

# Professionalism: Core Values and Practice

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# Definition

- “Profession” from Latin word

“professio” = public declaration with the force of a promise

# Professionals

Disciplined group of individuals adhere to **high ethical standards** and uphold themselves to, and accepted by the public as possessing **specialized knowledge and skills** in a widely recognized, organized, body of learning, derived from education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to exercise this knowledge and these skills **in the interest of others.**

# Hallmarks of a Profession

- Competence in a specialized body of knowledge and skill
- An acknowledgment of specific duties and responsibilities toward the individuals it serve and toward society
- A high standard of ethics, behaviour and work activities
- The right to train, admit, discipline and dismiss its members for failure to sustain competence or observe the duties and responsibilities
- Reasonable work morale and motivation

# What is Medical Professionalism?

- How we conduct ourselves as doctor while serving our patients and society, in our role as healers and medical scientist
- Compasses the values, behaviours, and attitudes inculcated into us by our medical school education and post-graduate training, along with our experience interacting with patients and fellow colleagues
- Greatly influenced by our contemporaneous social values and norms
- Is the basis for the trust in the patient-doctor relationship

# A Physician Charter: Medical Professionalism in the New Millennium

- Issued jointly by the American Board of Internal Medicine, American College of Physicians, European Federation of Internal Medicine in 2002
- Subsequently, 90 professional associations in American medicine have endorsed the Charter

Ann Int Med 2002;136: 243-246

# Fundamental Principles of the Charter on Professionalism

- The primacy of patient welfare
- Patient autonomy
- Social justice

# Professional Responsibilities defined by the Charter

- Competence
- Honesty
- Confidentiality
- Maintaining appropriate relationship with patients
- Improve quality of care
- Improve access to care
- Just distribution of finite resources
- Maintaining trust by managing conflicts of interest
- Scientific knowledge



# Core Values of Professionalism

- Altruism
- Accountability
- Excellence
- Honesty/Integrity
- Duty
- Respect and compassion to patients
- Responsiveness to the needs of patients
- Sensitivity to cultural, ethical, religious or other values of patients
- Empathy in negotiating and designing treatment
- Confidentiality and privacy for all patients

# Altruism

Obligated to attend to the best interest of patients rather than self-interest

Strive for the “Greater Good”

# Accountability

Take responsibility

for achievement of ultimate goal

of actions and outcomes and admit to and accept those outcomes

Accept role if learners fail

Acknowledges lapses/errors as teacher/learner without blaming

Follow through on tasks and promises in patient care

# Excellence

Be knowledgeable and competent

Commitment to life-long learning

On going professional development

Continuing self-appraisal

High personal standards

Provide best available patient care possible

# Honesty/Integrity

Patients must be completely and honestly informed, including the injury from medical care, and empowered to decide on the course of therapy

Recognizes and acknowledge own skills, abilities, limitations and weaknesses

Follow through with promises to patients and explain when unable to do so

Give the care you would want to receive

# Duty

Fulfill roles

Comply with regulations

Supervise and give best effort to learner and patient

Maintain balance lifestyle to achieve personal and professional goal

Taking responsibility of one's own health and well being

Be available and accessible when "on call"

Supporting impaired colleagues

Recognises need to ensure patient safety

# Respect

Should demonstrate respect for patients and their families, other doctors and team members, medical students, residents and fellows

Acknowledge other needs and feelings

Be kind and fair to all without judgment

“ The doctor professional is defined not only by what he or she must know and do, but most importantly by a profound sense of what the doctor must be “

Jordan Cohen

President of the Association of American Medical Colleges  
Farewell Address Nov 2005