Accountability: The Challenge for Medical and Nursing Regulators

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Accountability is often defined in many ways and poorly operationalized*. Accountability has become a major issue in healthcare**. Little is known about health professional regulatory accountability.

Purpose

To increase understanding of how regulatory bodies perceive and demonstrate accountability to their stakeholders.
Study Participants

• Sample: 22 nursing and medical provincial/territorial regulators.
Methods

• Exploratory descriptive study
• Literature review
• Semi structured interviews
• Document analysis of key published materials
Findings

• No common definition of accountability.
• Common concepts were identified such as responsibility, answerability, fairness and transparency.
• The majority agreed that they were accountable to a triad of constituents – the government, the public and their regulatory membership.
Accountability to Government

• Influenced by legislated requirements, funding, types and categories of registration.
• Perception that growing prescriptivness leads to restricted flexibility.
• Government relations categorized as formal and informal.
Accountability to Public

- Accountable first and foremost to protect the public and act in their interest.
- Accountable to the public through legislation.
- Encouraged public input and representation in certain regulatory activities.
Accountability to Regulatory Members

• Due diligence with members’ fees.
• Keep members’ informed on standards of practice and regulatory changes.
Accountability Metrics

• Legislation dictated required analytics and statistics.
• Legal requirements varied across the regulatory bodies.
• Smaller jurisdictions reported fewer metrics.
• Larger jurisdictions linked metrics to improve performance.
Accountability Challenges

• Stakeholder understanding of the regulatory role.
• Reconciling transparency with privacy.
• Appropriately utilizing social media.
• Organizational costs.
Summary of Common Perceptions

• Accountability was a key regulatory concept.
• There was variation in the definition and perception of accountability.
• Self-regulation was valued as essential and a privilege granted by government.
• There was a need for a common set of indicators.
• There was a trend to provide more metrics to increase accountability.
• The public and members should have more awareness of the regulatory presence.
Recommendations

• A national set of accountability indicators is recommended – it would facilitate regulatory comparison and reduce duplication.

• National dialogue about shared accountability would be welcomed by regulators.

• Social media engagement is a key emerging area for discussion.


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