

Formation of Characteristics of a Self-Actualizing Personality among Medical Students

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Improving the quality of physician training includes the development of professionally important qualities during the period of study at a university. Psychological and pedagogical support for medical university students has not been sufficiently developed and is rarely implemented. The work is aimed at studying the formation of the qualities of a self-actualizing personality among medical university students. The authors developed and substantiated a model of psychological and pedagogical support for the formation of a complex of personal protective skills for future doctors. The authors presented the results of an empirical study obtained on a sample of 180 5th year medical university students with specialties in General Medicine and Dentistry (90 people – experimental group participating in the experimental program, 90 people – control group). The researchers used the self-actualization test technique of E. Shostrom in adaptation of L.Ya. Gozman and M.V. Crozat. The results obtained indicate that indicators of the characteristics of a self-actualizing personality change statistically significantly after participation in the experimental program. These studies can be used as an effective means of professional development for future and practicing doctors.

Keywords: self-actualizing personality; professionally important qualities; self-acceptance; self-esteem; spontaneity; synergy; future doctors.

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Формирование характеристик самоактуализирующейся личности у студентов медицинского вуза

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Повышение качества подготовки врачей включает развитие профессионально важных качеств в период обучения в вузе. Психолого-педагогическое сопровождение студентов медицинского вуза разработано недостаточно, внедряется редко. Работа направлена на исследование формирования качеств самоактуализирующейся личности у студентов медицинского вуза. Авторы

разработали и обосновали модель психолого-педагогического сопровождения формирования комплекса профессионально важных качеств (ПВК) будущих врачей. Авторы представили результаты эмпирического исследования, полученные на выборке 180 студентов 5 курса медицинского университета специальностей «Лечебное дело» и «Стоматология» (90 человек – экспериментальная группа, участвующая в экспериментальной программе, 90 человек – контрольная группа). Исследователи использовали методику – самоактуализационный тест Э. Шострома в адаптации Л.Я. Гозмана¹ и М.В. Кроза. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют, что показатели характеристик самоактуализирующейся личности статистически достоверно меняются после участия в экспериментальной программе. Данные исследования могут быть использованы в качестве эффективного средства профессионального становления будущих и практикующих врачей.

Ключевые слова: самоактуализирующаяся личность; профессионально важные качества; самопринятие; самоуважение; спонтанность; синергичность; будущие врачи.

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Introduction

The period of study in a higher education institution marks a critical stage in the professional formation of an individual, during which the development of professionally important qualities (PIQs) for future specialists begins [1]. The formation and development of PIQs are influenced by the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standards (FSSES) and the "social order." As the evaluation of a doctor's competence and professionalism has become increasingly complex and pervasive, the higher professional education system faces the challenge of implementing effective training methods to ensure specialists meet both professional and societal expectations [25]. In the medical field, the cultivation of significant professional qualities is crucial for the effective performance of a specialist [22; 23]. However, the selection of applicants to medical universities currently relies solely on academic performance, disregarding the personal qualities of future doctors—a situation that is similarly observed in other countries [26].

The selection of essential professional qualities is based on the functional composition of medical activities. This involves complex types of labor within the "human-human" system, necessitating a broad education, a drive for professional growth, and the ability to perform diverse and intricately structured methods and techniques. These professional activities place specific demands on the worker [13, p. 130]. The study addresses the problem of a discrepancy between the need to develop a set of Professionally Important Qualities (PIQs)

¹ Гозман Л.Я. выполняет функции иностранного агента.

for future doctors and the lack of psychological and pedagogical support for this process in medical schools. The study hypothesizes that psychological and pedagogical support for medical students will transform their self-perception as professional practitioners and foster traits associated with a self-actualizing personality, such as self-acceptance, self-esteem, synergy, and spontaneity.

