As a part of your learning, you will have privileged access to people, and to their health information. The trust that people place in doctors carries considerable responsibility and expectations regarding your behaviour. It is important that you are aware of these responsibilities and expectations from the beginning of your medical training. Any breach of these expectations could result in serious repercussions for you, your continuing medical education and your later career. Your University is committed to support you to uphold this Code and to assist you throughout your studies, and encourages you to know where and how to access available support services.

You should think of yourself as a doctor-in-training, rather than as a student in theoretical studies. Though the degree of your involvement with patients, families and the wider community may initially be small, from now on you will be meeting people as part of your education as a doctor. As you progress through your training you will be increasingly part of the health care team. You represent the Medical School, and the medical profession, whenever you meet people in this way. Your behaviour outside the clinical environment, including your personal life, may have an impact on your fitness to practise. Your behaviour should justify the trust the public places in the medical profession. The following principles therefore apply right from the start. We ask that you read through these principles and sign this document acknowledging your agreement to comply with them. This form must be signed before you can begin your medical education.

Notes:
1. These standards apply when using electronic communications. Special care is required to ensure patient confidentiality.  
2. Caution is necessary when sharing your own personal information on social networking sites.  
3. The term 'will' is used to indicate that the associated statement sets a minimum standard that is expected of all medical students. The term 'should' is more aspirational and reflects a standard that the Medical School aims to promote and nurture, and students should aim to meet.  
4. This code applies in NZ and overseas, and also applies to overseas medical students in NZ.  
4. This code operates in conjunction with current Acts, Regulations and Codes of Practice that you will need to become familiar with during your training. These include the NZMA Code of Ethics, the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers’ Rights (1996), and the Health Information Privacy Code (1994).

A. Interactions with patients and their families
1. Respecting patients and their families:
   As a medical student I will:
   1.1. Respect the dignity, privacy and bodily integrity of patients.  
   1.2. Understand my own values and beliefs, and manage their possible influence on my interactions with patients.  
   1.3. Not impose my own cultural values, beliefs and practices on patients or discriminate against any person on the basis (for example) of age, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, creed, political affiliation, economic, social or health status.
1.4. Respect the autonomy of patients.
1.5. Treat patients and their families politely and considerately.
1.6. Ensure my appearance and dress are appropriate to enable effective and respectful interaction with patients and families.
1.7. Respect the needs and values of patients and their family members.

2. Not exploiting patients or their families:

As a medical student I will:
2.1. Not exploit any patient, whether physically, sexually, emotionally, or financially. Any sexual interaction with a patient is unacceptable.
2.2. Not abuse the generosity of patients in my pursuit of learning but place concerns for their wellbeing above all else.
2.3. Acknowledge the generosity of patients in my pursuit of learning and be conscious of the possible tensions between their wellbeing and my own learning.

3. Obtaining informed consent for your interaction with patients:

While your clinical supervisor is responsible for obtaining consent for your interaction with patients, in many circumstances you may still need to ask patients for their permission for their one-on-one interaction with you. As a medical student I will:
3.1. Clearly inform patients and where applicable substitute decision makers of my role and the purpose and nature of any proposed interaction with them, and follow the guidance in the document ‘Medical Students and Informed Consent’.
3.2. Ask patients if they have any questions and, if I am unable to answer them, refer the questions to my clinical supervisor.
3.3. Check if patients are satisfied with the information, request their consent, and ensure that consent is given freely and without coercion.
3.4. Acknowledge and accept that patients may refuse or withdraw consent to interact with me at any stage, without any compromise to their health care.
3.5. Make a special effort to assist the patient to reach the necessary level of understanding, for example where the patient is a child, or when language, illness or other factors interfere.
3.6. Be guided in my actions by ethical and legal standards and my clinical supervisor where patients are unable to consent, for example in the case of a child.

4. Appreciating the limits of my role:

As a medical student I will:
4.1. Acknowledge the level of my skills, experience and knowledge, and not represent myself as more competent or qualified than I am and correct any such misunderstandings that arise.
4.2. Not give advice or provide information to patients, family members or the general public, which is beyond my level of knowledge and expertise. When asked for such comment, I will direct that person to an appropriate professional.
4.3. Not initiate any form of treatment, except in an emergency where no-one more able or qualified is available to provide timely intervention and recognising the limits of my own knowledge and skills.
4.4. When otherwise approached for assistance, recommend that people seek appropriate professional help.

