

University of Arizona College of Medicine-Tucson Campus

Professionalism Program Mistreatment Definitions and Reporting for Medical Students

Goal

The University of Arizona College of Medicine – Tucson Professionalism Program and the College’s administrators are dedicated to improving and advancing our learning environment and to reducing/eliminating behaviors toward our learners that are not conducive to their growth and professional development.

This policy is in addition to the University of Arizona’s [Non-discrimination and Anti-harassment policy](#), which prohibits discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, based on a protected classification, including race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or genetic information. Any suspected violation of this policy will be referred to the Office of Institutional Equity.

Definition of Mistreatment

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Graduation Questionnaire¹ defines mistreatment as follows:

“Mistreatment either intentional or unintentional occurs when behavior shows disrespect for the dignity of others and unreasonably interferes with the learning process. Examples of mistreatment include sexual harassment; discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation; humiliation; psychological or physical punishment; and the use of grading and other forms of assessment in a punitive manner.”

Categories of Mistreatment Include²

Physical Mistreatment:

- “Physically mistreated causing pain or potential injury”
- “Pushed/slapped hand”
- “Exposed to other forms of physical mistreatment used to express frustration, make a point, or get attention”

Verbal Mistreatment:

- “Threatened/intimidated”
- “Yelled at”
- “Degraded/ridiculed/humiliated/insulted/sworn at/scolded/berated”
- “Exposed to inappropriate conversation/comments”

Sexual Harassment:

- “Exposed to hostile environment, including inappropriate physical contact, gender discrimination, sexual jokes, inappropriate comments, innuendo, and inappropriate requests of a sexual nature”
- “Unwanted social invitations (quid pro quo)”
- “Ignored because of gender”

Ethnic Mistreatment:

- “Exposed to racial or religious slurs/jokes”
- “Stereotyped”
- “Neglected/ignored (because of ethnicity)”

Power Mistreatment:

- “Dehumanized/demeaned/humiliated”
- “Deliberately asked a question the physician knows the student cannot answer (“pimping”)”
- “Intimidated/threatened with poor evaluation or grade consequences”
- “Asked to do inappropriate tasks”
- “Forced to adhere to inappropriate scheduling”
- “Neglect/ignored”

Adapted from The Pritzker School of Medicine, University of Chicago’s examples of mistreatment and non-mistreatment³:

		Mistreatment is not . . .	Mistreatment is . . .
M	Malicious intent	On the first day of third year, the ward clerk says to the student, “you guys are green,” then offers to help the students find a computer station.	A resident purposely gives a student misinformation before rounds. The student overhears the resident laughing about messing him over.
I	Intimidation on Purpose	A student working with the chairman of surgery says he feels nervous about operating with him since the chairman can “make or break” his career.	A resident tells a student that he intends to make her cry before the rotation is over.
S	Sexual harassment	A male student is asked not to go into a room because a female patient only wants a female to examine her.	A male attending tells a female student, “I can tell you know how to grab it like you mean it” while she is inserting an indwelling Foley catheter.
T	Threatening verbal or physical behavior	A student is yelled at to “get the XXX out of the way” by a nurse as a patient is about to be shocked during a code.	An attending grabs the student’s finger with a clamp in the OR or tells the student he is an idiot after he could not answer a “pimp” question.
R	Racism or excessive discrimination	An attending gives a student feedback on how to improve performance.	A resident tells a Hispanic student his “people” (assuming illegal immigrants) are responsible for high healthcare costs.
E	Excessive or unrealistic expectations	A student is asked to review an article and present it on rounds to the team.	A resident tells a student it is her job to perform rectal exams (necessary or not) on all the patients admitted to the service.
A	Abusive favors	A student is asked to get coffee for herself and for the team prior to rounds. The resident did it yesterday. The team gives the student money.	A student is asked to pick up an attending’s dry cleaning.
T	Trading for grades	A resident tells a student she can review and present a topic to the team as an opportunity to enhance her grade.	A student is told that if he helps a resident move, he will get honors.

As the above table illustrates, there is a distinction between **embarrassment**, which is NOT mistreatment, and **harassment**, which is mistreatment.

- Embarrassment: The state of feeling foolish in front of others. Example: An attending tells a student to prepare for an upcoming surgery by reviewing the relevant anatomy. The student fails to do so and is embarrassed when the attending asks an anatomical question during the surgery that he does not know the answer to.
- Harassment: When an unpleasant or hostile situation is purposefully created. Example: An attending physician purposely asks a question that he feels the student will not know the answer to and then publically calls her “stupid.”

Reporting Concerns of Possible Mistreatment⁴

- a. Medical students who are the subject of mistreatment or who have witnessed mistreatment of their fellow student are encouraged to discuss it with a faculty member/staff who is in a position to understand the context and address necessary action. Retaliation against medical students who report is not tolerated.
- b. The following positions should be considered as primary resources:
 - Block/Course Directors
 - Deans in the College of Medicine
 - Professionalism Support Team
 - Ombudsman
 - Students on away rotations should report to their course director at the site or to the above College of Medicine resources.
 - If the student does not feel comfortable reporting the mistreatment in person he/she can file a confidential report via the [professional conduct comment form](#).

Any report that suggests mistreatment will be referred to the University’s Professionalism Committee. Any report that suggests unlawful discrimination or harassment under the University’s Non-discrimination and Anti-harassment policy will be referred to the Office of Institutional Equity. Students may also directly report suspected discrimination or harassment to the Office of Institutional Equity.

Anyone found to have engaged in mistreatment will be subject to disciplinary action.

References

1. Mavis B, Sousa A, Lipscomb W, Rappley MD. Learning about medical student mistreatment from responses to the Medical School Graduation Questionnaire. *Acad Med*. 2014;89(5):705-711.
2. Fried JM, Vermillion M, Parker NH, Uijtdehaage S. Eradicating medical student mistreatment: A longitudinal study of one institution’s efforts. *Acad Med*. 2012;87(9): 1191–1198.
3. Pritzker School of Medicine. (n.d.). Retrieved June 10, 2016, from <https://pritzker.uchicago.edu/page/student-treatment>
4. Mistreatment of Medical Students Policy. (2013). Retrieved June 10, 2016, from <http://phoenixmed.arizona.edu/policy/mistreatment-medical-students-policy>