Numerous normative documents, particularly the concept for developing continuous medical and pharmaceutical education in the Russian Federation up to 2025, emphasize promoting professional and personal growth through educational programs and independent intellectual activities (self-education, informal, or spontaneous education). The objective of personal growth and self-realization is highlighted. Besides developing infrastructure and technologies for continuous adult education to ensure personal growth and self-realization across various adult categories, it is crucial that specialists are motivated to engage in individual cognitive activities and strive for professional improvement [19].

According to E.A. Klimov's classification, medical activity belongs to the socio-economic type due to its foundation in the complex "doctor-patient" relationship, encompassing professional, moral, ethical, aesthetic, economic, and legal dimensions. Key components include a creative mind, the ability to predict and model various probable outcomes due to non-standard situations and the unstructured nature of medical work, and the ability to listen and understand others. This requires observation, responsiveness, and tact, reflecting high competence in communication and deontological qualities. Additionally, a developed mindset, high cognitive motivation, a desire for knowledge, and qualities like humanism, duty, and altruism are essential [10; 11].

Self-actualization refers to the capacity to independently make life choices and achieve goals. According to E.E. Vakhromov, its goal is the fullest development of abilities and psychological growth, achievable only through socially oriented activities [3]. I.A. Ankindinova defines self-actualization as realizing one's abilities and personal potential, driving both professional and personal growth [2].

Independent activity and the pursuit of one's highest potential lead to self-realization, an ethically meaningful, eudemonic lifestyle. Personal growth and fulfillment are central aspects of this process, achievable through self-directed efforts and realizing professional potential [28]. Self-actualizing personality traits empower future doctors to interact actively and creatively with their environment, develop a humane approach to patients, and offer avenues for personal and professional growth. For physicians, important self-actualizing traits include self-acceptance, self-esteem, synergy, and spontaneity within the PIQ complex. These traits, identified through theoretical analysis and confirmed by practical research, enhance the effectiveness of doctors in the expert group who possess them [5].

Methods

In our study devoted to psychological and pedagogical support of the formation of professionally important qualities of the personality of future doctors, conducted from 2016

to 2020, under the concept of a set of professionally important qualities of the personality of a future doctor [7], we proposed a set of personal and volitional qualities, traits of self-actualizing personality, and value orientations.

In order to implement the formation of the above-mentioned traits, we have developed and justified a model of psychological and pedagogical support for the formation of a set of professionally important personality traits in future doctors. The characteristic feature of this model is the presence of a clear structure of components that are related to each other and ordered. The model outlines the following components: the goal, which is to develop a set of professionally important qualities in future doctors; specific tasks; the targeted qualities, which include personal traits, characteristics of a self-actualizing personality, volitional qualities, and a value orientation towards serving others; the approaches used to cultivate these qualities; the psychological and pedagogical conditions required; the content and tools—specifically, the program for psychological and pedagogical support; the forms and methods of implementation; and the expected outcomes [6].

As part of the study, a formative experiment was conducted with 180 fifth-year medical university students (average age 24.7, $SD = 3.41$; 102 women and 78 men) from the Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry. The experimental group, consisting of 90 randomly selected students (59% women and 41% men, including 45 from the Faculty of Medicine and 45 from the Faculty of Dentistry), participated in a 144-hour program of psychological and pedagogical support aimed at developing professionally important qualities (PIQs) in future doctors. The control group also included 90 students (54% women and 46% men) but did not participate in the program. Diagnostics of self-actualization levels were conducted for both groups one week before the program began. The experimental group attended classes twice a week for three academic hours over six months, while the control group did not participate. The program, designed by the authors, comprised three blocks: educational, corrective-developmental, and consultative, each employing specific forms and methods of work [6]. Through their participation, students developed an understanding of PIQs and their roles as effective professionals. Activities such as trainings, reflective exercises, case studies, and situational tasks encouraged the development of self-esteem, sensitivity, interpersonal skills, flexible behavior, creativity, spontaneity, and synergy. At the end of the cycle, both the experimental and control groups were re-diagnosed to assess the level of self-actualization and its various characteristics using the E. Sjostrom Self-Actualization Test (SAT) adapted by L.Y. Gozman and M.V. Kroz.[8]. The reliability of the results was verified using mathematical statistics methods (Wilcoxon and Mann-Whitney criteria).

