RESIDENT PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT POLICY

GME 8.4 Chapter: Resident/Fellow Training

Review Date: May 2013

I. PURPOSE

University of Utah Healthcare (UUHC) and the School of Medicine are committed to maintaining a collaborative environment of integrity, fairness, and compassion in all interpersonal contacts. To that end, we strive to provide a safe learning and working environment for residents, students and others that is free from harassment and/or discrimination. This includes behavior that could be perceived as inappropriate, harassing, or that does not meet the highest standards of professionalism.

The purpose of the Resident Professional Conduct Policy is to clarify the expectations of all house staff when interacting with others. All residents working at University Hospitals and affiliates must treat others with respect, courtesy, and dignity, and must immediately report conduct that is disruptive or otherwise inappropriate.

II. POLICY

Professionalism is one of the six AGCME core competencies in which residents must demonstrate proficiency in order to successfully complete their residency training and enter the independent practice of medicine. Components of professionalism include: 2

1. Honesty/integrity refers to a consistent regard for the highest standards of behavior and the refusal to violate one’s personal and professional codes. Honesty and integrity imply being fair, being truthful, keeping one’s word, meeting commitments, and being forthright in interactions with patients, peers, and in all professional work, whether through documentation, personal communication, presentations, research, or other aspects of interaction. Honesty and integrity require awareness of situations that may result in conflict of interest or that result in personal gain at the expense of the best interest of the patient.

2. Reliability/responsibility means being responsible for and accountable to others, including accountability to patients and their families, to society to ensure that the public’s needs are addressed, and to the medical profession to ensure that the ethical precepts of practice are upheld. Inherent in responsibility is reliability in

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1 The term resident include interns, residents and fellows.
completed assigned duties or fulfilling commitments. There must also be a willingness to accept responsibility for errors.

3. Respect for others extends to all spheres of contact, including but not limited to patients, families, other physicians, and professional colleagues, including nurses, residents, fellows, and medical students. Residents must treat all persons with respect and regard for their individual worth and dignity. They must be fair and nondiscriminatory, and be aware of emotional, personal, family, and cultural influences on patient well-being and patients’ rights and choices of medical care. It is also a professional obligation to respect appropriate patient confidentiality. All residents are required to complete online training demonstrating understanding of federal HIPAA guidelines.

4. Compassion/empathy means listening attentively and responding humanely to the concerns of patients and family members. Appropriate empathy for and relief of pain, discomfort, and anxiety should be part of the daily practice of medicine.

5. Self-improvement is the pursuit of and commitment to providing the highest quality of healthcare through lifelong learning and education. Residents must seek to learn from errors and aspire to excellence through self-evaluation and acceptance of the critiques of others.

6. Self-awareness/knowledge of limits includes recognition of the need for guidance and supervision when faced with new or complex responsibilities. Residents must also be insightful regarding the impact of their behavior on others and cognizant of appropriate professional boundaries.

7. Communication/collaboration means working cooperatively and communicating effectively with patients and their families and with all healthcare providers involved.

8. Altruism/advocacy refers to an unselfish regard for and devotion to the welfare of others and is a key element of professionalism. Self-interest or the interests of other parties should not interfere with the care of patients and their families.

Residents must endeavor to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct, refraining from behaviors that may be considered offensive to others or disruptive to the workplace or patient care. UUHC does not tolerate unprofessional behavior within or related to the workplace. Unprofessional behavior is any conduct that prevents or interferes with an individual’s or group’s clinical or academic performance, or creates a disruptive, unsafe, intimidating, hostile or offensive learning or working environment, or which jeopardizes or is inconsistent with quality patient care or with the ability of others to provide quality patient care. Unprofessional behavior can be active (e.g., profanity, yelling, or intimidation) or passive (e.g., failing to respond to a request for assistance or teaching). While there can be increasing levels of severity with respect to the type of unprofessional behavior, there may be incidents that rise to a more serious level, due not to their severity but to the repetitiveness of the action in spite of previous counseling or intervention.
Unprofessional behavior falls generally into three levels of increasing severity:

- **Level I**: Includes verbal abuse which is directed at-large, but has been reasonably perceived by a witness to be disruptive behavior as defined above, and most passive disruptive behavior.
- **Level II**: Includes verbal abuse of yelling, swearing or cursing; threatening, humiliating, sexual or otherwise inappropriate comments directed at a person or persons; physical violence or abuse directed in anger at an inanimate object (including throwing objects in anger); and discrimination or retaliation.
- **Level III**: Includes physical violence or other physical abuse directed at people and persistent Level I & II behavior that is unresponsive to remediation.

II. PROCEDURES

Process for Addressing Resident Unprofessional Behavior

Any UUHC faculty member, student, resident, employee, patient, family member or visitor may refer an allegation of unprofessional behavior involving a resident to the appropriate Program Director or, if this is not feasible, to the Director of Graduate Medical Education (Office of Graduate Medical Education). If, after gathering facts relevant to the allegation, the Program Director and/or the program’s Clinical Competency Committee determine that the resident’s performance or conduct is unsatisfactory, one or more academic actions may be imposed on the resident as described in GME 12.1, Academic Action, Dispute Resolution and Hearing Procedures Policy. The policy assures due process for residents and fair resolution of disputes of academic actions taken by programs.

Other GME policies that address professionalism include:

1. Resident Evaluation and Standards of Performance (GME 8.2)
2. Resident Social Media Policy (GME 9.7)
3. Resident Duty Hours in the Learning and Working Environment (GME 10.1)
4. Resident Professional Attire Guidelines (GME 9.1)

Approval body: Graduate Medical Education Committee
Approval date: May 24, 2013
Policy Owner: Graduate Medical Education

Historical Information:
Review dates:
Approval dates: