

Dalhousie Medical School Professionalism Policy

(Approved by Faculty Council – February 3, 2009)

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Introduction

Dalhousie Medical School is committed to creating an environment that is optimal for learning, teaching, conducting research and providing clinical care. To achieve and sustain this, Dalhousie Medical School expects students, residents, faculty, administration and staff to display professionalism, individually and collectively, in all their interactions with each other, with patients and families/significant others, with colleagues in other professions, and with members of the public when acting under the auspices of Dalhousie University.

Physicians and scientists have privileged positions in society. Professionalism is central to the ethos of both the practice of medicine and conduct of research and an expression of our commitment to patients and society.

The following principles of professionalism and examples given below are not intended to be exhaustive. They are articulated and described to guide us in our actions and interactions with others.

Respect for others

Professionals demonstrate consideration and respect for others including patients, their families and support persons, colleagues, learners, staff, teachers, other professionals and the public.

- We do not allow our conduct to negatively impact on others' learning or clinical activities.
- We do not discriminate against others on the basis of such grounds as age, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, ethnicity, political beliefs, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity.
- We demonstrate respect for the dignity and rights of patients and their families or support persons, considering their diversities, both in their presence and in discussion with other members of the healthcare team.
- We accept and promote patient autonomy in decision-making, and when the patient lacks capacity, we consult with and appropriately take direction from surrogate decision-makers.
- We respect the personal boundaries of others including refraining from making inappropriate comments, or unwanted romantic or sexual overtures towards others.
- We communicate respectfully with and among students, faculty, staff and administration verbally, in writing and online/social media.
- We respect the privacy and confidentiality of those to whom we owe that duty.

Honesty and Integrity

Professionals demonstrate adherence to the highest standards of personal, professional and academic honesty and integrity.

- We communicate truthfully with others verbally, in writing and online/social media.
- We do not falsify documents or records.
- We acknowledge and manage conflicts of interest appropriately, avoiding where possible and otherwise acknowledge and appropriately manage conflicts of interest, real or apparent..
- We admit and disclose errors and our contribution to conflict.
- We make accurate records of conversations, histories, physical findings and other information pertinent to patient care.
- We do not engage in plagiarism, nor do we give or receive assistance during an examination or in completion of an assignment unless such is expressly permitted.
- We conduct research in an ethical manner, analyzing and reporting results accurately and fairly.
- We credit the ideas and work of others appropriately and fairly.

Compassion and Empathy

Professionals demonstrate compassion and empathy for those in distress and especially for patients, their families and support persons.

- We demonstrate effective listening.
- We are aware of and respectful of others' differences and respond appropriately to their needs.
- We show compassion and provide support for patients, their families and support persons dealing with illness and/or dying and death.

Duty and Responsibility

Professionals acknowledge their duties to patients, their profession and society and accept the responsibilities that flow from these duties.

- We attend to patients' best interests and well-being as the first priority.
- We work cooperatively with others for the benefit of our patients and contribute to a healthy working environment for all.
- We make equitable and prudent use of healthcare resources under our control.
- We are responsible to society for matters relating to public health.
- We recognize and adhere appropriately to policies, codes, guidelines, and laws that govern us and our work.ⁱ
- We participate in the process of self-regulation of the profession.
- We address misconduct, incompetence, or behaviours that put patients or others at risk.
- We share resources and expertise and assume responsibility for our portion of a fairly distributed workload. Where issues of fair distribution arise, we act most immediately in the patient's best interests, and seek to resolve issues of fairness through appropriate channels.
- We respond in an appropriate, non-judgmental and non-demeaning manner when our expertise is sought.

- We do not take advantage of colleagues, learners, patients, their families or support persons, or others for emotional, financial, sexual or other personal purposes, and we conduct research and educational activities with these groups only with appropriate informed consent.
- We fulfill commitments, meet deadlines, and are punctual particularly where these behaviours have significant impact on others. Where we are unable to do so, we communicate appropriately to mitigate any negative impacts.
- We engage in lifelong learning, maintain clinical competence, and strive for continuous quality improvement.
- We take appropriate and necessary responsibility for our personal health and wellbeing.
- We recognize our own limitations and seek assistance appropriately.
- We display dress, behaviour and demeanor in the educational and healthcare setting in keeping with appropriate pedagogical, clinical, or safety standards.

ⁱ This policy is intended to complement Canadian law, policies, guidelines and codes of conduct established for the profession of medicine, and other policies, regulations and ethical standards that govern students, residents, faculty and staff of Dalhousie University, the Faculty of Medicine, the Undergraduate Medical Education program and all Postgraduate (Residency Training) Medical Education programs.

For reference, these documents and resources include but are not limited to the following:

- Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada CanMEDS Physician Competency Framework: <https://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/canmeds/canmeds-framework-e>
- College of Family Physicians of Canada Four Principles Family Medicine: <https://www.cfpc.ca/en/about-us/vision-mission-principles#four>
- Standards and Guidelines of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia: <https://cpsns.ns.ca/standards-guidelines/>
- Canadian Medical Association Code of Ethics & Professionalism: <https://www.cma.ca/cma-code-ethics-and-professionalism>
- Dalhousie University's Student Code of Conduct, Policy on Scholarly Integrity, and other relevant Dalhousie University policies: <http://www.registrar.dal.ca/calendar/ug/UREG.htm#15>
- Dalhousie University Office of the Vice Provost, Equity & Inclusion: <https://www.dal.ca/dept/vpei/hres.html>
- On Being a Scientist: Responsible Conduct in Research http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=4917
- Teaching the Responsible Conduct of Research in Humans (RCRH): <https://ori.hhs.gov/education/products/ucla/default.htm>