Hospital Hierarchy

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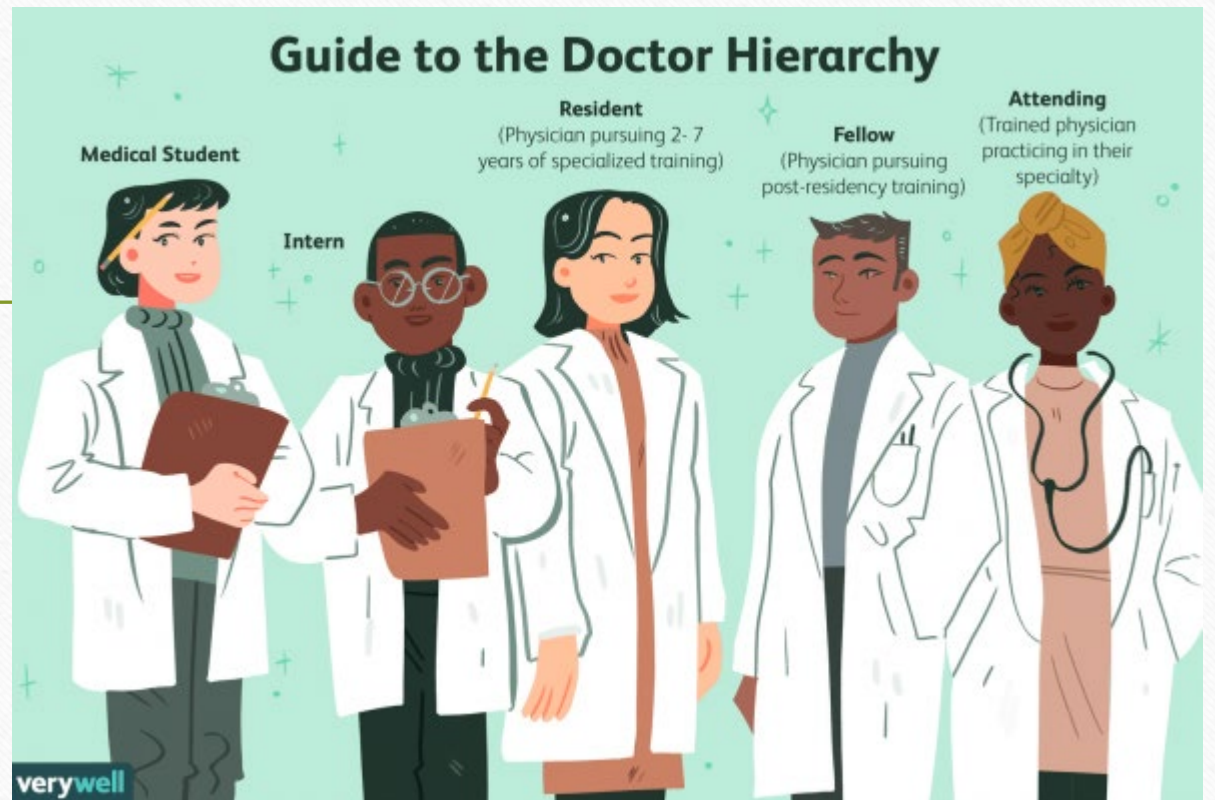Department of Internal Medicine

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Topics

- Types
- Consequences
- Solutions

Hierarchy

- Between health professions

- Between physicians

Doctor Hierarchy

Types of hierarchies

- Functional

- Dysfunctional

Dysfunctional hierarchies

- Dysfunctional hierarchies have been linked to negative impacts by creating learning environments that:

  - discourage the voicing of concerns

  - legitimize trainee mistreatment

  - create moral distress through ethical dilemmas

Dysfunctional hierarchies (cont.)

- Such an environment:
  - endangers patient safety
  - undermines physician empathy
  - hampers learning
  - lowers training satisfaction
  - amplifies stress, fatigue, and burnout

Functional hierarchies

- Functional medical hierarchies aim to optimize patient care through clinical instruction

- Functional hierarchies may improve resident education and well-being, as well as patient safety.

Functional hierarchy - considerations

Practitioners have the ability and authority to work to their full scope of practice

There is reciprocal respect between practitioners regarding patient care

Provider roles are clear to the patient and there is continuity of care

Each discipline should be able to advocate for their role on the team

Hierarchy Solutions

- Individual Solutions

- Institutional Solutions

Individual Solutions

Patient-Provider Relationship

- **Issue:**
  - Traditional relationship is often paternalistic with the patient subordinate

- **Proposed Solution:**
  - Shared-Decision making where decisions are made based on clinician expertise AND patient needs, values, and preferences

Individual Solutions

Management-Subordinate Relationship

- **Issue:**
  - questioning and accountability from subordinate to manager are often, whether implicitly or explicitly, discouraged

- **Proposed Solutions:**
  - Management-Encourage assertiveness from those who are "subordinate"
  - "Subordinate"-Identify and report errors or potential issues without recourse

Institutional Solutions

- **Goal:**
  - Support a culture of strong interdisciplinary teams
- **Potential issue:**
  - members of the group are unsure of the function of others in the group
  - This leads to misinterpretation of others role and influences the way individuals that act and interpret collaboration within the group. ○
- **Proposed Solution:**
  - members of an interprofessional team must first have an understanding of other team member

Organizational culture

- Hospitals vary in organizational culture

- The type of culture relates to the safety climate within the hospital.

- Healthcare organization's culture is a critical factor in the development of its patient safety climate and in the successful implementation of quality improvement initiatives.

Summary

- Both functional and dysfunctional hierarchies exist in healthcare

- Hierarchy influences patient care and outcomes, efficiency, and level of provider satisfaction or stress

- Institutions can foster collaborative and supportive team culture to create functional hierarchies

- Individuals can work within team structures to acknowledge areas for improvement

- Every healthcare provider has a responsibility to advocate for patient care!!