**NJMS Guide to Professional Conduct**

Students are expected to demonstrate professionalism as part of the requisite competencies for all courses in New Jersey Medical School. Since all of the attributes of professionalism cannot be tested on a written examination or an OSCE, patterns of behavior (as observed throughout the continuum of training and within the educational environment by faculty, staff, patients and residents) play an important role in making these determinations. The American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) defines professionalism in medicine as requiring the physician to serve the interests of the patient above his or her self-interest. Professionalism aspires to service, honor, altruism, respect for others, excellence, accountability, integrity and duty (SHARE AID). New Jersey Medical School celebrates these attributes in its students and expects the following behaviors at all times from students:

## 1. Characteristics and Responsibilities

* Attend required classes, laboratories, seminars, conferences, and clerkships unless you have an excused absence.
* Report all absences immediately to your course director and supervising physician.
* Complete all assignments accurately, thoroughly, legibly, and in a timely manner.
* Check email and WebCT regularly for course and school assignments and other school related obligations.
* Fulfill responsibilities to patients and healthcare professionals promptly.
* Be open, positive, truthful, and non-judgmental.
* Do not be arrogant, abusive, or condescending.
* Do not abuse alcohol or drugs.
* Dress in a neat, clean, professionally appropriate manner.
* Do not harass others physically, verbally, psychologically, or sexually.
* Do not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, disability, or sexual orientation.
* Use communal resources (equipment, supplies, and funds) responsibly and equitably.
* Adhere to regulations and policies such as those governing fire safety, hazardous waste disposal, and universal precautions.
* Avoid providing professional care to members of your family or intimate friends.
* Do not misrepresent or falsify actions and/or information (e.g. patient, laboratory tests, research data).
* Report any violations of the NJMS Honor Code to course director or Dean of Student Affairs.

### 2. Self-Improvement and Adaptability

* Acknowledge your strengths and weaknesses in the area of professional conduct.
* Identify ways to correct your weaknesses.
* Seek advice from faculty, peers, or others if you need help to make changes.
* Accept responsibility for errors. You are not expected to be perfect. Just acknowledge the error and take any necessary steps to correct the situation.

#### Do not react with abuse, anger, or defensiveness when receiving criticism.

#### Do not respond to criticism by blaming yourself or by blaming others

* Do respond to criticism with self-esteem: “Here’s a chance to learn something. I’ll ask for additional feedback, define the problem, and propose a solution.”
* Learn from experience so you won’t make the same mistake repeatedly—and so you will more quickly achieve professional competence.
* Explore your own feelings about topics such as cultural diversity, sexuality, spirituality, and death and dying so you can better deal with such topics.
* Maintain professional composure despite fatigue and stress.
* Do not be overly critical or verbally abusive during times of stress.
* Notify the responsible supervisor if anything interferes with your ability to perform clinical tasks effectively.
* Develop a support system, good dietary habits, recreation, disease prevention, exercise, and outside interests to optimize your physical and emotional health.

3. **Relationships With Patients**

* Establish rapport with patients and their families--and be sensitive to their feelings, needs, and wishes.
* Be considerate of each patient’s privacy and modesty, and respect each one’s cultural, psychological, and spiritual values.
* Treat patients with kindness, gentleness, empathy, and compassion.
* Do not have romantic or sexual relationships with patients or their family members.
* Be familiar with University Hospital’s “Patient’s Bill of Rights.”
* Clearly identify yourself and your level of training to patients and staff. (i.e., “I am a first-year medical student from New Jersey Medical School.”)
* Never be verbally or non-verbally rude, arrogant, or patronizing.
* Allow time for patients to give information, express opinions, and ask questions.
* Take time to answer questions from patients and their family members.
* Speak clearly and directly to the patient--and use words the patient can understand.
* Work with an interpreter whenever necessary.
* Resolve misunderstandings quickly.
* Obtain permission before doing anything that might be unpleasant or painful to the patient and warn the patient if a procedure will cause discomfort or pain.
* Share patient information only with members of the health care team that are involved in the patient’s care—and do so only where you will not be overheard (i.e. not in an elevator).
* Do not engage in unsupervised patient care in areas or situations where you are not adequately trained.

4. **Relationships With Healthcare Team Members**

* Function appropriately and cooperatively within the healthcare team.
* Exhibit verbal and non-verbal behavior that is not rude, arrogant, or patronizing.
* Be punctual, and apologize when late or give reason for being so.
* Speak clearly and directly to team members.
* Give specific, constructive, non-judgmental feedback to others.
* Identify and attempt to resolve misunderstandings.
* Accept and discuss emotional issues when appropriate.
* Complete assigned tasks or negotiate alternatives if unable to do so.
* Give prior notice of intended absence.
* Report research results honestly in scientific and scholarly presentations and publications.
* Give proper credit and responsibility to colleagues and others who participated in research when publishing and presenting reports.
* Identify team members who may need help due to stress or substance abuse.

Adapted from "A Strategy for the Detection and Evaluation of Unprofessional Behavior in Medical Students", Academic Medicine, Vol. 74, No. 9, September 1999, with the introduction adapted from the American Board of Internal Medicine Project Professionalism materials.

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