Code of Conduct for Healthcare Professionals

HEALTH REGULATION DEPARTMENT

DUBAI HEALTH AUTHORITY

2014
BACKGROUND

The Medical Profession is distinguished from other professions by the special moral duty of care to save lives and to relieve pain and suffering. Medical ethics emphasizes the importance and priority of this moral ideal and duty above considerations of personal interests and private gains. Health professionals are obliged to abide by a strict code of conduct which embodies high ethical standards, values, protection of the patients' interests, and the requirement to uphold professional integrity. Trust is therefore deemed an essential pre-requisite for the practice of medicine. Trust in turn renders the healthcare professional to be trustworthy and accountable for their actions or inactions. Whereas a patient's trust is fundamental to the process of healing, the healthcare professionals ability to heal is dependent on their professional knowledge, experience, skillsets, scope of practice and granted privileges. It is therefore necessary for every healthcare professional to ensure continuous professional development and embrace lifelong learning to accomplish their duty of care to their patients.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Dubai Health Authority (DHA) is pleased to present the Code of Conduct for Health Professionals (HP), which represents a milestone towards fulfilling the DHA strategic objective 3.2 to “Ensure quality, stability and availability of health professionals”. This guideline places an emphasis on the conduct and behaviour expected by DHA licensed Health Professionals in the Emirate of Dubai. This guideline was developed by the Health Regulation Department (HRD) in collaboration with Subject Matter Experts whose contributions have been invaluable.

The Health Regulation Department would like to gratefully acknowledge those professionals and to thank them for their dedication to quality in health and their commitment in undertaking such a complex task.

The Health Regulation Department

Dubai Health Authority
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guideline sets out the ethical requirements for healthcare professionals working under the jurisdiction of Dubai Health Authority. Healthcare professionals in this context include physicians, dentists and allied health. All healthcare professionals are therefore required to promote good ethical practice to ensure the medical profession provides high quality and safe care and remains a trusted entity, source of best practice, information and decision-making.

This guideline includes fifteen recommendations and begins with the general principles followed by further details of each in the subsequent sections. This document serves as a guideline on code of conduct for all healthcare professionals as per DHA Regulation and UAE Laws but is not exhaustive and is not a substitute for the provisions of legislation. If there is any conflict between this guideline and the law, then the law will take precedence. Furthermore, this guideline does not detail specific scenarios but rather sets out the parameters of good practice. Healthcare Professionals must therefore use this guideline to inform decision-making and practice.
DEFINITIONS/ABBREVIATIONS

- **Beneficence**: is action that is done for the benefit of others. Beneficent actions can be taken to help prevent or remove harms or to simply improve the situation of others.

- **Code of conduct**: is a set of conventional principles and expectations that are considered binding on any person who is a member of the medical profession.

- **Code of ethics**: is a written set of guidelines issued by an organization to its workers and management to help them conduct their actions in accordance with its primary values and ethical standards.

- **Communicable disease**: means an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxins that occurs through the direct or indirect transmission of the infectious agent or its products from an infected individual or via an animal, vector or the inanimate environment to a susceptible animal or human host.

- **Healthcare Professional**: A person who by education, training, certification and DHA licensure is qualified to provide healthcare services under the jurisdiction of DHA. They are typically an individual or a group of individuals involved with the delivery of health or related health services pertaining to the identification, assessment, evaluation, prevention, management or treatment of disorders, conditions or diseases.

- **Informed consent**: is a person’s voluntary decision about medical care that is made with knowledge and understanding of the benefits and risks involved. It includes:
a. Providing information to patients in a way that they can understand before asking for their consent.

b. Obtaining valid authority from the patients before undertaking any examination, investigation or provide treatment, or before involving patients in teaching or research.

- **Non-maleficence**: means to “do no harm.” Physicians must refrain from providing ineffective treatments or acting with malice toward patients.

- **Research ethics**: The application of moral rules and professional codes of conduct to the collection, analysis, reporting, and publication of information about research subjects, in particular active acceptance of subjects’ right to privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent.

