Guide to professional behaviour for undergraduate Health Sciences students

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Description

Guide to Behaviour

Name

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Description

The general rules for students in the faculty states that “students doing clinical work are expected to act in accordance with the ethical norms laid down by the Health Professions Council of South Africa”. This guide sets out the behaviour expected of all health sciences students in their personal and professional lives and in the presence of patients and their families. The intention of the guide is to encourage students to maintain high standards in their personal and professional lives and to strive to uphold, in their behaviour, the high esteem in which health professionals are viewed.

UCT Faculty of Health Sciences aims to develop distinctive qualities in all its graduates. These qualities are based on the CANMeds Framework. The Faculty aims to produce Expert Health Professionals who have the qualities of:

- Communicator
- Collaborator
- Manager
- Health advocate
- Scholar
- Professional

The Faculty expects its students to:

- Learn the knowledge and understanding of the scientific, philosophical, ethical and legal principles underlying the practice of patient-centred care and demonstrate the ability to apply that knowledge and understanding to problem-solving in the health care environment;
- Acquire the ability to work as an effective member of a health care team through understanding and respecting the roles of other health professionals and work collaboratively through appropriate interprofessional and interdisciplinary relationships in the interests of delivering a high level of patient care; and
- Be committed to forming appropriate partnerships with patients through respecting their cultural, ethnic, age, gender, sexual orientation and socioeconomic origins in order to optimise their health and the care they are offered.
- The following areas of general behaviour, dress, academic and clinical training, relationships with patients, relationships with colleagues, clinical practice and social media are presented as a guide in developing professional qualities.

General Behaviour

Heading

General Behaviour

Sub-heading

Code
1

Description
Students need to be aware that their behaviour outside the clinical environment, including in their personal lives impacts on both their clinical and academic work and may have an impact on the confidence that their patients and their teachers have in them and their fitness to practice.
Students are expected to be polite, honest, compassionate and trustworthy and act with integrity. This includes being honest when conducting research, writing reports and logbooks signing attendance registers and when completing and signing forms. Students need to be aware of plagiarism and report it when observed in others.
Students need to be present and punctual for all formally arranged learning opportunities and assessments or provide medical or other valid reasons for their absences.

Note

Dress Code

Heading
Dress Code

Sub-heading

Code
2

Description
Students are expected to dress appropriately, particularly when they are in contact with patients. Students are expected to:
(a) Be tidy, clean and neat;
(b) Refrain from wearing very casual or inappropriate clothes (no bare midriffs, shorts, short skirts or slipslops);
(c) Refrain from sporting hairstyles and jewellery that may offend patients and their families;
(d) Maintain a high standard of personal hygiene; and
(e) Wear uniforms or clean white coats where appropriate.

Note

Academic and clinical training

Heading
Academic and clinical training

Sub-heading

Code
3

Description
Students need to take responsibility for their own learning and to maintain their learning and skills throughout their careers. This means that they need to keep up to date and practice as much as possible the skills that they are taught.

Health sciences professionals learn through seeing procedures done, trying these skills under supervision or in a clinical skills laboratory and then practising the skills in a clinical environment under supervision until they are skilled enough to do these alone. Students are expected to gain as much clinical proficiency as they can.

Students are expected to:

(a) Attend all structured teaching and learning sessions (lectures, tutorials, clinics, ward rounds, after-hours duties, laboratory sessions etc);
(b) Complete all assignments and written work on time;
(c) Show respect for the knowledge and skills of their teachers and others involved in their learning;
(d) Behave with courtesy towards teachers, administrators and support staff;
(e) Reflect on the feedback they are given about their behaviour and performance and respond appropriately;
(f) Respond to communication, whether this be in connection with patient care or their own education; and
(g) Give constructive feedback on the quality of their learning and teaching.

Note

Relationship with patients

Heading

Relationship with patients

Sub-heading

Code

4

Description

Health sciences students have extensive contact with patients and their families throughout the clinical years of their training. Patients generally look upon the students as part of the health care team. This places responsibilities upon the student to behave in a manner that earns the respect of patients.

