

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL STUDENT CODE OF HONORABLE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

I. PREAMBLE

In the tradition of high standards of professional and personal conduct described by Hippocrates, we, the students of the University of Mississippi School of Medicine, create this Code of Honorable and Professional Conduct. We have dedicated ourselves to the study and practice of medicine for the benefit of humanity. In order to maintain the altruistic spirit of this enterprise, we commit to uphold the principles in this Code. We will show, both within and without the university, respect for personal honor, morality, order, and the rights of others. It is our goal, through the principles outlined in this Code, to set standards and patterns of behavior that will serve us well in our growth toward excellence in the practice of medicine. Accordingly, students, faculty, and staff have collectively agreed to endorse the spirit of the standards set forth in this Code of Honorable and Professional Conduct.

II. PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY

A. Respect for patients

1. Medical students shall not accept patient care responsibility, perform any action, nor allow themselves to be identified in a manner that is beyond their level of training or competence; one shall ask for supervision when appropriate, assistance when necessary, and never allow patients or patients' families to believe that one is anything but a medical student.
2. The confidentiality of patient information must be maintained at all times. Medical and personal information about the patient should be shared only with health professionals directly involved in patient care. Students shall not disclose information to any individual without explicit consent, nor should they discuss patient care in public areas.
3. The written medical record is an important means of communication among health care providers and a legal document available for patient review. Therefore, all written medical documents, electronic records, and oral presentations pertaining to patients, must be legible, truthful, complete, and accurate to the best of students' knowledge and ability. Patient records and verbal communication about patients should not contain offensive or judgmental statements.
4. Medical students should demonstrate respect for their patients through language and actions, using non-threatening, non-sexual, and non-judgmental language and behavior. Relationships formed with patients and their families should be appropriate. A patient's privacy and modesty should be maintained as much as possible during history taking, physical examinations, and any other contact.
5. A medical student shall serve patients to the best of one's ability regardless of diagnosis, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, religion, or political beliefs.
6. A medical student shall not allow competitiveness with colleagues to adversely affect patient care.

B. Respect for colleagues, faculty, staff, and hospital personnel

1. A medical student shall actively engage in the prevention of hazing, racist behavior, defamation, coercion, threats, or other forms of harassment. Endangering the safety of others, physical or psychological abuse, or intimidation of any member of the UMSOM community or others using its facilities will not be tolerated.
2. A medical student shall demonstrate deference to those with superior knowledge, experience, or capabilities and shall respect the directives of one's superiors. However, students have the responsibility to seek changes in those requests that seem contrary to the wishes or best interests of the patient or contrary to the principles outlined in this Code.

3. A medical student shall make every effort to attend all clinical duties and to arrive on time to clinics, rounds, classes, and conferences. If one is expected, but unable to attend, every attempt must be made to notify the appropriate person of one's absence or tardiness.

4. Students shall respect their peers by fulfilling their responsibilities on clinical teams and collective projects.

C. Respect for community

Students are expected to recognize that laws are established for the benefit of society as a whole. Laws, policies, and regulations at the university, local, state, and federal levels are to be upheld. The UMSOM may proceed with disciplinary action whether or not civil or criminal proceedings have been instituted against the student, a right that may not be challenged solely on the grounds that the criminal charges have been dismissed or reduced.

D. Substance Abuse

1. A medical student shall strive to assist impaired colleagues to seek professional help and to accept such help if one is impaired.

2. A medical student will not participate in the care of patients while under the influence of substances that impair clear clinical judgment and/or the ability to care for patients.

III. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As a community, students, faculty, and administration, are responsible for ensuring that our academic environment is one that allows students to develop medical knowledge and skills to the best of our ability, realizing that the health and lives of the persons committed to our charge will depend on that knowledge and skill. The following, though not all-inclusive, outlines the minimum standards for maintaining academic integrity.

A. Student Responsibility

1. Students understand and appreciate the sacrifice of individuals who provided their bodies for the benefit of our learning, and, therefore, will treat cadavers with the greatest respect.

2. Medical students will display respect and professional courtesy to faculty and guest presenters.

3. Medical students will display respect and courtesy to colleagues by exhibiting appropriate decorum in classes, meetings, or functions, or otherwise interfering with the right of colleagues in the pursuit of their education.

4. Students will do their part to establish optimal conditions for academic integrity by maintaining academic integrity.

5. Any actions indicating a lack of integrity or dishonesty in academic matters is considered a violation of academic integrity. Actions that can be construed to be in violation of these standards include, but are not limited to: acquiring, giving, or receiving unfair assistance; utilizing unauthorized materials or information on examinations or assignments; plagiarism; violating the directions of an instructor regarding examinations or assignments; sabotaging another student's academic performance with intentional and malicious actions that include defacing, damaging, hiding, or removing without authorization any library materials or ancillary course materials; falsifying documents, including attendance records; falsifying, manipulating, or manufacturing data in academic, clinical, or research matters.

B. Faculty Responsibility

Because students and faculty are colleagues in the UMSOM medical community, the faculty shall strive to uphold and promote the conduct described in this Code.

III. PROMOTION OF HONORABLE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND REPORTING OF CODE INFRACTIONS

Our philosophy as medical students is to be responsible for our own actions and ourselves first, rather than to aggressively and unreasonably monitor our peers. As dishonorable actions threaten the people within our care, our program, our class, and our education, we accept the responsibility as a group that the principles of this Code and their spirit are upheld.