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AHP</td>
<td>Allied Health Professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGO</td>
<td>Clinical Governance Office</td>
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<td>DHA</td>
<td>Dubai Health Authority</td>
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<td>HP</td>
<td>Health Professional</td>
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<td>HRD</td>
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<td>WMA</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Medical ethics is a system of moral principles that apply values to the practice of clinical medicine and in scientific research. Medical ethics is based on a set of values that professionals can refer to in the case of any confusion or conflict. These values include the respect for autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice. All healthcare professionals are required to uphold and abide by the oath undertaken on graduation, e.g. Hippocratic Oath, The Declaration of Helsinki (1964) and The Nuremberg Code (1947), Declaration of Geneva and WMA Code of Medical Ethics, etc. This guideline is focuses on the health professional's responsibility to act in the best interest of patients, the public and ethical principles of:

- Beneficence; refers to doing good to others
- Non-maleficence, refers to doing no harm to others
- Fair and unbiased provision of health services (justice)
- Respect for your patient’s privacy and confidentiality
- Respect for your patient's right to refuse or choose their treatment in accordance with any UAE laws that are applicable (autonomy)
- Personal integrity
Such tenets may allow healthcare providers, and patients to create a treatment plan and work towards the same common goal without any conflict. It is important to note that tenets are non-hierarchical. This guideline is not intended to provide an exhaustive study of medical ethics nor is it intended to cover every situation or complexity that may be encountered in medical practice. However, contravening this guideline may render a licensed Health Professional liable to disciplinary proceedings as per DHA’s Regulations.

2. SCOPE

All Healthcare Professionals (HP) licensed to practice under the jurisdiction of DHA

3. PURPOSE

• To set out the principles that foster high quality and safe medical practice

• To assure healthcare professionals fulfil their professional duties and to assure timely, effective, and safe care

• To assist in public protection through the provision of best practice guidelines

• To set out a framework to guide professional judgment and/or disciplinary action
4. APPLICABILITY

4.1. This guideline is applicable to all healthcare professionals providing healthcare services under the jurisdiction of DHA in the Emirate of Dubai.

5. RECOMMENDATION ONE: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

5.1. This document is based on the following principles, which are to be followed by the HP at all times.

5.1.1. Act in the best interest of your patients and the public.

5.1.2. Respect your patient’s privacy and maintain confidentiality of information.

5.1.3. Working with patients with caring, honesty and integrity.

5.1.4. Respect your patient’s choice and right to refuse or choose their treatment and obtain informed consent to give treatment.

5.1.5. Communicate effectively with your patient, caregivers and other professionals.

5.1.6. Ensure that any advertising you do, or support is truthful, accurate and does not induce unnecessary demands for your services.

5.1.7. Limit your work or stop practicing if your performance or judgment is affected by your health or other reasons.
5.1.8  Act within the limits of your knowledge, skill and experience, and if necessary, refer to another professional.

5.1.9  Keep accurate and adequate patient records.

5.1.10 Engage in professional development and keep your professional skills and knowledge up-to-date.

5.1.11 Maintain high standards of personal conduct and behavior.

5.1.12 Effectively supervise tasks you have asked others to complete and undertake supervisory duties you have been assigned professionally.

6. **RECOMMENDATION TWO: ACT IN THE BEST INTEREST OF YOUR PATIENTS AND THE PUBLIC**

6.1  You must take responsibility for the safety and welfare of your patient and the public at all times.

6.2  You must not allow personal biases and prejudices to affect the quality of services provided to your patient.

6.3  You must take part in systems of quality improvement to promote patient safety. This includes:

   6.3.1 Engaging in regular reviews and audits of their work and that of their team.

   6.3.2 Responding constructively to the outcomes of the audit.
6.3.3 Taking steps to address any problems and carrying out further training where necessary.

6.3.4 Regularly reflecting on the standards of practice and the care they provide.

6.3.5 Review patient feedback, where it is available.

6.4 To help keep patients safe you must:

6.4.1 Report sentinel events that put or have the potential to put the safety of a patient, or another person at risk to the relevant accrediting body.

6.4.2 Report suspected adverse drug reactions.

6.4.3 Eliminate any risk that would compromise patient safety.

6.5 If you suspect to or have any communicable disease that could be passed on to patients, or if your judgment or performance could be affected by a condition or its treatment, you must consult a suitably qualified professional. You must follow their advice about any changes to your practice or treatment they consider necessary. You must not rely on your own assessment of the risk to patients.

