

Research *Rounds*

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FACULTY OF MEDICINE

The Centre for Health Education Scholarship (CHES)
invites you to Research Rounds with:

Lies, Damned Lies, and Surveys

Dr. Anthony R. Artino, Jr.

Date: January 16, 2019

Time: 12:00pm to 1:30pm
(feel free to bring a bagged lunch)

Venue: Diamond Health Care Centre, room 2267

With videoconference to:

- IRC 305
- NHSC 9-374
- RJH CA 120

**Please be aware that this session will be recorded and made available online to CHES members on a password-protected site.*



Anthony R. Artino, Jr., PhD

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Research *Rounds*

Anthony R. Artino, Jr.
Lies, Damned Lies, and Surveys

ABSTRACT Mark Twain famously expressed his disdain for statistics when he said, “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.” Beyond referencing his own difficulties with math, Twain was making the point that statistics can have persuasive power, even when used inappropriately. In short, statistics often are used to bolster weak arguments.

The same can be said of surveys—results from a poorly designed and poorly executed survey can have considerable persuasive power. Flawed survey results can send educators off searching for fixes to non-existent problems, negatively influence policy decisions, and fill the scientific literature with unsubstantiated knowledge claims that take years to correct, if they are ever corrected.

In this talk, I discuss the challenge of designing and implementing high-quality, self-administered surveys. Using empirical data and a series of examples from health care, education, and politics, I describe how survey results can be used to shape science and policy, often inappropriately. In addition, I provide insight into the cognitive processes that guide how respondents make sense of survey questions, and I demonstrate what happens when these cognitive processes are ignored by educators and researchers. Next, I propose several design principles meant to improve surveys and introduce procedures that front-load the survey-design process by focusing heavily on item development and pretesting. Finally, I end by discussing the future of surveys as an evaluation and research methodology. Taken together, the goal of this talk is to demonstrate that Mark Twain’s lament, when applied to surveys, is often correct—but it certainly doesn’t have to be.

ABOUT Anthony R. Artino, Jr., Ph.D., is Professor and Deputy Director for the Division of Health Professions Education at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland. He received his Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Connecticut and has accrued over 21 years of leadership experience as a Captain in the U.S. Navy. In his current role, he teaches graduate courses, conducts research, mentors students and junior faculty, and provides administrative leadership. As a researcher, he has been the Principal or Associate Investigator on more than \$8 million in funded research. In this role, he collaborates with teams of scientists trained in medicine, psychology, epidemiology, and English. His research teams study various aspects of human motivation and learning in health professions education. Dr. Artino is Deputy Editor for the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* and Assistant Editor for *Academic Medicine*. He has published 120 peer-reviewed journal articles and given lectures at international meetings around the globe.

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