A. Responsibility to self

We recognize that personal accountability can be delegated to no higher authority than oneself. Accordingly, a medical student who feels he/she has committed a breach of this Code should approach his/her Medical Student Honor Council (MSHC) Representative, or any member of the MSHC Representative for counsel. The Representative, after consulting with the Prefect (see Section V, will determine whether a violation may have occurred and what action should be taken, ranging from no action to an investigation by the MSHC. The MSHC will give full consideration to the inherent honor in taking responsibility for one's actions.

B. Responsibility to colleagues

When a student or faculty member observes, suspects, or knows about dishonorable or unprofessional conduct, he/she should document and discuss it with the person(s) involved as soon as possible. The approach to the individual in question must be grounded in the presumption of innocence. If a person takes responsibility for an infraction of this Code, then he/she must be encouraged to contact a member of the MSHC as outlined in Section IV. Medical Students shall also strive to seek counsel from an objective party when encountering a situation of questionable violation.

A. If adequate explanation for the behavior is not offered, the questionable conduct must be reported to the MSHC via any of its members. This step of dialogue among peers is the most important aspect of the process as it promotes a sense of community responsibility for upholding the Code and diffuses frivolous accusations and misinterpretations of behavior. However, if a student or faculty member is unable to approach a student on his/her own, assistance may be sought from any member of the MSHC. Members of the medical school community are encouraged to avoid the unnecessary disclosure of information regarding a suspected violation of this Code to students, faculty, staff, or the administration. This measure helps to ensure due process and strict confidentiality for the students involved. Students and faculty should avail themselves of the process elaborated in this Code in order to maintain presumption of innocence and confidentiality until a violation has been substantiated

C. Responsibility to community

The students, faculty, and administration all share in the responsibility to create an optimal environment for learning, ethics, and professionalism. If a student believes that procedures are in effect that create a temptation to violate the Code, the student should discuss the matter with a MSHC Representative for counsel and referral to the appropriate person. If a student believes he/she has witnessed a member of the University Of Mississippi School Of Medicine engaging in behavior that is contrary to the best interests of a patient or contrary to the principles outlined in this Code, any MSHC member may be approached for counsel and referral to the appropriate person.

V. THE MEDICAL STUDENT HONOR COUNCIL (MSHC or Council)

A. Members

1. Prefect: a) The Prefect shall be the Senior Class President. The Prefect must have at least, if not more, than one year of service on the MSHC. The new Prefect will assume position and responsibilities on the first day following graduation of the Senior Class; the term of office is one academic year. b) The Prefect will direct and be responsible for the performance of all duties and functions of the MSHC and its members. The Prefect will be responsible for the orientation of all new students to the Code of Honorable and Professional Conduct. c) The Prefect with the help of the representative of the class of the alleged violator will determine whether any suspected violations warrant a preliminary hearing for further discussion and action by the MSHC. A decision to entertain an investigation in to an alleged incident shall be made by The Prefect of the MSHC in conjunction with the Dean of Academic Affairs d) The Prefect will chair the Investigating Committee. e) The Prefect is a voting member of the MSHC. f) The Prefect may appear as representative of the MSHC to Dean's meetings and Promotions Committee meetings, as requested.

2. Vice-Prefect: a) The Vice-Prefect shall be the Senior Class Vice-President. The new Vice-Prefect will assume the position and responsibilities on the first day following graduation of the Senior Class; the term of office is one academic year. b) The Vice-Prefect shall help the Prefect in his/her duties. c) The Vice-Prefect shall assume the full responsibilities of the Prefect in his/her absence.

2. Clerk: The Clerk shall be the Junior Class President; the term of office is one academic year. The Clerk shall assist the Prefect in the performance of his/her duties and will prepare and preserve a written record of all proceedings and actions by the Council. It is the duty of the Clerk to deliver notice of all such proceedings and actions to the appropriate persons and to maintain records of the MSHC. The Clerk will assume full administrative powers and duties of the Prefect in the absence of both the Prefect and Vice-Prefect. Under these conditions, the acting Prefect will choose a Clerk from the remaining class representatives to the MSHC.

3. Class Representatives: The Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Junior Class, Sophomore Class and Freshman class shall all be members of the MSHC. The Voting members include the Prefect, Vice-Prefect, Clerk, the Vice-President of the Junior class, and the President of the Sophomore Class. The Vice-President of the Sophomore class, President and Vice-President of the Freshman class shall be a non-voting members of the council. Each representative must be a student in good standing; the term of office is one academic year. The duties of the MSHC Representatives will be to follow specified procedures as outlined by the Code of Honorable and Professional Conduct.

4. Faculty Advisers: There will be one faculty adviser, appointed by the MSHC. The faculty adviser must be a listed faculty member and is subject to approval by the Dean of the School of Medicine. The faculty adviser shall be appointed to the position in the academic year prior to the year of service. The faculty adviser shall be in term for three academic years. A faculty adviser cannot serve more than two (2) successive terms. The faculty adviser will act as adviser to the MSHC and will participate as a non-voting member in all Council proceedings. The faculty adviser will serve as a liaison to the administration and faculty.

5. Alternate Faculty Representatives: An alternate faculty adviser shall be chosen by the MSHC, who will serve as adviser to the council in the absence of the Faculty Adviser. The alternate faculty adviser is subject to approval by the Dean of the School of Medicine. The alternate faculty adviser shall be appointed to the position in the academic year prior to the year of service. The alternate faculty adviser shall be in term for one academic year. The alternate faculty adviser will act as adviser to the MSHC and will participate as a non-voting member in all Council proceedings. The alternate faculty adviser will serve as a liaison to the administration and faculty.

Adopted by the Medical Student Council, May 11, 2009.

Approved by the School of Medicine Dean's Council, June 22, 2009.

Presented to Executive Faculty, July 21, 2009.