Achieving good medical practice

Honesty and Integrity in the Professional Environment
Aims and Objectives

1) To develop an understanding of what honesty and integrity means to us as medical students

2) To identify the importance of honesty and integrity within your interactions with patients, peers and professionals

3) To be able to critically analyse common scenarios with regards to honesty and integrity

4) To find out more about the GMC guidance on *Achieving good medical practice: a medical students guide*

5) To give you a few tools to take into your professional work, to help you in difficult situations where honesty and integrity are of great importance
Task 1: In pairs, try to explain to your partner what honesty and integrity means to you. Try to give an example upon when you feel you acted with integrity or honesty within the professional environment?

Often subtle things, with potentially significant repercussions

Would you correct a ward cleaner if they call you doctor?

Is intertwined within policy and legislation

Are you aware that forging a signature is classified as fraud?

Is it dishonest to reassure a patient who is facing imminent death?

If you were a patient, would you prefer the upsetting truth, or a false comfort?

Would you lie to prevent yourself getting in trouble if you were 100% certain you would not get caught?

Honesty and Integrity

Would you apologise to a patient if you made a minor prescribing mistake, with no subsequent sequelae?

Would you declare a recent criminal conviction to your medical school?

Would you do anything if you heard a fellow colleague make a derogatory comment about a recently qualified nurse?

How many times have you raised / reported patient safety concerns whilst on placement?

Have you ever made up or claimed to find a positive examination finding?

Have you ever discussed examination / OSCE questions before your student colleagues sit the exam themselves?

Have you ever made up or claimed to find a positive examination finding?

Is this an acceptable way to approach being a medical professional? How would you feel if you heard someone making a derogatory comment about your performance in your first week of foundation training?

How many times have you raised / reported patient safety concerns whilst on placement?

Have you ever discussed examination / OSCE questions before your student colleagues sit the exam themselves?

Do you feel it is honest to keep silent about your mistakes, or is it better to be open about them and learn from your errors?
Lesson 1: understand and accept your level of knowledge, skill and competence

Task 2: A medical student is on his first week of placement in A&E. He has just looked at an x-ray, and thinks he can see a transverse fracture of the left radius. He has not discussed his thoughts with his supervising consultant. Listen to the following conversation. Give 3 examples in this scenario of behaviour not demonstrating honesty and integrity.
Lesson 1: understand and accept your level of knowledge, skill and competence

Task 2: A medical student is on his first week of placement in A&E. He has just looked at the x-ray, and thinks he can see a transverse fracture of the left radius. He has not discussed his thoughts with his supervising consultant. **Give 3 examples of behaviour in this scenario not demonstrating honesty and integrity.**

- Failed to correct the history giver when ‘incorrectly’ called doctor
- Incorrectly gave a diagnosis of a left radial fracture without the underpinning knowledge to make the diagnosis
- Gave management advice without the underpinning knowledge to make the informed decision

Task 3: How would you demonstrate honesty and integrity in this scenario?

- Explain your destination (job role – e.g. 2nd year medical student), and explain why you are speaking with the patient
- Explain that you cannot give a confirmed diagnosis based on your level of training and lack of knowledge
- Explain that you are unable to offer a management plan, and signpost the question to your senior doctor
Lesson 1: understand and accept your level of knowledge, skill and competence

**Task 4:** *Listen to the following version of the same scenario.* This student understands and accepts his level of knowledge, skill and competence. What are the possible consequences of the behaviours demonstrated by the medical student in the first scenario?

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**Experience of emergency medicine**

One of the second-year medical students had some experience of emergency medicine. Could I ask your name and also the name and DOB of your son?

*Of course, my name is Rachel Patterson, and this is my son James. His date of birth is 27th March 2012."

Thank you. Would it be okay if we had a chat about why you have brought James in today?

