



University Hospital of Brooklyn

College of Medicine

School of Graduate Studies

College of Nursing

School of Health Related Professions

School of Public Health

Office of Graduate Medical Education

Policy on Professionalism

Downstate Health Sciences University College of Medicine is a community marked by exceptional personal and professional integrity that embodies the foundational tenets of our institution—values-driven culture, leadership, and education. It is our system of principles that continues to spur excellence and pride in the work we do every day. We commit to the highest standards of ethical behavior and exemplary performance in education, research, and patient care.

These professionalism standards apply to all members of the Downstate Health Sciences University academic community, including residents, fellows, faculty and faculty in graduate medical education programs

Our students, trainees, faculty and staff strive each day to create an environment conducive to the education of ourselves and our community. We will continually demonstrate kindness, empathy and compassion for our peers, our colleagues, and our patients in the care we provide, the research we conduct, and the education we deliver. In regard to patient care, we firmly believe in the primacy of patient and family welfare and a deep respect for patient autonomy. We support the principles of social justice, which include the fair distribution of health care resources. We will adhere to universal principles of research ethics when designing, conducting, performing, evaluating, and reporting our research. We will respectfully express our beliefs and opinions and be sensitive to the diversity of our community, which is one of our great strengths.

Regardless of where we are, or whom we are with, we will conduct ourselves in a manner of utmost honesty and integrity as we treat, learn, teach and communicate. We will strive to achieve this every day and if we briefly falter, we will acknowledge our error, apologize where appropriate, and resume what we have accepted as professional behavior befitting a leading academic medical center.

Definition

A physician professes both knowledge and expertise, accompanied by a moral code of conduct toward his or her patients and colleagues. Professionalism encompasses several virtues expressed in the following attitudes resulting in specific behaviors. These include:

Excellence: a desire to maintain a standard of knowledge and competence that exceeds ordinary expectations, and includes a commitment to lifelong learning. Some examples of behaviors that exhibit excellence include:

- a. Contributing to an atmosphere of learning
- b. Putting forth effort which goes beyond what is needed solely for the purpose of achieving a grade in a course
- c. Not exhibiting anti-intellectual attitudes and behaviors
- d. Not making decisions based on inadequate knowledge

Altruism: readiness to place the interests of others above one's own. Some behaviors exhibiting altruism include:

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- a. Sacrificing one's own time and energy for the sake of others' needs
- b. Accepting inconvenience to meet the needs of one's patients
- c. Accommodating patients' and families' special needs for comfort and help
- d. Volunteering one's skills and expertise for the welfare of the community

Compassion: sympathy combined with a desire to correct the cause of the problem. Some examples of compassion include:

- a. Recognizing the needs of a patient without being specifically told
- b. Appreciating the patients' and families' special needs for comfort and help
- c. Doing all that you can to meet the needs of the patient

Duty: preparedness to behave conscientiously or reliably and responsibly with respect to rules and schedules. Some behaviors which exhibit a sense of duty include:

- a. Being available and responsive when "on call"
- b. Reporting on time
- c. Completing paperwork and assigned tasks
- d. Reading and responding to professional emails
- e. Fulfilling responsibilities in a timely manner
- f. Health and program related learning activities

Accountability: accepting responsibility for one's behavior toward patients, colleagues, the profession, and the public. Some examples of accountability include:

- a. Accepting constructive feedback and incorporating it to make changes in behavior
- b. Recognizing limitations and seeking help
- c. Not working in an impaired state
- d. Protecting patient confidentiality

Honor and Integrity: "honor" is the consistent regard for the highest standards of behavior and "integrity" is the refusal to violate the code of professionalism. Possessing honor and integrity implies being fair, being truthful, keeping one's word, meeting commitments and being straightforward. In addition to upholding these standards oneself, one is obligated to encourage professionalism on the part of one's colleagues and report lapses in professional conduct on the part of others. Some examples of lack of honor and integrity include:

- a. Cheating, plagiarism, forgery, and sabotage
- b. Falsification of patient histories or records
- c. Misrepresentation

Respect: readiness to treat others – including patients, colleagues and faculty – with consideration for their rights and interests. For example:

- a. Establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries in work and learning situations
- b. Respecting others regardless of personal bias
- c. Dressing in an appropriate manner
- d. Using professional language and being mindful of the environment
- e. Resolving conflicts in a manner that respects the dignity of every person involved
- f. Demonstrating personal commitment to honoring the choices and rights of other persons, especially regarding their medical care
- g. Listening to other members of the health care team and taking their opinions into account

All concerns related to unprofessional behavior by residents, fellows, faculty and program staff should be documented in accordance with institutional policy and reported to the Program Director, Office of Graduate Medical Education (GME) and/or the DIO for appropriate review and action. These standards are assessed regularly through formative and summative evaluations, including milestone-based Clinical Competency Committee reviews, in accordance with ACGME requirements.

Amended and Approved by GMEC: 7/16/2025

Signed by:

Teresa Y. Smith-Bellille, MD, MScEd

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Chairman of the GMEC

Lisa J. Dremer

DIO