

Medical Professionalism at Creighton University School of Medicine

Preamble

Medical education and patient care at Creighton University are critically dependent on the commitment of students and faculty to professional values that are anchored in the Catholic and Jesuit tradition of being women and men for others. These professional values include altruism, accountability, excellence, duty, honor and integrity, respect, compassion, and a special emphasis on social justice.

Beginning with the admissions process, our medical education environment fosters a lifelong commitment to professionalism by stimulating critical and creative thinking and by providing ethical perspectives for an increasingly complex world.

THE COMPONENTS OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALISM

Altruism lies at the core of professionalism and entails putting the interests of others before one's own. The interests of the patient must be paramount. Serving the poor and disenfranchised is the hallmark of altruism in the Jesuit tradition.

Accountability means that medical professionals are responsible to their patients, colleagues, and society. Medical students are accountable to fellow students and teachers by preparing for and participating actively in their educational activities. In addition, students are responsible for maintaining and improving the quality of teaching by constructively evaluating the curriculum to ensure the best possible education for current and future students. Upholding the ethical standards of the profession includes being prepared to report the professional misconduct of others.

Excellence is a conscientious commitment to life-long learning and to honest self-assessment to assure the highest quality of medicine. For the medical professional, it means continuing to gain and share knowledge of clinical medicine and biomedical research to improve the welfare of patients and the public's health. For the student, the pursuit of excellence begins with the first day of medical school and includes a commitment to innovative, integrated and values-centered learning, research, and patient care.

Duty is the commitment of oneself to both the service of others and to one's own personal development. For the medical professional and the student, it means advocating for and being responsive to patients and others in need, particularly those whom society marginalizes by reason of their economic and social status, age, mental or physical impairment, and/or ethnic, racial, religious, sexual, or gender status. It also means being involved in professional organizations and community programs and not participating in activities that compromise objectivity and the well-being of patients and society. In addition, duty entails paying attention to one's spiritual, mental, and physical well-being. It also involves an appreciation of the importance of maintaining a balance among personal, family, and professional areas as a way to remain healthy and to maintain a proper perspective.

Honor and integrity constitute the highest moral standards of behavior and adherence to personal and professional ethical codes. The standards include truthfulness, fairness, and fidelity to one's words and commitments. The medical professional must avoid all conflicts of interest. For students, honesty demands genuine representation of themselves and their credentials, meticulous adherence to the student honor code, and the rejection of any actions that compromise the welfare and development of their colleagues.

Respect for others first and foremost demands recognition and reverence for the human dignity of patients and their families. For both the medical professional and the student, it means adhering to the canons of medical ethics. This includes patient involvement in decision-making, confidentiality, fully informing the patient, never abusing power, and acting always for the best interests of the patient. Additionally, the medical professional and student must show sensitivity to gender, age, culture, religion and other aspects of diversity among patients, families, and colleagues.

Compassion means having empathy for and bringing reassurance and care to patients and their families. For medical professionals and the student it is an indispensable element of professionalism and an integral element of healing. Caring and emotional support are necessary especially for patients with incurable illness.