Results

Before the experiment, researchers observed no statistically significant differences in self-actualization indicators between the control and experimental groups.

Table 1 presents the indicators of a self-actualizing personality before and after

participation in a program designed to help future doctors develop essential career-related personality traits.

Statistical analysis using the Wilcoxon criterion revealed significant improvements in self-actualizing personality indicators such as self-acceptance ($Z = -3.625$; $p \leq 0.01$), self-esteem ($Z = -4.359$; $p \leq 0.01$), and synergy ($Z = -4.524$; $p \leq 0.01$). There were also notable trends for spontaneity ($Z = -3.602$; $p \leq 0.1$), contact ($Z = -1.762$; $p \leq 0.1$), and creativity ($Z = -3.662$; $p \leq 0.1$).

Qualitative analysis showed that participation in the psychological and pedagogical support program significantly increased the number of students with high scores in self-acceptance, rising from 13% to 40%.

The percentage of students with high self-esteem in the experimental group increased from 27% to 67%.

As a result of the experiment, the proportion of future doctors with high synergy scores rose from 40% to 70%.

Additionally, 87% of students exhibited high levels of spontaneity after the program, compared to 73% before the experiment.

Participation in the support program also increased the number of future doctors with high scores in contact skills, essential for communicative abilities and competence, from 43% to 60%.

The number of students in the experimental group with high creativity scores significantly rose from 50% to 77%.

Table 1

Dynamics of indicators of self-actualizing personality (in %) in students before and after participation in the program of psychological and pedagogical support of the formation of a set of professionally important qualities of personality of future doctors

	Before			After		
	low	average	high	low	average	high
Time orientation	30	50	20	20	40	40
Support	6,7	63,3	30	0	60	40
Value orientations	0	30	70	0	20	80
Behavioral flexibility	16,7	13,3	70	13,3	10	76,7
Sensitivity	13,3	10	76,7	0	13,3	86,7
Spontaneity	13,3	13,3	73,4	6,7	6,7	86,6
Self-esteem	16,7	56,7	26,6	10	23,3	66,7

Self-acceptance	43,3	43,3	13,4	30	30	40
View of human nature	13,3	70	16,7	6,7	53,3	40
Synergy	30	30	40	10	20	70
Acceptance of aggression	30	13,3	46,7	10	23,3	66,7
Contactability	13,3	43,3	43,4	10	30	60
Cognitive needs	0	20	80	0	16,7	83,3
Creativity	30	20	50	13,3	10	76,7

Researchers used the Mann-Whitney criteria to compare self-actualization indicators in the control and experimental groups before and after the experiment. Table 2 presents sample indicators with significant statistical differences and a tendency toward differences.

In the control group, repeated measurements showed no significant differences ($p \geq 0.05$).

Table 2

Comparative analysis of sample indicators of self-actualizing personality in the control and experimental groups before and after the experimental work

	group	Before experimental work (no differences)				After experimental work (differences revealed)			
		Average rank	Σ ranks	U	p	Average rank	Σ ranks	U	p
Spontaneity	EG	11,05	110,50	44,50	,674	13,65	136,50	18,50	,015
	KG	9,95	99,50			7,35	73,50		
Self-esteem	EG	10,00	100,00	45,00	,704	13,40	134,00	21,00	,028
	KG	11,00	110,00			7,60	76,00		
Synergy	EG	10,40	104,00	49,00	,939	13,00	130,00	25,00	,057
	KG	10,60	106,00			8,00	80,00		
Contactability	EG	10,00	100,00	45,00	,702	13,15	131,50	23,50	,043
	KG	11,00	110,00			7,85	78,50		

Discussion of results

Self-acceptance is an important condition for the self-actualization of a future doctor's personality, as it indicates the ability to accept oneself, taking into account one's own shortcomings and weaknesses, the adequacy of self-esteem, and confidence in decisions concerning patient management tactics. According to F. Perls, every individual from birth tries to actualize himself "as they are," i.e., to actualize the "image of themselves" and use their own growth potential [15]. "Be your true self," thereby becoming fully human, as C. Rogers believed [16]. Self-realized people are completely content with themselves as they

are, full of quirks, imperfections, and flaws. It reconciles them with their own selves and their relationships with people [24].