*Of course, my son was playing football. He tripped and fell forward onto his wrist. Straight after this, he started crying and complaining of pain. Have you seen his X-ray?*

The A&E consultant did show it to me before I came in. Unfortunately, I cannot really comment on what it shows. As I have very little experience in reading wrist X-rays, the consultant will come and talk to you soon and explain what it shows. If anything is that okay with you?

*OK, will he need surgery?*
Lesson 1: understand and accept your level of knowledge, skill and competence

Task 4: This student understands and accepts his level of knowledge, skill and competence. **What are the possible consequences of the behaviours demonstrated by the medical student in the first video scenario?**

- Emotional distress to the patient, relatives and friends
- Breakdown of the patient - doctor or student relationship
- Loss of confidence in the decision making ability of clinicians
- Demonstrates carelessness, and a lack of respect
- Misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatments
- Inaccurate medical records
- Inappropriate / unnecessary medical examinations and investigations
- Financial implications
- Sequalae resulting from incorrect identification as a medically qualified doctor
Lesson 2: be honest when you make mistakes, and apologise for your errors

**Task 5:** *Listen to the following scenario. What would you do if you made a similar mistake?*
Lesson 2: be honest when you make mistakes, and apologise for your errors

**Task 5: What would you do if you made a similar mistake?**

Be open and honest when something goes wrong

You should tell your supervisor as soon as possible, as they can support you, and if necessary will help you put things right, which may include explaining to the patient what has happened and offering an apology.

Remain calm, professional, kind and understanding to your patient, their family and friends, and also to your colleagues.

**Task 6: In pairs roleplay a conversation** between yourself (the medical student), and the patient you have wrongly taken blood from.

**Task 7: Listen to an example response** from the medical student demonstrating honesty towards the error he has made.
Lesson 3: be a professional, and treat your colleagues with respect

Task 8: Listen to the following audio clip between a consultant doctor and a medical student. In your groups, discuss the following: Why should you not act in this way?

Professional performance involves participating fully in the learning process

Trust is expected in doctors and students

It is important to engage fully with your medical course by attending educational activities, including lectures, seminars and placements

Doctors and students are trusted with the most personal information regarding a patient’s health – it is important not to abuse this trust

Doctors hold a trusted position in society and must make sure their conduct – both professionally and personally – justifies their patient’s trust in them and the public trust in the profession

In order to perform your job fully, you require the full trust of your colleagues

Honesty and trust are the cornerstone of our profession

Dishonesty in medical practice can have legal and financial implications

Be impartial. Treat all patients equally. Explain treatments fully. Do not copy the work of others. Do not forge a supervisor’s name.
Lesson 4: support your colleagues kindly, and treat them with respect

Task 9: Listen to the following audio clip between a medical student and a student nurse. Has the medical student responded appropriately in this situation?

- Has stopped the student nurse placing the patient in danger
- Showed his colleague little respect, and his behaviour could be considered rude and unjustified
- No acknowledgement of the patient and their feelings
- Not supportive of the student nurse – who is also on placement trying to learn

Task 10: In pairs roleplay a conversation between yourself (the medical student), and the student nurse, upon how you would approach this situation differently

Task 11: Listen to an example response from the medical student demonstrating a more respectful approach to the patient safety error the student nurse is about to commit

Treat all patients equally
Explain treatments fully
Do not copy the work of others
Do not forge a supervisor’s name
Offer an apology
Be professional when accepting criticism
Be dependable
Reflective practice
Informed consent
Be honest if things go wrong
Do not abuse your position
Be open about your competence
Be impartial
Be honest when writing in medical notes
Be kind.
Take Home Messages

1) You are a representative for the medical profession – ensure your professional behaviour matches the expectations the public hold of you

2) Start as you mean to go on. Developing an honest attitude to your work, and demonstrating integrity as a medical student; will translate to good medical practice as a qualified doctor

3) Even though there may be an easier option, it is always best to offer an apology, explain the situation, and work with your colleagues in managing complex situations involving errors

Achieving good medical practice:
guidance for medical students

Link to the guidance