Medical Educator Code of Conduct

Mount Sinai School of Medicine is dedicated to fostering ethical teaching practices at all levels of the education process. We have, therefore, developed the following Code of Conduct as a guide to Educators.

Responsibility to the Patient

- When participating in patient care, I will place the needs and interests of the patient above my own.
- I will treat patients and their families with respect and dignity both in their presence and in discussions with other members of the health care team.
- I will not tolerate discrimination in patient care on the basis of race, color, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, military status, marital status, sexual preference, genetic disposition, or any other legally protected status, or any other legally protected status, or on the basis of socioeconomic status, and I will expect the same of my colleagues.
- I will interact with patients with respect for their privacy and modesty.
- I will treat patient information received as part of any educational experience as private and I will follow patient privacy and confidentiality guidelines as outlined by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) and state laws.
- I will regard confidentiality as an obligation of patient care and will guard any patient information that is shared with me and use it only for the evaluation and management of the patient or as otherwise permitted by law.
- I will limit discussions of patients to members of the health care team or to other legally authorized individuals, and to private settings that are removed from others’ hearing.

Responsibility to the Student

- It is my primary responsibility to contribute to the intellectual development of each student.
- I will approach each student with a commitment to meeting his or her educational needs.
- I will uphold a classroom atmosphere and team setting conducive to learning.
- I will treat my students with respect and dignity.
- I will approach topics that students might find sensitive or uncomfortable in an open, honest, and positive way.
- I will communicate the objectives of the educational experience to students, I will seek and implement instructional methods or strategies that best communicate the material, and I will select methods of instruction that are effective in helping students to achieve the course objectives.
- I will provide course material, assignments, and class and office hour schedules in a timely fashion.
• I will adhere to written policies and practices and act on these with consistency and fairness.
• I recognize the inherent subjectivity involved in grading and will do everything possible to ensure that grading practices are as objective as possible.
• I will regard student grades, letters of evaluation, attendance records, and private communications as confidential materials. They will be released only with student consent, or for legitimate academic purposes, or if there are reasonable grounds for believing that releasing such information will be beneficial to the student or will prevent harm to the student or to others.
• I will avoid actions such as exploitation, harassment, and discrimination, which detract from student development.
• I will not use my professional authority to pressure students to take on tasks or responsibilities that are outside of the responsibilities of a medical student. I will not ask students/trainees to perform tasks of a personal nature.

Responsibility to the Profession

• I accept that in order to maintain the community of trust, which is vital to research and clinical practice, my peers and I must commit ourselves to both encouraging professionalism and expressing concern to the appropriate parties upon witnessing a lack thereof.
• I will acknowledge and document, as appropriate, the sources of information and other materials used for teaching.

Responsibility to Society

• I acknowledge the importance of participating in activities that contribute to improving the health of society.
• I acknowledge the importance of social and political action to advocate for important patient and healthcare issues.
• I acknowledge the significant impact of social and economic factors on health care.

Responsibility to Faculty, Administration and Peers

• I recognize my responsibility to tell the truth.
• I will interact with all members of the health care team in a considerate and cooperative manner.
• I will not tolerate discrimination among my colleagues on the basis of race, color, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, military status, marital status, sexual preference, genetic disposition, or any other legally protected status, as well as socioeconomic status, and I will expect the same of my students.
• I recognize my responsibility to take action to ensure the virtues of professional honesty and integrity in my colleagues.
• In an effort to resolve conflicts in a manner that respects the dignity of every person involved, I will consider the opinions and positions of others with an open mind.
• I strive to promote wellness in my colleagues, including assuming an obligation to assist impaired colleagues in seeking professional help, and to accept such help if I become impaired.
• I will accurately credit sources and ideas developed and work done by others in reports and in research endeavors.

Responsibility to Self

• I will maintain the highest standards of academic honesty.
• My demeanor, behavior, use of language, and personal appearance in the presence of patients, in the classroom, and in health care settings will be professional.
• I will maintain a high level of subject matter knowledge and ensure that the content of my educational experience is current, accurate, representative, and appropriate.
• I have an obligation to maintain my mental and physical well being in order to be effective as a physician and/or educator.
• I will not use alcohol or drugs in any way that could interfere with my educational and clinical responsibilities.
• I will not use my professional authority to engage in romantic, sexual, or financial relationships with students, coworkers, or patients or members of their families.

My Rights as an Educator

• I have the right to expect clear administrative guidelines.
• I have the right to appropriate administrative support to develop a curriculum and to run my course/clerkship.
• I cannot be compelled to perform tasks that are unethical or beyond my expertise.
• I have the right to a workplace free of discrimination based on race, color, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, military status, marital status, sexual preference, genetic disposition, or any other legally protected status.
• I have the right to expect professional development and mentoring.
• I have the right to be informed of administrative changes that effect course/clerkship schedules and curricula well in advance of the start of the course/clerkship.

Violations of the Educator’s Code of Conduct

Should a learner experience conduct that is inconsistent with the Educator’s Code of Conduct, he/she is encouraged to first address the issue with either the colleague or educator who engaged in the behavior or the director of the course/clerkship in which the educator teaches. Should this attempt to resolve the problem fail, or if the nature of the behavior is such that the learner does not feel comfortable addressing the issue with either the educator or the course/clerkship director, the student should consult with the designated ombudsman to decide upon an appropriate course of action.

Adapted in part from “Medical Student Statement of Principles” University of California San Francisco School of Medicine and “The Educator’s Code of Conduct” Penn State College of Medicine Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. Used with permission.

http://www.medschool.ucsf.edu/professional_development/professionalism/honor_code.aspx