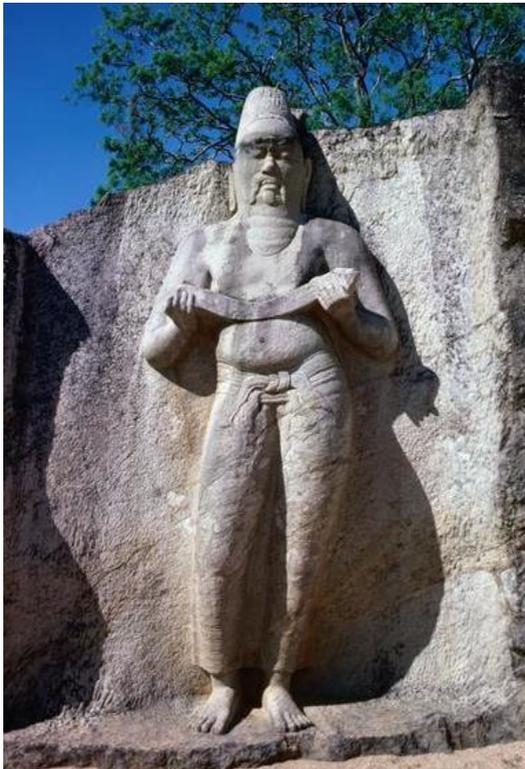




COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS OF
SRI LANKA

**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TEACHERS
AND LEARNERS**



Values Committee
2014

Message from the President



It is heartening to note that this very valuable document on “Code of Conduct for Teachers and Learners” is being published to coincide with the commencement of the Membership of the College of General Practitioners (MCGP) Diploma programme conducted by the College of General Practitioners of Sri Lanka for its second batch (2014 – 2016) of participants. It is noteworthy that this programme is being conducted based on a new and updated curriculum. The new curriculum underwent carefully thought out changes in 2012 to ensure that it is in line with modern medical education principles. This has made the MCGP programme a much sought after course by budding general practitioners.

I am sure that this document will add considerable value and colour to this GP-friendly, two-year, weekend diploma course conducted by the College which is currently the only non university diploma programme recognized by the Sri Lanka Medical Council. It is certain to provide practical and important guidance to teachers and learners, of the various educational programmes conducted by the College, so that they can strive to maintain high professional standards while providing better care for their patients and the communities they live in.

Publishing of this document also coincides with the 40th academic sessions of the College which has the theme “Learning to care” I would like to congratulate the four-member strong, efficient and effective Values Committee headed by Dr. Percy Motha and his team members, namely, Dr. Jayantha Jayatissa, Dr. Bujawanse and Dr. Eugene Corea, for their hard work and commitment in developing this document. They have been ably supported by the members of the Faculty of Teachers and the College staff who helped them with their considered inputs and editorial assistance.

It is a proud moment for me personally to be at the helm of this prestigious academic body at a juncture when evolving professional and ethical thinking in the practice of Family Medicine is being shared and reinforced by our members for the benefit of their peers and the medical community. What is particularly important to remember is that they are doing all this in the limited time they have at their disposal after working hard at their busy practice. I sincerely salute their efforts.

K. Chandrasekher

President

College of General Practitioners of Sri Lanka

17th October 2014

Message from the Chairman of the Values Committee



Code of conduct for learners and teachers is a long felt need of the College of General Practitioners. Many of our members are involved in teaching / learning activities from the 1980s, when general practitioners started teaching medical students of the Colombo Medical Faculty for the first time and in the Diploma in Family Medicine of the PGIM. Presently, it is of even greater value for the Colleges' MCGP course, which has a unique distinction as the only 'non – university' course registered with the Sri Lanka Medical Council.

Duncan Bujawansa, Jayantha Jayatissa and Percy Motha along with Eugene Corea of the Values Committee met several times to formulate, adapt, revise and edit the document to suit our needs. Valuable contributions from Leela De A Karunaratne, Dennis Aloysius, Nandani De Silva, Indika Karunatileke, K. Chandrasekher and Antoinette Perera refined the document, further.

In preparing this document, the secretarial assistance and the computer work of Dimuthu. C. Weerasekera and M. A. Hassen of the office are much appreciated. The draft was next presented to the council of the College for approval. The

final product was circulated among members and associates of the College for their perusal and endorsement.

