



## **Code of Professional Conduct for Medical Students at the Universities of Auckland and Otago**

In learning to be a doctor you are required to meet certain professional responsibilities and expectations. These arise from your increasing involvement with patients, whānau and the wider community as your learning progresses on your way to becoming a doctor. In particular, as you learn to be a doctor in Aotearoa/New Zealand it is important to recognise your obligations to uphold Māori rights under te Tiriti o Waitangi. Our position within the Pacific region and our formal relationships with Pacific Island nations also require a commitment to Pacific peoples. As healthcare professionals, we must strive to achieve equitable health outcomes for all, particularly Māori and Pacific Peoples. Patients and whānau place significant trust in the medical profession and also in those learning to be a doctor. Whenever you meet people, you represent the Medical School, the University, and the medical profession. Your behaviour both within and outside of the clinical environment should uphold the reputation of the medical profession that you are joining.<sup>1</sup>

This Code sets out basic principles that are central to these responsibilities and expectations. It is important that you are aware of these principles from the beginning of your learning in medicine. It is important that you familiarise yourself with this Code so that you are aware of what your responsibilities are, and what is expected of you. These principles form the basis of your professional development and will inform the assessment of your professional practice during your time at medical school. Your University is committed to supporting you in upholding this Code and encourages you to know where and how to access specialist support services. Any breach of these standards could undermine patient trust in the medical school and medical profession.

We ask that you read through this Code and sign the form below to acknowledge your commitment to comply with the principles in it. This form must be signed before you can begin learning to be a doctor.

### *Notes:*

- These principles apply to all communications and interactions as a learner in medicine, including electronic communications. Special care is required to ensure patient confidentiality.<sup>2</sup> Caution is necessary when sharing your own personal information and/or that of colleagues on social networking sites.<sup>3</sup>
- This code applies in NZ and overseas, and also applies to overseas medical students in NZ.
- This code operates in conjunction with current Acts, Regulations and Codes of Practice that you will need to become familiar with during your learning. These include the [MCNZ Good Medical Practice \(2016\)](#), and all relevant Medical Council Statements, the [Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights \(1996\)](#), the [Privacy Act \(2020\)](#), the [Health Information Privacy Code \(2020\)](#), the [Health Practitioner Competence Assurance Act \(2003\)](#) and the [NZMA Code of Ethics](#).

## **A. Interactions with patients and their whānau**

### **1. Respecting patients and their whānau:**

*As a medical student I will:*

- 1.1. Treat patients and their whānau respectfully and considerately.
- 1.2. Establish meaningful connections with patients and their whānau using whakawhanaungatanga.
- 1.3. Recognise that cultural safety requires me to reflect on how my own views and biases impact on clinical interactions and the care I provide to patients.
- 1.4. Respect the worldviews, values and cultural beliefs of patients and their whānau members.

- 1.5. Not impose my own cultural values, beliefs and practices on patients or discriminate against any person on the basis (for example) of age, sex, gender identity, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, creed, political affiliation, economic, social or health status.
- 1.6. Respect the dignity, privacy, tikanga and the right of patients to exercise control over their own body.
- 1.7. Respect the autonomy of patients.
- 1.8. Ensure my presentation and attire are appropriate to enable effective and respectful interaction with patients and whānau.

## **2. Not exploiting patients:**

*As a medical student I will:*

- 2.1. Prioritise patient wellbeing in pursuit of my learning.
- 2.2. Not exploit any patient, whether physically, sexually, emotionally, or financially. Any sexual interaction with a patient is unacceptable.

## **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. Follow the guidance in the document 'Medical Students and Informed Consent'<sup>4</sup>.*

*As a medical student I will:*

- 3.1. Ensure that patients and their substitute decision makers (where applicable) are aware of my role and the purpose and nature of any proposed interaction with them.
- 3.2. Acknowledge and accept that patients may refuse or withdraw consent to interact with me at any stage, without any compromise to their health care.
- 3.3. Recognise the role of whānau in supporting the patient's decision making processes.

## **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, whānau or the general public, that 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 under supervision or 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.

## **B. Personal and professional expectations**

### **5. Acting honestly, reliably and with integrity**

*As a medical student I will:*

- 5.1. Take responsibility for my own actions and inactions.
- 5.2. Be punctual and notify where this is not possible.
- 5.3. Meet deadlines, negotiating variations where appropriate.
- 5.4. Abide by the academic integrity policies of my university and not plagiarise another's work or research.
- 5.5. Be accountable for completing tasks.
- 5.6. Complete documents accurately and truthfully.

