

How Well Do We Know Doctors?



In the BMJ's weekly quiz for doctors, 50 respondents were asked to define their personality. The results reveal a wide choice of adjectives related to their working style, their personality, and their attitude among others. The most popular adjectives included competitive, committed, conscientious, determined, driven, exacting, hardworking, obsessive, perfectionist, persevering, persistent, relentless, tenacious and passionate.

Over half of the respondents chose one of those adjectives. Other popular words that were provided include extrovert, outgoing, optimistic, warm, positive, adventurous, cheerful, enthusiastic, energetic, and lively. Other adjectives that were also suggested include compassionate, considerate, kind, generous, sensitive, and charming.

Only four respondents used the words introspective, diffident, and cautious while four more said difficult, bossy, impatient, or impossible. Five respondents were more critical of themselves and volunteered feisty, outspoken, opinionated and loquacious. Only one respondent claimed to be a visionary. The same respondent, who worked in Public Health, also claimed to be outspoken.

Out of the 50 respondents, twelve stated that their earliest ambition was to be a doctor. Five wanted to be scientists and two claim they wanted to be nuns. Three revealed they wanted to be pilots while three others said they had artistic ambitions and wanted to be film directors, actors, writers or poets. The founder of Dartmouth Atlas of Healthcare John Wennberg said that he wanted to be a mountaineer, ski bum, forester, pastor, philosopher, linguist or sociologist.

When asked about their opinion on doctor-assisted suicide, 24 were in favour of it, 15 against and the remainder offered equivocal answers or no answer at all. Raymond Tallis was pretty aggressive in his point of view saying that the current law was a "moral disgrace" and that it should be changed to permit doctor-assisted suicide for people who are terminally ill and have expressed a wish for such assistance.

The respondents were asked to name one book that every doctor should read. The book with the most nominations was John Berger's *A Fortunate Man* (with three votes) published in 1967. Other suggested authors include Anton Chekhov and Primo Levi (two votes each). The best suggested title for a book was Klim McPherson's *How to be Humble without Being Obsequious*.

When asked about their favourite contributors to healthcare, 20 named Nye Bevan as the best health secretary. Frank Dobson got nine nominations followed by Alan Milburn and Stephen Dorrell with five nominations each. Kenneth Clark got three votes while Barbara Castle and Alan Johnson got two. Andrew Lansley was named as the worst health secretary with fifteen votes. Also included in this list were Kenneth Clarke, Enoch Powell and John Moore.

When asked about their worst mistakes, the responses fell into two groups: medical errors including wrong prescriptions, bad diagnoses, inept treatments; and career errors such as failing to apply for jobs, taking a wrong turn, failing to turn over an exam paper and missing the questions on the back.

Top pet hates comprised self-regard, shallow knowingness, worthiness, people who take themselves too seriously, experts, bullies and liars. When questioned about guilty pleasures, chocolate was at the top of the list followed by whisky.

Source: BMJ

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