Self-esteem, the ability to recognize and appreciate one's positive traits, plays a crucial role in forming a doctor's "self-concept" [12]. The strength of self-concept, self-respect, self-esteem, self-importance, and self-sufficiency are key personal resources that help doctors overcome professional stress [4].

The complex set of professionally important qualities (PIQ) for future doctors includes synergy, which enables them to perceive the world and people holistically. This holistic perception will help them to understand the relationship between opposites, such as the spiritual and the physical, within a person. It is crucial for doctors to analyze often contradictory information, interpret results, and understand the impact of the psyche on disease and vice versa. The founder of the theory of self-actualization, A. Maslow, refers to the characteristics of self-actualizing people as an adequate perception of reality, finding the new in the known, and a sense of community with humanity as a whole [17]. A high level of synergy allows individuals to effectively utilize their strengths, abilities, skills, and resources in unique situations to achieve both external and internal harmony [18]. Modern foreign authors also note that the "spirituality" of doctors is associated with the interpretation of patients' illnesses and can act as a bridge that promotes the development of relationships with the patient [27].

The data on increased spontaneity indicators do not show that we lack the ability to think about purposeful action. It reveals the possibility of not calculating in advance the type of behavior necessary when assisting patients in emergency and urgent situations and taking responsibility for changing tactics. Spontaneity is the suddenness and unpredictability associated with self-realization and expression. E. Sjostrom, among the characteristics of a self-actualizing personality ("actualizer"), notes such characteristics as honesty, openness, sincerity, and freedom of expression of one's potentials [21].

Sensitivity, a key aspect of self-actualization, indicates how well a future doctor understands their own needs and feelings, as well as their capacity for reflection. It also demonstrates their ability to respond to various stimuli in their future professional activities.

A doctor's behavioral flexibility determines their ability to adapt to changing circumstances and approach problem-solving creatively. This flexibility shines most during professional stress or unexpected events that require new behaviors. It reflects how well future doctors can implement their values in their actions, interact with others, and respond promptly and appropriately to evolving situations. And to do this, a technologically equipped doctor should not only treat, but also be able to talk to his patient, and this is something that has to be learned [9]. In the context of self-actualization, contactability is considered not only as a communicative ability or skill of effective communication but also as a prosocial attitude of a person.

Creativity, as a quality of self-actualizing personality, stipulates the ability of future doctors to analyze information, understand cause-and-effect relationships, make non-standard inferences, go beyond standard models, and develop and apply innovative methods and techniques in their work [20]. This concerns the expression of creative orientation in future doctors' personalities.

Conclusions

Psychological and educational support during medical school significantly improved future doctors' self-actualization indicators, which are part of their Professional Important Qualities (PIQ). The experimental group showed statistically significant improvements in these indicators, demonstrating the effectiveness of the author's support program. Although these results affirm the program's success, further confirmation using the self-actualization method is necessary to validate the effectiveness of psychological and pedagogical support for students.

The professionally important characteristics of the self-actualizing personality of future doctors are the personal striving for maximum identification and presentation of individual abilities, as well as for further self-development and education. Personality development stimulates the transformation of professional activity, filling it with new meaning through the process of personalization [14]. These indicators reveal the personality orientation of future doctors. They provide a model for their interactions with patients, as well as their professional and personal characteristics.

The research and data generated are powerful tools for the professional development of medical students, residents, and practitioners at all stages of their careers.

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