The Values Committee believe that this document will be a valuable tool for efficient and productive teaching/learning activities in the educational programmes of the College. In our opinion this code may be of use to teachers and learners even in other fields of medicine.

Percy Motha
Chairman
Values Committee
College of General Practitioners of Sri Lanka
17th October 2014

Foreword

According to this code of conduct laid down by the College, it would appear that in order to practice the science and art of medicine unimpeachably, teachers and learners in Sri Lanka must conform to no less than 74 rules! The code of conduct has been formulated by a panel of doctors appointed for the purpose by the College. In Latin “a doctor” is a teacher of a doctrine, and the intrepid and indefatigable doctors comprising the panel, Percy Motha, Jayantha Jayatissa, BGD Bujawansa and Eugene Corea, deserve the gratitude of their peers for the exhausting work they have done in meticulously defining these 74 rules of conduct for our profession. Yet, more in humility than in irony, they hasten to declare that the code they have laboriously compiled “does not constitute an exhaustive statement of the manner in which teachers and learners should conduct themselves.”

However a careful study of the code gives one yet another perspective. The code clearly states that guiding and facilitating good professional conduct is its purpose. The code does not deal with rules. The language of the code is more to exhort & to encourage. Furthermore the importance of using common sense, sound judgment and personal integrity is emphasized. A common sense reading of this code would indicate that it is directed at many different types of teachers or in the very least deals with many different roles of teachers which do not always overlap. It is also a guide for learners as well. At the same time, the many exhortations for good conduct are repeated several times over in different sections. Each section would serve the teacher as a complete guide for appropriate behavior in a given role.

I do agree that in the current world of medical practice, we need to be more explicit and specific about our rules of conduct and that I suppose is what the panel has done in this code.

Even so, as teachers and learners we know that to live with a sense of honor and dignity in our own judgment and in the judgment of our peers we must have a standard of behavior to which we must conform. Historically, the only sanction known to ethics is the assent of the majority and in principle the College of General Practitioners represents that vast majority of our profession. So the College has the right and indeed the duty to show us the way to conduct our lives as teachers and learners. Each and every one of us is, at different times, both a teacher and a learner. Self-evidently from our self understanding, we have laid down these rules for ourselves. If these rules of conduct that we ourselves have formulated according to our best lights are belittled or violated we shall surely incur the moral opprobrium of our peers. This means that we will lose our good name and our reputation in our profession. Losing our good name and reputation is a much greater tragedy than losing our fat purse. In Shakespeare's words "who steals my purse steals trash." And to lose our reputation is to lose our humanity leaving only our bestiality. Shakespeare's enduring version of it is worth recalling: "Reputation, reputation, reputation! Oh, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial".

Carlo Fonseka
President
Sri Lanka Medical Council

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Introduction

Medical teachers have to pay heed to the ethical aspects of their interactions with learners. The nature of teaching in the general practice setting exposes learners to interactions between medical teachers, their patients and their families, colleagues, statutory authorities, pharmaceutical and health care representatives, subordinates, and the community at large.

As such the onus is on medical teachers to adhere to the codes of professional conduct, guidelines and directives laid down by the Sri Lanka Medical Council and the College of General Practitioners. It goes without saying that the law of the land has to be obeyed.

Medical schools in the island have their own codes of behavior and medical teachers in the general practice setting who teach their students will be expected to conform to these codes as well.

Purpose

The purpose of this Code is to guide and facilitate good professional conduct among teachers and learners in all educational programmes of the College of General Practitioners of Sri Lanka.

Applicability

This code is applicable to:

1. All general practice teachers, trainers, mentors, assessors and examiners of the CGPSL.
2. All trainees, mentees and examination candidates who are registered for the diploma, certificate and mentoring programmes of the College.
3. All medical students who are taught and trained through arrangements made with the College by their respective medical faculties.
4. All non GP teachers who undertake teaching/ training on behalf of the College.

Unless otherwise specified herein after “teachers” refers to GP and non GP teachers, trainers, mentors, assessors, reviewers and examiners in College programmes. “Learners” refers to medical undergraduates, postgraduate trainees, mentees and examination candidates in College programmes unless otherwise specified.

The under mentioned ordinance, codes and guidelines remain applicable to all of them.

