What do we know about uncertainty, and teaching around uncertainty, in health professions education? A scoping review

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“Tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty is a profoundly frustrating experience for most people, but especially for doctors. Living with uncertainty is like being on a slow-moving carousel, with that vague unsettling sensation permeating your body. And then, in that state, doctors are asked to make serious and profound decisions, ones that may gravely affect the life of a human being.”

Danielle Ofri
Why a scoping review?

“Scoping reviews are useful for answering the broader questions (such as “What is the nature of evidence for this intervention?” or “What is known about this concept?”)

Tricco et al., 2018
Who is on the team?

Jenny Hammond

Jenny Moffett

Teresa Pawlikowska
How have we approached the task?

1. Adopted approach based on Joanna Briggs Institute guidelines
2. Devised our scoping review protocol including search strategy
3. Pre-test exercise with 50 papers to evaluate reviewer agreement
4. First round of screening (title and abstract)
5. Full text review using coding scheme
Where have we got to?
What have we learned so far?

Teaching and learning strategies: reflection, storytelling, problem-based learning, serious games, simulation and role-play, storytelling, script concordance testing

Uncertainty “bedfellows”: ethical decision-making, communication, cognitive reasoning, evidence-based medicine, professionalism, end-of-life topics

Uncertainty is a topic of discussion for most health professions with no clear pathway to address. Has important implications for career choice, graduate outcomes and health
Other lessons?

Scoping reviews can be time consuming and relies on the reviewing team being able to match work flow, although this can be asynchronous.

Logistically, Zoom web conferencing tool and EndNote to complete – and use a good coding sheet.

PRISMA Extension for scoping reviews is now available.
The wise man is one who knows what he does not know.

Laozi