

UW MEDICINE POLICY ON PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Policy

UW Medicine values professionalism among its faculty, staff, trainees, and students in carrying out UW Medicine's mission of improving the health of the public through teaching, research and patient care. Professionalism includes demonstrating excellence, integrity, respect, compassion, accountability, and a commitment to altruism in all our work interactions and responsibilities.¹

It is the policy and expectation of UW Medicine that UW Medicine faculty, staff, trainees, and students will conduct themselves in a professional manner in all of their interactions with patients, members of the public and the University community, and each other. The purposes of this policy are to promote excellence, integrity and altruism in all of our activities; to assure that all persons are treated with respect, dignity and courtesy; and to promote constructive communication and collaborative teamwork.

Definitions

Excellence represents a dedication to the continuous improvement of the quality of care, research inquiry, and teaching effectiveness. Pursuit of excellence should be accompanied by integrity, empathy, compassion, and respect for the diversity of values and opinions of others.

Accountability refers to taking responsibility for ones' behavior and activity.

Altruism reflects a commitment to advocate for the interests of others over ones' own interests.

Unprofessional behavior means behavior that: violates laws or rules regarding discrimination and harassment; violates rules of professional ethics, including professionalism in clinical, educational, research or business practices; or is disrespectful, retaliatory or disruptive.

Discrimination and harassment means discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, citizenship, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or military status.

Rules of professional ethics means ethical standards that have been established by external professional societies or associations, e.g., Joint Commission, American Association of Medical Colleges, National Institutes of Health, or by UW Medicine entities for various professions (e.g., physicians, nurses).

Professionalism in clinical practice settings includes, but is not limited to safeguarding the care needs and privacy concerns of patients and adherence to established standards on patient safety, timeliness of completing medical records, quality improvement initiatives, communication and follow-up with patients, reporting errors, and regulations governing billing practices.

1. Stern, DT. *Measuring Medical Professionalism*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

Professionalism in the conduct of research includes, but is not limited to a commitment to intellectual integrity, welfare of human subjects and research animals, diligent and unbiased acquisition, evaluation, and reporting of scientific information, adherence to university research regulations, and collegial and fair treatment of trainees and research staff at all levels.

Professionalism in education includes, but is not limited to a commitment to the highest standards of scholarship, innovation in teaching methods, respect for the student-teacher relationship, and leadership through modeling of life-long learning.

Ethical business practices means the wise use of resources and practices that are compliant with and appropriate under laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest, sponsored research, or the delivery of and reimbursement for healthcare services.

Disrespectful, retaliatory, or disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to behaviors that in the view of reasonable people impact the integrity of the health care team, the care of patients, the education of trainees, or the conduct of research such as:

- Shouting or using profane or otherwise offensive language;
- Degrading or demeaning comments;
- Physical assault or other uninvited or inappropriate physical contact;
- Threats or similar intimidating behavior, as reasonably perceived by the recipient;
- Unreasonable refusal to cooperate with others in carrying out assigned responsibilities; and
- Obstruction of established operational goals, beyond what would be considered respectful dissent.

Procedure

Incorporating the principles of professionalism into applicable documents. This policy is intended to provide a common definition and set of principles regarding professionalism throughout UW Medicine. UW Medicine units should incorporate these principles of professionalism as appropriate in their policies, procedures, and practices, such as offer letters and evaluations.

For staff covered by collective bargaining agreements, UW Medicine managers and supervisors are expected to apply this policy in a manner consistent with the principles of just cause, as well as any other applicable requirements of the labor agreements.

For hospitals and clinics that are part of UW Medicine, this policy is intended to define “professionalism” at the UW Medicine level in accordance with Joint Commission standards. Under this policy, “desirable behavior” means demonstrating professionalism as described above and “disruptive behavior” means engaging in conduct that is unprofessional as described above. The hospitals and clinics will have policies and practices implementing these principles and may further define expectations regarding appropriate conduct.

Mechanisms for addressing unprofessional behavior. A number of policies and resources within UW Medicine and affiliated sites address particular types of behavior. Where individuals have complaints against employees, including complaints alleging violation of UW non-discrimination policies, individuals may address these through local investigation and resolution, the UW Ombudsman, or the University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office (UCIRO) (see University of Washington Handbook, Volume Four, Part 1, Chapter 2). Specific administrative or contractual processes also exist to address specific types of complaints including classified and professional staff complaints, whistleblower complaints, and patient complaints. There are also existing processes for addressing student conduct issues and for addressing faculty members' rights to resolve or adjudicate issues under the Faculty Code. An individual should contact his or her supervisor for help determining whether a particular behavior is covered by an established procedure.

Additionally, for unprofessional behavior as defined by this policy that does not require reporting under existing procedures, UW Medicine faculty, staff, trainees, and students may raise concerns through the following avenues: (1) informal and collegial one-on-one resolution; (2) bringing the issue to their supervisor or the next highest individual of authority if concerns involve the supervisor; (3) contacting Human Resources; (4) following applicable grievance procedures under collective bargaining agreements; and/or (5) contacting the University of Washington Ombudsman.

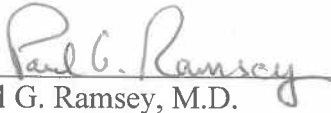
Supervisor responsibility. Supervisors are expected to demonstrate leadership in exhibiting and promoting professionalism. This includes setting clear expectations and managing performance of those they supervise in accordance with these standards through regular communication and timely performance reviews. This also includes respecting diversity of opinion and not retaliating against subordinates as a consequence of their offering respectful, dissenting views. Finally, supervisors are expected to address professionalism concerns and deficiencies through counseling, discipline, or other action as appropriate in accordance with policies and procedures within the University of Washington, UW Medicine, affiliates and partner entities.

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