

Appendix O - Student Code Of Professionalism

Preamble

What virtues, values, and principles are essential to the formation and sustenance of therapeutic relationships between patients and their physicians? To effective collaboration between physicians and other health care professionals? To the cultivation of a profession worthy of the public trust? As students at Georgetown University School of Medicine, we are embarking on our path to the profession at a time when these and other related questions have become the focus of unprecedented interest and concern. The result has been a provocative, wide-ranging and in-depth dialogue about the ultimate ends of medicine – and about what current and future physicians should do, as well as be, in order to ensure the achievement of these ends.

With this code of professionalism, we seek to initiate and contribute to this dialogue within the community of Georgetown's School of Medicine by explicitly identifying and describing the values, virtues, and principles that we believe are critical to our formation as physician-healers and to our ability to serve our patients competently and compassionately, and our profession and society with honor. In so doing, our intent is to offer ourselves a set of concrete guideposts to shape our thoughts and actions, especially in the midst of the demands of learning and eventually practicing our profession. Moreover, in an effort to testify to the critical significance of being both responsible and accountable, in this code we also seek to articulate a fair and just approach to alleged failures to uphold, in particular, the virtue of honesty and the principle of respect – that is, the virtue and the principle that we believe are so essential to our identity and integrity as professionals that their breach merits a considered but deliberate response.

We envision this code as a living, vital document, subject to ongoing reflection, dialogue, and change, especially as we gain experience with its actual effects on us as individuals and as a moral community.

Article I: Our Values, Virtues, and Principles

With an understanding that the following ideals are central to the practice of medicine, we, as members of the community of Georgetown University School of Medicine, will strive to

- ❑ **Respect the dignity and intrinsic value of every individual.** Regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, age, gender, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, religious belief or political affiliation, we will strive to respect our teachers, fellow students, patients, and other members of the medical school community.
- ❑ **Be altruistic.** We will strive to place the interests and needs of others, especially the sick and the disadvantaged, above our own self-interest.
- ❑ **Be compassionate toward others.** We realize that the ability to share in the experiences of others – especially, the suffering of the sick – is critical to the work of healing.

- ❑ **Act and speak with integrity.** We will seek to speak and to act in ways that testify to, and support our values and principles.
- ❑ **Be collaborative and collegial.** We realize that care for patients and ourselves demands the integration and coordination of the talents, knowledge, and skills of all members of the health care team.
- ❑ **Be responsible and accountable.** We will be willing to accept and acknowledge our shortcomings, as well as our successes. We will also commit ourselves to responsibility and accountability for our own learning.
- ❑ **Seek excellence.** We will endeavor to improve our knowledge and skill, both within and beyond the learning environment.
- ❑ **Practice humility.** We acknowledge the limits of our science and our practice, as well as our personal limits in knowledge and skill.
- ❑ **Be worthy of the trust** of our patients, teachers, and fellow students.
- ❑ **Be honest,** speaking and acting with truth.

Article II

Promoting and Defending Professionalism in Medical Education

The obligation to exemplify these values, virtues, and principles ultimately rests with each of us. When we reflect these values, virtues, and principles we enrich and strengthen our medical community. Since professionalism in the practice of medicine depends upon self- and mutual regulation, we promise to support each other in meeting this obligation with the aim of creating and maintaining a community founded on this shared commitment.

Actions that promote our values, virtues and principles, should be recognized, encouraged and supported. Actions – both words and deeds – that undermine our virtues, values, and principles should also be addressed. The following options are available for discussing and addressing actions, especially of the latter type:

- A. In many situations, a direct, honest, confidential, and informal approach is most appropriate. This informal approach is inspired by the conviction that being open and forthright bolsters our shared community. Both in recognizing acts that promote our shared virtues, values, and principles, and in honest discussions about acts that may undermine them, a direct and informal approach allows us to support and to encourage each other, while strengthening our medical community.
- B. Concerns may also be voiced to, and explored with the Ombuds Office of the School of Medicine. The Ombuds Office provides a strictly confidential and impartial forum for exploring the options available for conflict resolution, including the mediation of disputes among members of the medical school community.

Serious violations of the stated virtues, values, and principles may require an alternate process. Because serious failures in respect and honesty – including sexual harassment, bias, discrimination, abuse, and academic dishonesty - pose substantial threats to professionalism and to the integrity of our community, the following formal written process is available.

**Article III:
Process for Investigating and Resolving Allegations of Serious Failures in Respect and
Honesty**

The following written formal process – which will always be conducted with the utmost regard for confidentiality and for the rights of students -- is to be followed during the investigation and resolution of allegations of a serious breach of this Code of Professionalism. Allegations of academic dishonesty, harassment, bias, discrimination, or abuse are considered serious threats to our stated virtues, values, and principles.

