

Assertiveness in the physician's role: A Scoping Review

Maayan Gutgeld-Dror,^{*} ^{**} Nathaniel Laor^{**},^{***} & Orit Karnieli-Miller^{*}

^{*}The Department of Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University

^{**}Cohen-Harris Resilience Center, Israel

^{***}The Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University

Purpose

Physicians' encounters aim to establish empathic rapport, good communication, and decision-making processes.



However, encounters with patients, family members, and the healthcare team may become challenging or conflictual



Handling these encounters may require physicians to be assertive, i.e., to share and protect their needs, rights, and values while preserving those of others

A scoping review was performed to learn about what is known regarding physicians' assertiveness

Methods

A literature search of four online databases: (MEDLINE, Embase, PsycINFO, and WoS) seeking articles on **physicians' assertiveness published up to February 2022**

Using the Joanna Briggs Institute approach and the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) checklist

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:

Population: Physicians at different career stages.

Concept: Physicians' assertiveness

Context: All contextual settings of physicians' interpersonal professional encounters

Results

1,513 Records screened

153 Reports sought for retrieval

22 Studies included in review

68% from the last decade

54% concentrating on bottom-up power relations

No clear definition of assertiveness in

40%

of the studies
Definitions varied:
focused on self,
others, or
both self and other



Variation in measuring assertiveness
(ranging from 1–12 items)

Conclusions

- **Physicians' assertiveness is relatively unexplored**
- Assertiveness was found to be relevant in various interpersonal relationships
- "Assertiveness" remains vague due to its **varied definitions and measures**
- There is a **need for research** that is based on a **clear definition that reflects the sensitive and unique nature of physicians' role** in their various professional interpersonal relationships
- This definition can be helpful in **decision-making processes** to allow respectful acknowledgement of both partners' values, needs and expertise