### **6. 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 and/or distress. 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:*

- 6.1. Hold all patient information in confidence, including after patients have ended treatment or died.
- 6.2. Respect patients' right to determine who should be provided with their personal information.
- 6.3. Not remove or copy patient-related material without specific permission, and handle such material in accordance with 6.4.
- 6.4. 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.<sup>3</sup>
- 6.5. Be aware of the limited circumstances in which breaches of confidentiality may be justified or required.
- 6.6. 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.

## **7. Accepting responsibilities to the profession:**

*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:*

- 7.1. Report matters of serious concern in a timely and professional manner, including those which may impact on immediate patient safety, to those with the authority to act.
- 7.2. Be respectful and careful when using social networking sites or public forums.
- 7.3. Not exploit my role as a medical student for personal gain.
- 7.4 Give constructive evaluation and feedback as appropriate on medical education programmes.

## **C. Relationships with staff and colleagues**

### **8. Respecting staff and colleagues:**

*As a medical student I will:*

- 8.1. Show respect to all members of the health care team and ancillary staff.
- 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, particularly those in a vulnerable or more junior position to myself.
- 8.5. Hold in confidence information about my peers and staff 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 continuing improvement in practice, self and others**

### **9. Research and system quality improvement :**

*As a medical student undertaking or associated with research or system quality improvement activities I will:*

- 9.1. Adhere to all the ethical principles in the appropriate national guidelines. Ensure I have appropriate ethical oversight and any required consultation and ethical processes.

### **10. Maintaining personal well being:**

*As a medical student I will:*

- 10.1. Attend to my own health and wellbeing.
- 10.2. Acknowledge that my physical and psychological health impacts on my ability to function in my role with patients and staff.

- 10.3. Promptly seek appropriate assistance and notify the Student Affairs Office (Otago), or Director of Medical Student Affairs (Auckland) in the event that illness or impairment interferes with my ability to carry out my role, or my ability to learn,
- 10.4. Be aware that misuse of substances (including alcohol) impacts on health and fitness to practise, and may cross the boundaries of legality, which becomes a professional conduct issue.
- 10.5. Remain aware of the wellbeing of my colleagues, and support them, to the extent that I am able, to seek help when needed.

### **11. Holding a positive attitude to learning:**

*As a medical student I will:*

- 11.1. Commit to continued learning and the development of skills.
- 11.2. Recognise that my learning needs are valid and important.
- 11.3. Be prepared to seek and respond to constructive feedback on my own performance.
- 11.4. Identify barriers that impede my learning and notify my academic supervisor.
- 11.5. Show respect and observe tikanga in working with human cadavers, human tissue and animal tissue.<sup>5</sup>
- 11.6. Engage in self reflection to enable me to identify my learning needs.
- 11.7. Actively engage to make the most of educational and clinical opportunities to extend my knowledge and further my skills with appropriate support and supervision.
- 11.8. Care for my peers, provide support in learning opportunities, and work collaboratively and respectfully in all situations.
- 11.9. Be prepared, when called upon, to provide constructive feedback to my peers on their performance.

### References

1. Medical Council New Zealand (2020) Unprofessional Behaviour Available from: [www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/standards/e4ddbfd758/Statement-on-unprofessional-behaviour.pdf](http://www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/standards/e4ddbfd758/Statement-on-unprofessional-behaviour.pdf)
2. A Guide to Social Media & Medical Professionalism (2019). Available from: [https://ama.com.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020%20AMA%20Social%20Media%20Guide%20FINAL\\_0.pdf](https://ama.com.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020%20AMA%20Social%20Media%20Guide%20FINAL_0.pdf)
3. Taking and sharing images of patients policy documents from the relevant University.
4. Bagg, W., et al. (2015) 'Medical Students and informed consent' NZMJ Vol 128 No 1414.
5. Code of Conduct issued by the Anatomy Department at the relevant University.

December 2010, Reviewed 2013, 2015, 2020. Date for next review 2025.

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I have read the Code. I undertake to comply with it and seek clarification on any areas of uncertainty.  
I agree to familiarise myself with any subsequent revisions.

Family name: \_\_\_\_\_ (BLOCK LETTERS)

Given name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_