What are the behavioural indicators of professionalism: massage therapy students’ perceptions
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Introduction
The concept of professionalism began with the Hippocratic oath. Defining professionalism can be problematic, however the essential elements may include expertise, organisation, autonomy and a spirit of public service. Professionalism in massage therapy is manifested through technical competency, communication skills, management of boundaries, respect and business practices. The aim of this research was to explore massage therapy students’ perceptions of behavioural indicators for professionalism. Ethical approval was gained by the Southern Institute of Technology Ethics Committee.

Methodology
Auto-ethnography
n=3

2 Focus group interviews
n=9

Face to face interviews
n=9

Key Findings, Indicators & Examples

Excellence
- Knowledge
- Standards
- On-going development
- Toolbox
- Prepared
- Time management

“Well I think if you think excellence is achievable, you are aiming too low. You can always raise the bar…” Ned

“It’s knowledge, knowledge, education, progressive, continuous education is very important…” Elli

Respect
- Scope of practice
- Respect
- Informed Consent
- Relationships/Boundaries
- Confidentiality
- Altruism/Client focus

“A therapist that conducts themselves in a professional manner so they are very respectful of the client and respectful of the clients wants and needs.” Ned

“...in a real situation, confidentiality is a key thing for you to run a successful business...” Olive

Communication
- Informed Consent
- Teamwork

“I would expect that a therapist wouldn’t be condescending to a client, speak in layman’s term’s so the client can understand...” Ray

“Your client becomes one of your team as well, working together to come up with a positive outcome at the end...” Ben

“...being a professional you would want to get some sort of satisfaction out of it. Otherwise... it will make it so much harder to care for what you are doing and who you are working with.” Roy

References

Implications
Massage students are concerned about varying levels of qualifications. The lack of standardisation can leave the public confused about our objectives.

Massage students see ongoing development as a way to exhibit professionalism. They value long-term goals and giving the best quality treatment.

Respect towards clients, the profession and colleagues is highly valued.

Communication is the base of the professional/client relationship.

Findings maybe developed into a measurement tool to evaluate professional indicators.