1. Medical Ordinance
2. SLMC’s guide lines on professional and ethical conduct
3. Advising Ourselves About Values in Family Practice
4. Hand Book for Trainees and Trainers – MCGP Course

5. Family Practice Clinical Teachers Guide
6. MCGP Prospectus
7. Handbook on Mentoring in Sri Lankan General Practice

Limitations

This Code does not constitute an exhaustive statement of the manner in which teachers and learners should conduct themselves. Nor does the Code relieve teachers and learners from the responsibility to use common sense, sound judgment and personal integrity in their interactions with others and in discussing issues of behavior in an open and collegial manner.

I: Conduct towards learners

Teachers should accept personal responsibility for teaching character qualities that will help learners to evaluate the consequences of, and accept the responsibility for, their actions and choices. Teachers are obligated to help foster civic virtues such as integrity, diligence, responsibility, cooperation, loyalty, fidelity, and respect-for the law, for human life, for others, and for self.

Teachers, in accepting positions of public trust, should measure success not only by the progress of each learner toward realization of their potential, but also as citizens of the greater community of the republic.

1. Teachers should strive to conduct themselves in a fashion to be excellent role models for learners.
2. Teachers should treat learners with respect regardless of level of training, race, creed, colour, gender, sexual orientation, or field of study.
3. Teachers should impart knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior, and provide the experience that learners require in their chosen careers.
4. Teachers should supervise learners at all levels of training, appropriate to their knowledge, skills and experience.

5. Teachers should support and encourage learners in their endeavors to learn and develop their skills, attitudes and sense of enquiry.
6. Teachers should maintain a professional teacher-learner relationship at all times and avoid the development of emotional, sexual, financial or other relationships with learners.
7. Teachers should refrain from addressing learners in a disparaging fashion.
8. Teachers should refrain from intimidating or attempting to intimidate learners.
9. Teachers should refrain from harassment of learners in any fashion – emotional, physical or sexual.
10. Teachers should not reveal confidential information concerning learners, unless required by law.
11. Teachers should make a constructive effort to protect learners from conditions detrimental to learning, health, or safety.
12. Teachers should endeavor to present facts in an unbiased manner without distortion.

13. Teachers should assess carefully and accurately learners' abilities and provide prompt verbal and written feedback.

14. Teachers should assess only performance and not allow assessment to be coloured by personal interactions.

15. Teachers should provide remedial teaching when so indicated by assessment.

16. Teachers should be open to reasonable and constructive criticism by learners and adapt to reasonable learner needs.

II: Conduct towards practices and performance

Teachers should assume responsibility and accountability for their performance, continually strive to demonstrate competence and endeavor to maintain the dignity of the profession, by respecting and obeying the law of the land, and by demonstrating personal integrity.

1. Teachers should apply for, accept, assume positions or take responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications, and should adhere to the terms of a contract or appointment.
2. Teachers should maintain sound mental health, physical stamina, and social prudence necessary to perform the duties of any professional assignment.
3. Teachers should continue professional growth, recognizing the importance of continuous self assessment and continuing education.
5. Teachers should not misrepresent official policies of the College and should clearly distinguish those views from their own personal opinions.
6. Teachers should honestly account for all funds committed to their charge.
7. Teachers should not use institutional or professional privileges for personal or partisan advantage.
8. Teachers should behave with honesty, integrity and fairness towards all with whom they come in to contact when carrying out their duties.

9. Teachers should work within the limits of their competence and seek advice when necessary.

10. Teachers should be reliable, timely and responsive in respect of assigned responsibilities.

11. Teachers should respect the confidentiality and safeguard the privacy of, learners and patients.

12. Teachers should disclose and avoid all conflicts of interests.

13. Teachers should complete assessment of learner assignments on time.

14. Teachers should not engage in academic or research misconduct including misrepresentation, lying, plagiarism or fraud.

III: Conduct towards other teachers

Teachers, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, should accord just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession.

1. Teachers should not reveal confidential information concerning colleagues unless required by law.
2. Teachers should not make false statements about colleagues or the College.
3. Teachers should not interfere with their colleagues' freedom of choice, and should work to eliminate coercion that forces teachers to support actions and ideologies that violate individual professional integrity.

IV: Conduct towards community and country

Teachers should keep in mind that, in the field of Medicine, the knowledge and skills which they share with learners and their peers have been born out of human suffering. Even advances in Medicine are driven by illness and disease. As such the knowledge and skills which teachers pass on to learners belong to the community as a whole and not to any individual.