Students are expected to:

(a) Be respectful, polite and considerate towards everyone including patients, their escorts, community members, staff and fellow students;
(b) Greet patients politely and address them appropriately being mindful of age differences and sensitive to the cultural context;
(c) Build relationships with patients and their families based on honesty, openness, trust and good communication;
(d) Maintain a professional boundary between themselves, their patients and anyone else close to the patient;
(e) Ensure that patients or their caregivers give their informed consent for any activity performed by the student on the patient;
(f) Ensure that they are adequately supervised when performing any procedures on patients;
(g) Be aware of the rights of the patient and respect the decisions made by patients;
(h) Not unfairly discriminate against patients nor allow personal views to affect the treatment that they provide. (This includes views about ethnic origin, race, age, colour, culture, gender, sex, religious beliefs, political orientation, lifestyle, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, social and economic status etc).
(i) Ensure that they maintain patient confidentiality and not discuss the patient with anyone not directly involved in the patient's care;
(j) Be aware of ethical issues in relation to the care of the patient;
(k) Ensure that they are clearly identified as students;
(l) Be aware of their own limitations in relation to the care of the patient and refer to their supervisors; and
(m) Ensure the protection of their own health when treating patients.

Note

Relationship with colleagues

Heading

Relationship with colleagues

Sub-heading

Code

5

Description

Teamwork is key to the work of the health professional. Health professional students have to be able to work effectively with their colleagues in order to deliver a high standard of care and ensure patient safety. Students need to develop skills to work in multi-disciplinary teams, offering respect for the skills of other members of the team and developing effective communication with all members of the health care team.

Note

Clinical Practice

Heading

Clinical Practice

Sub-heading

Code

6

Description

Being able to provide a high standard of clinical care is key to becoming a health professional.
Students are expected to:

(a) Recognise and work within the limits of their competence and ask for assistance when necessary;
(b) Be honest with patients and accurately represent their position as students;
(c) Ensure that they are appropriately supervised;
(d) Ensure that the treatment offered is based on clinical need;
(e) Be aware of scarce resources and not waste these;
(f) Maintain high standards of clinical practice;
(g) Raise concerns with the relevant authorities when clinical standards that could compromise patient or others safety are not upheld.

Note

Social Media

Heading

Social media

Sub-heading

Code

7

Description

Social media has grown phenomenally over the past few years. It has become common for health care professionals to use blogging, personal websites and online social networking in both their professional and personal lives. While social media is a useful tool, health professionals need to be aware of the risks, particularly to patient confidentiality and the blurring of professional and private boundaries that is posed by social media. Once information is posted on social media, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to remove and can spread beyond an individual's control. Inappropriate online activities can have a detrimental effect on relationships with colleagues, patients, employment prospects and personal integrity.

Be aware of:

(a) Maintaining confidentiality – do not post information about patients (living or deceased), colleagues or teachers on social media (even when names are removed), regardless if this communication is only meant for colleagues or other health professionals.

(b) Refraining from defaming others – defamation is the publication, declaration or broadcast of material that is capable of lowering a person in the estimation of others, thereby damaging the reputation of the subject. Do not re-post material about others that can be defamatory. Do not post comments that can harm the reputation of colleagues or the profession or jeopardise your future as a health professional.

(c) Doctor-patient boundaries – social media allows patients to access information about health professionals' personal lives that goes beyond what a normal patient/health professional relationship would allow. Be aware of what you post about yourself and your personal life. Be careful not to violate professional boundaries. Avoid online relationships with current or former patients.

(d) Your ethical and legal obligations to protect patient confidentiality.

(e) Professional boundaries: think carefully before "friending" others, including employers, other health professionals, administrative staff, teachers and tutors and allowing them to access personal information. Don't place staff members into an awkward position by requesting them to join your network.

(f) Be aware of the image you project of yourself online and how this can impact on your professional standing.

(g) Practical tips:

- Protect your privacy – be careful what personal information you share with others, check your privacy settings regularly (please note even with privacy settings in place, it is possible to underestimate the number of people who can see your posts and how quickly it can be spread)
- Consider the size of your audience – it is probably much wider than you think
- Check who your friends are – ensure that you do not have patients as your friends. Check past posts and ensure that you have not made offensive comments in the past.
- Check the groups you have joined – check the posts on the group to ensure that there are no offensive comments made or that the groups do not subscribe to racist, sexist, culturally insensitive or other such offensive or derogatory views.
- Check your photographs – are there any that you would not like your patients or colleagues to see?

Note