

Clinical Ethics for Medical Students:

Guidelines

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Introduction

Doctors as a community are respected throughout the world. They are looked up to as leaders in the society. This regard does not come automatically. It has to be earned by hard work, good personal interactions, and above all, a sense of humility that god has chosen you to be one of the chosen few to care for your fellow humans. Remember that a few kind words or an act of consideration goes a long way in alleviating human suffering. Remember that you are also a scientist. Therefore observe, listen and study. The first visit to the hospital wards is both exciting and stressful. As a medical student learning basic sciences and your clinical skills in the laboratory, you have interacted with healthy people. In the hospital, you are going to meet patients, see plenty of suffering and sorrow. Unless you are mentally prepared, you can feel overwhelmed by this. Medicine, unlike other branches of study needs live individuals on whom to practice your skills. The society permits you to gain experience by learning on live patients. Therefore you owe it to the society to treat all patients with kindness and consideration. You will come into contact with other medical professionals like consultants, resident staff, nurses, technicians and other support staff. Remember that the management of a patient is a team

effort. It is absolutely vital that you are able to get along with others. The better team person you are, the easier it will be on you and you will learn a lot of clinical medicine and enjoy the experience at the same time. The hospital records are the property of the hospital and the patient. They need to be treated with respect and preserved. As a student, you will be competing against your friends. Do not allow this competition to deteriorate into personal acrimony and fights. Following pages give you some guidelines about your behaviour in the hospital. They are not meant to be exhaustive. If in any doubt, consult your tutor.

Punctuality Dress and Demeanour

1. Arrive well ahead of clinic times.
2. Keep yourself adequately informed of the timetable and any changes to it.
3. Carry your university identification at all times and produce it when asked for.
4. Dress in clean conservative clothes. Either use the traditional Arab dress or clean trousers and shirt. **DO NOT WEAR JEANS/TEE SHIRTS.**
5. Wear your white coat at all times that you are in the hospital.
6. Wear closed footwear instead of sandals. There may be splashes of blood or other secretions onto your exposed feet if sandals are worn.
7. Clip your nails short. Long nails can harbour infections. They can also be uncomfortable while examining patients.
8. As far as possible, do not smoke. If you have to, do not smoke at least an hour before attending the hospital. A smelly smoky breath is not liked by patients!
9. Do not speak or laugh loudly in the hospital corridors. Remember that there are sick people trying to rest.
10. Follow the hospital signs. Do not stand or sit in the vicinity of hazardous areas like x-rays. Take precautions to protect yourself.
11. Do not shut doors noisily.

12. Bring your own stethoscope, BP apparatus, measuring tape , hammer, etc. Do not borrow from others.
13. Greet everyone cheerfully

Obligations to patients

1. The big three as far as patients are concerned: Courtesy, Consideration and Confidentiality.
2. Listen to patients politely and respect their views even if you do not agree.
3. Before you go in to examine a patient, ask the consultant, resident doctor or the nurse if it is all right to do so
4. Do not ever enter a patient's cubicle unless you have asked for permission from him.
5. Do not disturb the patient if he is resting or sleeping.
6. While interviewing or examining a female patient have a female chaperone present in the same room.
7. Follow the hospital guidelines to prevent hospital infection. This may mean that you may have to take special precautions.
8. Do not insist on continuing examination if the patient has pain or discomfort.
9. Do not discuss the patient's condition or reports or any other discussion during the clinic with the patient or his attendants. You simply do not know enough yet. If the patient or his relative asks you for information, refer them to the nurse or resident doctor.
10. Do not take photos of patients without their express written consent and your tutors knowledge and permission
11. Do not refer to patients as "interesting cases"
12. Do not make fun of patient ailment or the way he reacts to his illness.

13. Do not repeat rumours about things that happened in the hospital.
14. Do not accept gifts hospitality or any other inducements from the patient or his relatives.
15. Do not attempt romantic liaisons with the patient or her relatives.

Interaction with other clinical professionals

1. Introduce yourself to the other personnel in the ward.
2. Behave with dignity and respect towards other health professionals.
3. Do not be rude or abrupt with the nurses or other support staff.
4. Do not interfere with or comment about the work of hospital personnel. If you think that something wrong has been done or said to a patient, bring it to the notice of your tutor.
5. Do not repeat rumours about things that happened in the hospital. It can damage careers or even worse, someone's life.
6. Do not attempt romantic liaisons with female staff.
7. Be fair, do not discriminate on the basis of color, race or religion or ethnicity. All patients are equal.

Care of hospital records

1. The hospital records include the clinical notes, lab reports and x-rays. They are hospital property. They have to be respected.
2. Do not peruse records without express permission.
3. They are under no circumstances to be taken out of the patient cubicle or the ward.
4. Do not "borrow" records for your case preparation.
5. Do not write in the patient record papers.

Interaction with your colleagues

1. Remember that patient management is team work. You have to work harmoniously with each other.
2. Respect your colleague's opinion. If you do not agree with an opinion, do not be offensive about contradicting it. Listen politely and attentively to others.
3. Keep competition healthy. Do not use undesirable methods to gain more marks.
4. If you get to know about change of schedule of lectures, inform others in your class or batch.
5. Share your knowledge with others. Selfishness does not help in the long run.

The clinical term is perhaps the most satisfying and exciting part of your journey towards becoming a Doctor. The basic tenet to remember is that to a doctor, care of a patient comes first, last and always. Think of his comfort first, your colleagues next and last of all, you own comfort.