1. Teachers should pledge to protect the prevailing health and education systems in the country.
2. Teachers should recognize that quality education is the common goal of the public, educational institutions and teachers, and that a cooperative effort is essential among these groups to attain that goal.
3. Teachers should understand and respect the values and traditions of the diverse cultures represented in the community and should not permit considerations of caste, creed, race, gender or sexual orientation to cloud interactions with the community.
4. Teachers should safeguard harmony in the community.

V: Conduct of learners.

Learners should strive to pursue excellence in their acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes in the medical profession, and uphold the behavioral and ethical standards of the medical profession

1. Learners should comply with the codes, regulations and policies of the College, the university, the Sri Lanka Medical Council and other relevant regulatory or accrediting bodies.
2. Learners should behave with honesty, integrity and fairness in all their dealings.
3. Learners should recognize the importance of lifelong, continuous self assessment and continuing education.
4. Learners should attend all mandatory orientation, educational and teaching sessions or provide appropriate notification of absence.
5. Learners should complete all assignments on time or notify reasons for the delay.
6. Learners should not engage in academic or research misconduct including misrepresentation, lying, plagiarism or fraud.
7. Learners should regard their teachers with due respect and gratitude.

8. Learners should not engage in any activity which does not safeguard the dignity of patients or does not respect patient consent guidelines, confidentiality and privacy.

9. Learners should respect the educational goals, standards and policies of the College of General Practitioners of Sri Lanka.

10. Learners should make a conscientious effort to meet and exceed the expectations of the curriculum.

11. Learners should work with commitment as integral members of a team not pursuing personal advancement or success to the detriment of the well-being of other team members.

VI: Conduct in clinical teaching encounters

1. Any use of a patient for teaching purposes should take place only with the consent of that patient or guardian.

1.2. Where the contact between the learner and the patient is primarily for teaching purposes, then explicit prior consent must be obtained from the patient or guardian.

1.3. Verbal consent will normally suffice. If the encounter includes a procedure or examination of an embarrassing or invasive nature, then prior consent should have been taken and documented.

1.4. Clinical teachers who ask learners to perform procedures or examinations on patients who are incapable of giving informed consent, purely for the purposes of education, should ensure that the learners understand that either the patient has given prior consent, or that consent has been given by an appropriate surrogate.

2. The Institutions involved in teaching must ensure that systems are in place so that all patients, including those in the ambulatory setting, are informed about the roles within their health care teams, including specific reference to learners, to enable them to make informed decisions about the teaching process.

3. All clinical staff have a duty to inform patients of the role of learners on their team; learners must always be identified as such.
4. Clinical teachers must not ask learners to assume tasks or responsibilities beyond their competence without adequate instruction and supervision. The responsibility is on teachers to assure themselves of a learner's competence, but learners have a responsibility to inform teachers if they are not competent to carry out a task.
5. Learners should not be used to obtain written consent from patients, but they may witness signatures.
6. All members of the clinical team have a responsibility to ensure that these guidelines are followed. The final responsibility rests with the clinical teachers.

VII: Conduct at examinations

1. Examiners should treat all candidates with respect regardless of level of training, race, creed, colour, gender, sexual orientation or field of study.
2. Examiners should assess candidates solely on the basis of performance.
3. Examiners should adhere to the laid down regulations and pay heed to recognized norms of assessment.
4. The marks, grades or performance of candidates should not be divulged by examiners to unauthorized individuals.
5. Examiners should not attempt to influence the assessment of candidates by other examiners.
6. Candidates should not act in a manner that would unfairly or fraudulently alter assessment made by examiners.
7. Examiners should not fraudulently alter the marks or grades of any candidate.
8. Examiners should declare and avoid any conflicts of interest that are likely to or would be perceived to be affecting independent assessment of candidates.
9. Members of the board and examiners should declare and relinquish their posts if candidates who are members of their family or their employees are sitting for the examination. The temporary resignation should cover a period of time from when the board members begin to discuss matters relating to the examination till the examination results are released.
10. Mentors should not be the examiners of the portfolios of their mentees.

