



**THE GEORGE  
WASHINGTON  
UNIVERSITY**  
WASHINGTON, DC

**Responsible University Official:**  
Vice President for Health Affairs,  
Walter A. Bloedorn Professor of  
Administrative Medicine, and  
Dean, School of Medicine and Health Sciences  
**Responsible Office:** Office of the Dean  
**Most Recent Revision:** May 2018

**CODE OF CONDUCT  
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND  
HEALTH SCIENCES, GW MEDICAL FACULTY ASSOCIATES INC., AND THE  
GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL**

**CODE OF CONDUCT  
IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

## **Preamble**

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The George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences (“SMHS”), GW Medical Faculty Associates Inc. (“MFA”), and the George Washington University Hospital (“Hospital”) are committed to creating and maintaining an environment that promotes high quality patient care and fosters excellence in education and research. Faculty, residents, students, nurses, and other health care professionals who are involved in the delivery of health care or the clinical learning environment at SMHS, MFA, and the Hospital (“GW Professionals”) are committed to promoting and maintaining the highest standards of behavior in order to provide a healthy and safe learning environment and to better serve society. The following norms are intended to serve as conduct guidelines for this community of health care professionals, educators, and learners, and to foster an environment that encourages speaking up without fear of retaliation.

These guidelines are not meant to supersede relevant existing policies within SMHS, MFA, or the Hospital. It is expected that all GW Professionals will adhere to this Code of Conduct. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action under applicable institutional policies. Furthermore, although this code is explicitly developed for the clinical learning environment and delivery of healthcare, it is expected that GW Professionals will adhere to similar standards in the conduct of all their activities. Please see the Appendix for examples of inappropriate behavior.

## 1. **HONESTY**

Honesty and integrity will be practiced by GW Professionals during all aspects of educational, research, and clinical activities. GW Professionals will conduct themselves in an ethical and courteous manner.

## 2. **PROMISE-KEEPING**

Promise-keeping requires GW Professionals to fulfill commitments made at the beginning of any educational, research, and clinical activities. This includes attending required learning sessions, arriving on time, dressing appropriately, and completing assigned tasks.

## 3. **RESPECT FOR INSTITUTION, PROFESSION, AND PATIENTS**

- In order to foster an environment of civility, GW Professionals will approach the educational, research, and clinical environments with mutual respect and with respect for patients. This includes respect for race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, age, marital status, cultural differences, political convictions, and roles within the institution.
- It is expected that GW Professionals will show respect and common courtesy for each other and patients in an environment free from harassment and discrimination, exploitation, verbal abuse, physical violence, and intimidation in any form.
- GW Professionals will strive to create a culture of safety and are committed to implementing changes that will promote a safe environment for patients and GW Professionals.

## 4. **DUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS**

GW Professionals will not misuse any power differentials within their professional relationships. To avoid conflicts of interest, GW Professionals will not enter into dual-role relationships that are likely to detract from professional and educational development or lead to perceived or actual favoritism. Issues regarding the establishment of a romantic/sexual relationship between GW Professionals are governed by applicable policies regarding sexual harassment.

## 5. **CONFIDENTIALITY**

GW Professionals will respect the confidentiality of all patient information. GW Professionals who utilize patient information as any part of the educational experience or clinical activities will follow patient privacy and confidentiality guidelines as mandated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) or other applicable laws, regulations, or policies.

## 6. **TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES**

GW Professionals will work as committed and integral members of teams. In the pursuit of advancement and success, all GW Professionals will be mindful of the impact of their behavior on other members or functions of the team.

## **Appendix**

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### **EXAMPLES OF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

Below are examples of behavior that are generally considered “inappropriate.” The list of behaviors is not exhaustive and it is expected that the exercise of common sense and good judgment will lead GW Professionals to recognize other inappropriate behaviors.

- Making belittling or berating statements;
- Name calling;
- Using profanity or disrespectful language;
- Criticizing the treatment of other healthcare providers to patients;
- Making disrespectful or personal comments in medical records;
- Making degrading or demeaning comments regarding patients and their families, hospital personnel, other health professionals, other health professions and discipline specialties, and/or the hospital;
- Using physically threatening language;
- Making physical contact with another individual that is threatening, intimidating, or disrespectful;
- Throwing instruments, charts, or other objects;
- Making threats of violence;
- Making threats of retribution;
- Engaging in sexual harassment;
- A pattern of committing sexual impropriety with a patient/client or other health care professional;
- Committing any act that could reasonably be construed as mental or physical abuse;
- Failing to respond to patient care needs or staff requests;
- Failing to respond in a timely manner to patient care needs or staff requests;
- Failing to return phone calls, pages, or other messages;
- Being unavailable while on-call or on-duty without arranging for appropriate coverage;
- Misrepresenting or misleading anyone as to his/her qualifications or role;
- Providing treatment without appropriate supervision or authorization;
- Misusing or misrepresenting an institutional or professional affiliation;
- Engaging in plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty;
- Soliciting personal remuneration or reward of any kind from a patient or family;
- Stealing, misappropriating, or misusing drugs, equipment, or other property;
- Unlawfully breaching confidentiality, including but not limited to accessing electronic records of patients/clients for whom he/she is not on the care team;
- Photographing, recording, or videotaping patients without permission;

- Utilizing social media or internet resources in a way that breaches patient confidentiality, such as blogging, tweeting, texting, or emailing protected health information;
- Utilizing humor or personal expression that could be taken out of context when posted on social media sites, or that inappropriately conveys the support of the Hospital, MFA, or SMHS;
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs or being otherwise unfit for participation in inpatient/client care at work or on-call;
- Failing to respect patients'/clients' rights, privacy, or dignity;
- Targeting an individual based on their racial, cultural, or gender identity, or sexual orientation;
- Falsifying records for any reason.

*Approved by the SMHS Faculty Assembly Executive Committee 1/22/2015*

## **Who Needs to Know This Policy**

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Medical students, faculty members, staff, residents, and fellows

## **Contact**

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Richard J. Simons, MD, MACP  
Senior Associate Dean for MD Programs  
Professor of Medicine  
202-994-9528; [pwhite16@gwu.edu](mailto:pwhite16@gwu.edu)

## **Who Approved This Policy**

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Jeffrey S. Akman, MD, Vice President for Health Affairs,  
Walter A. Bloedorn Professor of Administrative Medicine, and  
Dean, School of Medicine and Health Sciences

*Most Recent Review/Approval: Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate, 7/23/2015*