

If “Competence” is the Answer, Have We Asked the Right Question?

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LUNCH PROVIDED WITH RSVP
King Center, Bernard Becker Medical Library

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In education, regulation, professional development, and practice, “competence” has become the dominant way of thinking about the work of health care providers. The philosopher Kenneth Burke has noted that “every way of seeing is also a way of NOT seeing something else.” With the time and attention we have dedicated to teaching, assessing, measuring, and reporting on competence, what are we missing? While competence is a reasonable goal for professional practice - is there something else we are overlooking? This presentation will review current thinking regarding competency in the education and practice of health professions and present alternative viewpoints for better understanding the complex reality of professional practice and personal fulfillment.

Dr. Austin is a professor and the Koffler Chair in Management at the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy and the Institute for Health Policy, Management, and Evaluation - Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto. He is a world-renowned expert in the area of maintaining and assessing competency. His research focuses on the professional and personal development of the health care workforce. He has published more than 200 manuscripts and authored 4 reference texts. In 2017, he was installed as a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of the Health Sciences – one of the highest honors for health services researchers in Canada. He is the only University of Toronto professor ever to have received both the President’s Teaching Award for sustained excellence in education and the President’s Research Impact Award for the importance of his research in Canada and internationally.

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