VIII: Conduct in e-learning and teaching (Netiquette)

The online teaching/ learning environment is like any other such environment in that the basic rules of behaviour apply. However, unlike in face to face teaching, teachers and learners do not see each other online. They cannot observe each others' body language. Furthermore what is uploaded enters cyberspace and may be seen by third parties. Hence great care must be taken to safe guard the teaching/ learning environment and those interacting within it. This is particularly important with regard to ensuring intellectual property rights online.

1. The online programme should guarantee equal access to all authorized learners.
2. Computing resources of the College should not be used for any other purpose other than what is stated in the programme. Copy rights need to be protected.
3. Teachers and learners should treat each other with respect in all online communications.
4. Confidential patient information should not be posted via email.
5. Personal information of learners and work done by them uploaded into the programme must be treated as confidential at all times.
6. Keeping in mind the speed and connectivity of the internet which can magnify missteps and errors of communications it is necessary that emotions should be properly managed

by teachers and learners online. Care must be taken not to respond to personal attacks and seemingly abusive comments as they too may be the result of missteps of others.

7. Teachers and learners should be forgiving of each others' mistakes online while promptly acknowledging their own.
8. Personal beliefs including those relating to politics and religion must be excluded from the online environment unless they have been specifically requested.
9. While online, teachers and learners could challenge each others' ideas but not abuse those who express them.
10. Teachers and learners should limit or if possible avoid the use of emoticons and "Caps Lock" features as they are prone to be misinterpreted.
11. Teachers and learners should exercise great care and pause before using "Reply All", "Cc", "Send" and "Forward" commands.
12. Teachers and learners should read all messages in a thread before replying.
13. Teachers or learners should refrain from sharing pass words.
14. Learners' posts should be relevant to the topic and within the scope of the course material.
15. Teachers and learners should ensure that they log out when they have finished with the system.

16. Teachers and learners when communicating online should express themselves clearly, be brief and to the point and be respectful of each others' time and bandwidth.
17. Learners who are new to online learning should observe how their peers communicate with each other before participating in online discussions, chat rooms, or post information on course web space.

IX. Conduct in Research

More often than not medical research involves patients. The safety and the welfare of the patients must be given the highest consideration by doctors when undertaking research. The relationship between teachers and learners has an impact on research projects undertaken as part of coursework. Therefore their conduct is important. The College has a duty to facilitate good quality research of the highest ethical standard, in its educational programmes

1. Safeguarding the interests of research participants and ensuring their safety is the responsibility of the College, teachers and learners.
2. Teachers should guide learners towards adhering to research ethics.
3. Learners should obtain approval from authorized ethical review committees prior to embarking on research.
4. Teachers and learners should declare and avoid conflicts of interests prior to undertaking research.
5. The College should ensure strict confidentiality of all research proposals submitted by learners.
6. Supervisors should not claim authorship of research that they have supervised.

Acknowledgements

The under mentioned documents were consulted and adapted in the preparation of this code.

1. Code for the Ethical Conduct of Clinical Teaching Encounters (Policy # CC-04) of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Queen's University
Last revised: April 15, 2008
<file:///Z:/Committees/Faculty%20of%20Teachers%20of%20Family%20Medicine/Code%20of%20Conduct-11.2.2014/Web%20Pages/Code%20for%20Ethical%20OConduct%20of%20Clinical%20Teaching%20Encounters.htm>
2. Code of Ethics for Educators of the Association of American Educators
<file:///Z:/Committees/Faculty%20of%20Teachers%20of%20Family%20Medicine/Code%20of%20Conduct-11.2.2014/Web%20Pages/Code%20of%20Ethics%20for%20Educators.htm>
3. Code of Conduct of the Faculty of Medicine of McGill University
https://www.mcgill.ca/files/medsra/Code_of_Conduct.pdf
4. Netiquette Guidelines for online students, Distance learning programme, Wenatchee Valley College revised March 2010.
<https://www.wvc.edu/directory/departments/distance/netiquette.pdf>

5. Netiquette Guidelines for online courses

<http://carleton.ca/edc/wp-content/uploads/Netiquette.pdf>

6. The Core rules of Netiquette (Summary) - Netiquette by Virginia Shea

<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/book/>

This code was prepared by Percy Motha (Chairman), Jayantha Jayatissa (Hony. Secretary), B G D Bujawansa and Eugene Corea of the Values Committee/ College of General Practitioners of Sri Lanka.

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04th August 2014