6.6 You must inform the Clinical Governance Office (CGO) at Health Regulation Department (HRD) if you have any concerns regarding the health, conduct or competence of other licensed professionals you work with that may negatively impact the safety and welfare of patients and/or the public. Please refer to the fitness to practice policy issued by DHA for more information.
6.7 You must deal impartially and safely with risks of infection to your patient and to
yourself. You must make sure that all staff and trainees, if any, you manage have
appropriate supervision to carry out the activities safely.

6.8 When participating in clinical research, you must put the care and safety of your patient
first and ensure that the trial is approved by DHA research ethical committee. In
addition, informed consent must be obtained from participants.

7. **RECOMMENDATION THREE: PATIENT’S PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF
INFORMATION**

7.1 Keep your patient’s records confidential, and use the information obtained in the course
of your professional practice only for the purposes for which it was given, or where it is
otherwise lawful.

7.2 Ensure that there is no disclosure of any patient information without consent, except
where it is required or permitted by law or if it is required to protect your patient or
others from harm.

7.3 Not in any way exploit or abuse the relationship with your patient and the trust your
patient has placed in you.

7.4 Take reasonable steps to make sure that there is no unauthorized access, use or
accidental disclosure of your patient’s information.
7.5 Respect your patient’s refusal for therapy, whether in part or in whole. Based on UAE law.

8. **RECOMMENDATION FOUR: WORKING WITH PATIENTS WITH CARING, HONESTY AND INTEGRITY**

8.1 Working with patients requires high standards of professional conduct. This involves you to:

8.1.1 Be polite, compassionate and honest.

8.1.2 Treat patients as individuals and respect their dignity, privacy and personal beliefs.

8.1.3 Share with patients all the information they will need to make decisions about their care.

8.1.4 Support patients in caring for themselves and to empower them to improve and maintain their health.

8.2 During patient consultation you should:

8.2.1 Adequately assess the patient's conditions, taking account of their history (including the symptoms and psychological, spiritual, social and cultural factors), their views and values; and examine the patient.

8.2.2 Promptly provide or arrange suitable advice, investigations or treatment.
8.2.3 Prescribe drugs or treatment, including repeat prescriptions, only when you have adequate knowledge of the patient’s health and are satisfied that the drugs or treatment will help with the patient’s ailment.

8.2.4 Provide effective treatments based on the best available evidence.

8.2.5 Be satisfied that they have informed consent before carrying out any examination or investigation, provide treatment or involve patients or volunteers in teaching or research.

8.2.6 Take all possible steps to alleviate pain and distress whether or not a cure may be possible.

8.2.7 Consult colleagues where appropriate.

8.2.8 Inform patients about their right to see another doctor and ensure that they have enough information to exercise that right.

8.2.9 Conduct clinical examination of patients from opposite gender in the presence of a chaperone.

8.2.10 Check that the care or treatment provided for each patient is compatible with any other treatments the patient is receiving, including (where possible) self-prescribed over-the-counter medications.

8.3 You must not use your professional position to pursue a sexual or improper emotional relationship with a patient or someone close to them.
8.4 You must not express your personal beliefs (including political, religious and moral beliefs) to patients in ways that may cause them distress.

8.5 You must not refuse or delay treatment because you believe that a patient's actions or lifestyle have contributed to their condition.

8.6 You must always refer appropriately if the patients' condition or needs are not within your scope of practice.

8.7 You must contribute to the safe transfer of patients between healthcare providers and between health and social care providers.

8.8 You must share all relevant information with colleagues involved in the patients' care within and outside the team, including when handing over care when they go off duty, and when delegating care or referring patients to other health or social care providers.

8.9 When delegating the care of a patient to a colleague, you must be satisfied that the person providing care has the appropriate qualifications, skills and experience to provide safe care for the patient.

8.10 When accepting a referral from other professionals, you must ensure that you fully understand the request, and provide treatment only if you believe it is appropriate or in your patient's best interest to do so. If this is not the case, you must discuss the matter with the professional who has made the referral and the patient.

8.11 You must consider and respond to the needs of disabled patients and should make reasonable adjustments, so they can receive care to meet their needs.
8.12 Be open and honest with patients if the treatment or procedure does not achieve the expected outcome. You should explain promptly and in detail to the patient/their family what has happened and discuss the likely short-term and long-term effects that the patient could have and advise them accordingly.