- A. A formal allegation of a serious breach of this Code of Professionalism must be described in writing by the individual(s) making the allegation. This document should include the relevant details of the alleged violation, including the specifics of where, when, and by whom such an alleged failure occurred. The name(s) of the individual(s) bringing the allegation must be included in the written account.

- B. This written allegation must be submitted to the School of Medicine’s Associate Dean for Students within ten days of the “discovery” of the alleged violation. The individual(s) against whom the allegation is made will receive a copy of the written allegation and will also have the opportunity to respond in writing. The Associate Dean for Students will meet with all of the parties involved. Upon deliberation, if the Associate Dean for Students finds that the allegation is sufficiently egregious, or is part of a history or pattern of behavior, the formal allegation will be forwarded to the Chair of the School of Medicine’s Executive Faculty Committee on Students. If the Associate Dean finds that the written allegation does not warrant immediate action, a copy of the formal, written allegation and a copy of the response will be placed in confidential files created for all parties involved. Each party to an allegation will be informed of the Associate Dean of Students’ decision within thirty days of the initial meeting. The contents of the confidential files will be destroyed upon graduation of each of the students involved in an allegation.

- C. If the Chair of the Committee on Students receives a formal written complaint from the Associate Dean for Students, the Chair will appoint a three-person Subcommittee to investigate the allegation. The Subcommittee will determine via its investigation whether there is cause to bring the allegation before the full Committee on Students. The Subcommittee will be comprised of one faculty member and two elected members of the School of Medicine’s fourth-year class. If a conflict of interest arises between a member of the Subcommittee and an individual involved in an alleged violation, the Subcommittee member will be excused of his/her responsibilities. The Chair of the Committee on Students will appoint the replacement.

- D. The Subcommittee will collect facts relevant to the investigation. The collection of these facts may include:
- 1) The original written complaint.
 - 2) A written rebuttal by the accused.
 - 3) Additional voluntary verbal statements from the individuals directly involved in the alleged incident. All such statements should be transcribed and signed by the individual providing the statement.
 - 4) Corroborating evidence presented by all parties. This may include witness statements in support of either party.
- E. The accused is entitled to the following rights:
- 1) As stated previously, the accused is to receive a copy of the written allegation;
 - 2) To be given reasonable notice of the hearing before the Subcommittee;
 - 3) To address the Subcommittee concerning the alleged incident;
 - 4) To have prior knowledge of the nature of the evidence to be used against him/her;
 - 5) To be accompanied by an advisor of his/her choosing. This advisor's role shall be to consult and support the student.
 - 6) To receive a fair hearing;
 - 7) To have all proceedings undertaken with utmost confidentiality.
- F. If the subcommittee unanimously finds that there is cause for further investigation by, and referral to, the full Committee on Students, the Chair will convene the full Committee at the earliest convenience. Otherwise, all relevant documents and materials will be placed in a confidential file. In the event of a split decision of the subcommittee, a written minority and majority opinion will be placed in the confidential file. This file is to be destroyed upon graduation of the accused.
- G. If an allegation is forwarded to the full Committee on Students, this committee will review the written allegation and findings of the Subcommittee. The accused is entitled to present a rebuttal or defense before the full Committee. The accused is granted the same rights afforded during the Subcommittee hearing. If the full Committee on Students finds that there is sufficient evidence to support the allegation, it may resolve the matter in one of several ways. As outlined in **Appendix N** of *The Georgetown University School of Medicine Student Handbook 2004-2005*, the full Committee on Students may:
- 1) Issue an oral reprimand to the accused at the conclusion of the review;
 - 2) Issue a written reprimand to the accused to be placed in his/her academic file. This reprimand may remain in the academic file or may be removed after the completion of some form of restitution or remediation;
 - 3) Suspend the accused from the School of Medicine for a specified period of time;
 - 4) Expel the accused from the School of Medicine.
- H. Under certain circumstances the accused may invoke an appeals process. As outlined in **Appendix N** of *The Georgetown University School of Medicine Student Handbook 2004-2005*, if the Committee on Students dismisses a student or denies permission to return from a leave of absence, the student may appeal this decision to the Committee on Student Appeals. This group is a special committee of seven faculty members appointed

by the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The Committee on Student Appeals may:

- 1) Affirm the decision of the Committee on Students;
- 2) Reverse or modify the action of the Committee on Students in a manner dealing more benignly with the student;
- 3) Remand the case to the Committee on Students.

In cases under 1) and 2) the decision is final and without further appeal.

- I. As specified in *The Georgetown University School of Medicine Student Handbook 2004-2005*, Appendix C, allegations of harassment, bias, discrimination, and abuse may be reported to the Special Assistant to the President of the University for Affirmative Action, Ms. Rosemary Kilkenny, J.D.

Approved by the Student Council, October 2001