

Code of Professional Conduct for General Surgery Residents at the Wake Forest School of Medicine

I. Preamble

The General Surgery Residency Program strives to prepare physicians for practice in surgery, focusing on the development of clinical skills, professional competence, and acquisition of key knowledge through organized educational programs with guidance and supervision. Professional competence requires that they manifest in their lives exemplary ethical and professional attitudes. Among the attitudes and behavior we espouse are:

- A. respect for the sanctity of human life and the dignity of patients
- B. personal humility and an awareness of medicine's inherent limitations
- C. maturity and balanced personal and professional lives
- D. an understanding and respect for collegial teamwork in the provision of healthcare
- E. commitment to the development and continued maintenance of clinical competence in ourselves, our colleagues, and our students.

The Code of Professional Conduct for residents is not intended to dictate behavior. It does, however, establish minimum expectations that provide a disciplinary framework for those who choose not to abide by these professional standards.

II. The Code of Professional Conduct for Residents/Fellows

All residents are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates competence, integrity, candor, personal commitment to their best interests, compassion, and absolute discretion and confidentiality. Residents are expected to conduct themselves with honor and integrity, and respect the rights and dignity of all individuals.

III. Expectations

The following statements, organized into broad categories, further describe the Department of Surgery's minimum expectations for residents' professional behavior.

A. Respect for all individuals in the community. Residents, students, faculty, and staff recognize the right of all individuals to be treated with respect without regard to position, race, age, gender, handicap, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation. Harassment, including sexual harassment, is prohibited by law, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The Medical Center shall take steps reasonably necessary to prevent any harassment from occurring, which will include, but is not limited to: providing a process for filing and handling complaints; educating the medical school community; affirmatively raising the subject and expressing strong disapproval thereof; developing appropriate sanctions, informing faculty, staff, residents, and students of their rights and developing methods to sensitize all concerned.

B. Appropriate handling of information, records, or examination materials. Any form of cheating or

providing false information is a violation of the trust placed in physicians and is a serious infraction of the Code of Professional Conduct. Timely and accurate completion of medical records according to specific guidelines of the affiliated institution at which the resident is rotating is mandatory.

C. Respect for patients' confidentiality and safety. Patients' privacy, modesty, and confidentiality must always be honored. Patients must be treated with kindness, gentleness, dignity, empathy, and compassion. Patients should not be publicly identified without adequate justification or permission.

IV. Code Violations

A violation of the Code of Professional Conduct occurs when any resident acts contrary to the values and responsibilities expected of those engaged in the profession of medicine. Violations occur when any resident jeopardizes the welfare of a patient, disregards the rights or dignity of another individual, or allows or assists another in so doing. The Department of Surgery reserves the right to initiate action and impose sanctions for any conduct that is determined to be a violation of the Code.

V. Procedures for Investigating Code Violations

The Department of Surgery has a responsibility to ensure a professional environment and to provide equity for all parties involved in a breach of professional conduct. This is consistent with the WakeWings concept and it is expected of all housestaff. Individuals reporting an infraction of the Code can first speak with offenders about the infraction and remind them of their professional conduct. However, if the circumstances do not allow the claimant to approach the offender, or the claimant believes the alleged infraction requires further action, the allegation may be referred to Program Director. The Program Director will undertake an investigation of the allegations. This can result in no finding, written reprimand, and suggestion for counseling, probation, or dismissal.