

Does a structured medical ethics education programme improve professional identity among medical interns?

Submission date 23/03/2026	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 24/03/2026	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 23/03/2026	Condition category Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

This study looked at whether a structured medical ethics education programme could help improve the professional identity of medical interns. Professional identity includes how interns see themselves as future doctors, how they understand their values, and how they behave in clinical settings. The study also aimed to understand how and why any changes in professional identity take place.

Who can participate?

Medical interns aged 22 to 30 years who were completing their clinical training at a teaching hospital in China could take part. They needed to give informed consent and be able to complete study questionnaires.

What does the study involve?

Participants were randomly placed into one of two groups. One group took part in a two week ethics education programme that included case discussions, reflection sessions, and group activities. The other group continued with their usual clinical training. Everyone completed questionnaires before and after the programme to measure changes in their professional identity.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Participants might gain a better understanding of ethical issues in medicine, feel more confident about their professional values, and strengthen their professional identity. There were no known significant risks from taking part in the study.

Where is the study run from?

The study was run at a teaching hospital affiliated with a medical university in China.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

The study has already been completed. The ethics education programme lasted two weeks, followed by time for data collection and analysis.

Who is funding the study?

The study was funded by a teaching reform project at Zunyi Medical University and a research fund from the Guizhou Provincial Health Commission (China).

Who is the main contact?

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Study information

Scientific Title

Theory-based structured Medical Ethics education intervention and its effects on Professional Identity formation among medical interns

Acronym

MEPI

Study objectives

1. To evaluate the effect of a structured medical ethics education intervention on professional identity formation among medical interns
2. To explore the underlying mechanisms through which the intervention influences professional identity development

Ethics approval required

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Ethics approval(s)

Approved 27/08/2025, Medical Ethics Review Committee of the Second Affiliated Hospital of Zunyi Medical University (Second Affiliated Hospital of Zunyi Medical University, Zunyi, 563003, China; +86 85127596557; zyefyjwk@163.com), ref: KYLL-2025-127

Primary study design

Interventional

Allocation

Randomized controlled trial

Masking

Open (masking not used)

Control

Active

Assignment

Parallel

Purpose

Health services research

Study type(s)**Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Professional identity formation among medical interns

Interventions

Participants were randomly assigned to an intervention group or a control group using block randomization.

The intervention group received a structured medical ethics education programme over a period of two weeks (10 teaching hours in total). The programme included case-based discussions, guided reflection sessions, and facilitated group discussions integrated into clinical internship

settings. The intervention aimed to support professional identity development by promoting ethical reasoning, reflective learning, and value internalization.

The control group followed the routine clinical internship curriculum without additional structured ethics education.

All participants completed a professional identity questionnaire before and after the intervention.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

1. Overall professional identity score measured using a validated 20-item professional identity scale at baseline (pre-intervention) and immediately after the two-week intervention

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Professional cognition score measured using the corresponding subscale of the validated 20-item professional identity scale at baseline (pre-intervention) and immediately after the two-week intervention

2. Emotional identity score measured using the corresponding subscale of the validated 20-item professional identity scale at baseline (pre-intervention) and immediately after the two-week intervention

3. Behavioural tendency score measured using the corresponding subscale of the validated 20-item professional identity scale at baseline (pre-intervention) and immediately after the two-week intervention

4. Sense of group belonging score measured using the corresponding subscale of the validated 20-item professional identity scale at baseline (pre-intervention) and immediately after the two-week intervention

5. Ethical responsibility identity score measured using the corresponding subscale of the validated 20-item professional identity scale at baseline (pre-intervention) and immediately after the two-week intervention

6. Career intention measured using a self-reported questionnaire assessing intention to pursue a medical career at baseline (pre-intervention) and immediately after the two-week intervention

Completion date

08/02/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Undergraduate students majoring in clinical medicine undertaking clinical internships at the study hospital

2. Willing to participate in the study and providing written informed consent

3. Able to complete the study questionnaires independently, including both pre- and post-intervention assessments

4. Not previously exposed to a similar structured medical ethics education programme

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Adult

Lower age limit

22 Years

Upper age limit

30 Years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

216

Key exclusion criteria

1. Refusal to participate or withdrawal of informed consent
2. Inability to complete the study questionnaires independently
3. Incomplete questionnaires or data with significant inconsistencies
4. Prior participation in a similar structured medical ethics education programme

Date of first enrolment

01/09/2025

Date of final enrolment

02/11/2025

Locations**Countries of recruitment**

China

Sponsor information**Organisation**

Second Affiliated Hospital of Zunyi Medical University

Funder(s)**Funder type****Funder Name**

Zunyi Medical University Teaching Reform Project

Funder Name

Guizhou Provincial Health Commission Research Fund

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available