B. Personal and professional values

5. Maintaining patient confidentiality:

Patient information is confidential. Disclosure without patients’ permission or other legally acceptable justification is inconsistent with the trust required in medical practice and has the potential to cause harm. Patient information may be discussed with peers and professional staff who are directly involved in the care of that patient, and, on occasion with colleagues in a setting where confidentiality is protected.
As a medical student I will:

5.1. Hold all patient information in confidence, including after patients have ended treatment or died.
5.2. Respect patients’ right to determine who should be provided with their personal information.
5.3. Not remove or copy patient-related material without specific permission, and handle such material in accordance with 5.4.
5.4. Ensure that all my documents and images containing patient information are de-identified, kept in a secure place in a way that prevents unauthorised access, and securely destroyed when no longer required.3
5.5. Be aware of the limited circumstances in which breaches of confidentiality may be justified or required.
5.6. Not access patient information unless I am involved in their care, or have a legitimate reason and permission from those authorised to give such permission.

6. Researching ethically:
As a medical student undertaking or associated with research activities I will:

6.1. Adhere to all the ethical principles in the appropriate national guidelines and seek ethical approval from the appropriate research ethics committee.

7. Maintaining personal well being:
As a medical student I will:

7.1. Acknowledge that my physical and mental health impacts on my ability to function in my role with patients and staff, and in the event of illness or impairment that interferes with this role, I will seek appropriate assistance and notify the Student Affairs Office (Otago), or Phase Directors (Auckland).
7.2. Maintain my own wellbeing to the level that ensure I can carry out my role.
7.3. Remain aware of the wellbeing of my colleagues, and support them, to the extent that I am able, to seek help when needed.

C. Relationships with staff and colleagues
8. Respecting staff and colleagues:
As a medical student I will:

8.1. Show respect to doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and all other members of the health care team.
8.2. Show respect to teaching and non-teaching staff.
8.3. Show respect to simulated patients, volunteers and peers.
8.4. Not exploit my peers, or others, in a vulnerable or more junior position to myself.
8.5. Hold in confidence information about my peers gathered in learning situations, but recognise that there are limited circumstances in which breaches of confidentiality to appropriate persons may be justified.

D. Commitment to professional standards and continuing improvement in self and others
9. Holding a positive attitude to learning:
As a medical student I will:

9.1. Commit to continued learning and the development of skills.
9.2. Recognise that my learning needs are valid and important.
9.3. Be prepared to seek and respond to constructive feedback on my own performance.
9.4. Where barriers exist for learning opportunities, identify these and notify my academic supervisor.
9.5. Act with integrity in all learning and assessment situations.
9.6. Not plagiarise another’s work or research and will abide by the plagiarism and dishonest practice policies of my university.
9.7. Show respect in working with human cadavers and human tissue. (See the Code of Conduct issued by the Anatomy Department at the relevant University)

As a medical student I should:
9.8. Care for my peers, provide support in learning opportunities, and work collaboratively and respectfully in all situations.
9.9. Be prepared, when called upon, to provide constructive feedback to my peers on their performance.
9.10. Make the most of educational and clinical opportunities to extend my knowledge and further my skills with appropriate support and supervision.

10. Accepting wider professional responsibilities:
Doctors have a responsibility to the profession and to the public to maintain high standards of care; this wider responsibility is over and above individual responsibility for their own clinical competence.

As a medical student, I will:
10.1. Report matters of serious concern in a professional manner, including those which may impact on immediate patient safety, to those with the authority to act.
10.2. Not use social networking sites or public forums to raise concerns about an individual.
10.3. Not exploit my role as a student doctor for personal gain.
10.4. Give judicious, constructive evaluation and feedback as appropriate on medical education programmes.
10.5. Be aware that alcohol and substance misuse may impact on health and fitness to practise, and may cross the boundaries of legality, which becomes a professional conduct issue.

References
1. Medical students: professional values and fitness to practise Guidance from the GMC and the MSC. Available from: http://www.gmc-uk.org/education/undergraduate/professionalBehaviour.asp

I have read the Code and I undertake to comply with it.
I agree to familiarise myself with any subsequent revisions.

Family name: _____________________________ (Block Letters)

Given name: ____________________________

Date: ___________________ Student Number____________________

Signature: _____________________________