9. **RECOMMENDATION FIVE: RESPECT YOUR PATIENT’S CHOICE AND OBTAIN INFORMED CONSENT**

9.1 You must ensure that your patient understands the need for treatment or services to be provided, the risks involved and expected outcomes from the treatment provided prior to proceeding, except in an emergency situation.

9.2 If your patient is unable to give consent, informed consent should be obtained from family members as appropriate in accordance with UAE law.

9.3 If your patient or family refuses treatment or therapy that you believe is necessary for their well-being or else would put them at significant risk or harm, you must take reasonable efforts to persuade them to be treated.

9.4 You must respect your patient’s wish for a second opinion, and/or decision to consult with other health professionals.
9.5 You must make reasonable records of the information provided to your patient, your patient’s consent or decision on treatment provided, in accordance with point 3.9 of this Code.

10. RECOMMENDATION SIX: COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

10.1 Take reasonable steps to ensure effective communication with your patient, their family, fellow professional colleagues, and other healthcare professionals, to enhance outcomes for your patient.

10.2 Be truthful, respectful and courteous in all your professional communications, with your patient, his caregivers, or other professionals.

10.3 Listen to patients, take account of their views, and respond honestly to their questions.

10.4 Ensure that patients are involved, within the limits of their capacities, in understanding the nature of their problems, the range of possible solutions, as well as the likely benefits, risks, and costs, and should assist them in making informed choices.

10.5 Ensure that your communication with your patient and/or his family is done in a manner that does not impair confidence in other professionals involved in his care. You must not disrespect any professional or criticize their opinion in any situation.

10.6 Strive to communicate clearly and effectively with your fellow professional colleagues, and other professionals.
10.7 Update other professionals involved in the care of your patient where appropriate to ensure adequate care for the patient.

10.8 Maintain patient confidentiality when communicating publicly, including speaking to or writing in the media.

10.9 Be honest and trustworthy when writing reports, and when completing or signing forms, reports and other documents. They must ensure that any documents they write, or sign are not false or misleading.

10.10 Have knowledge of, respect for, and sensitivity towards, the cultural diversity of the community in the UAE.

11. RECOMMENDATION SEVEN: TRUTHFUL ADVERTISING

11.1 You must ensure that any advertising you publish or support, or any information provided about you or your services is truthful, factual and accurate.

11.2 You must not persuade your patient to acquire more services than are required.

11.3 You must not mislead the public and your patients with regard to your professional qualification, experience and expertise.

11.4 Your advice and recommendations on products or services to your patient must not be influenced by financial or other forms of rewards.
11.5 If you have a financial interest in an organization or service to which you intend to refer patients for any treatment or investigation, you must always disclose this interest to your patient and your health facility before making a referral.

12. **RECOMMENDATION NINE: CONCERNS WITH OWN HEALTH OR JUDGMENT**

1.1. You must stop practicing or limit your scope of work if your ability to practice safely and effectively is adversely affected by your mental or physical health or for any other reason.

1.2. You must consult a suitably qualified health professional, on ways that you can change your practice to continue to be safe and effective, or stop practicing if it is necessary, depending on their advice.

1.3. If you are suffering from any communicable disease, you must take necessary precautions and limit your practice in order to prevent infecting others. You are also to seek medical advice and follow it.

1.4. You must inform the HRD of any significant changes in your mental or physical health and resulting changes in your practice.
13. **RECOMMENDATION TEN: ACT WITHIN THE LIMITS OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE**

13.1 You must only practice within the scope of your own competence, or the fields in which you have the appropriate education, training and experience and hold a valid license from DHA.

13.2 You must consult or refer as appropriate, for further advice or treatment, if you discover in the course of treating your patient that your patient requires interventions that are beyond your own scope of practice or experience.

13.3 If you are returning to practice after a gap in service, you may be required to practice under supervision or according to the Approved Practice Setting and Back to Practice regulation set by the HRD.

14. **RECOMMENDATION ELEVEN: PATIENT RECORDS**

14.1 You must ensure that the records are complete and legible.

14.2 You must sign and date all entries.

14.3 Complete records means that records must include the following:

   14.3.1 Relevant patient details.

   14.3.2 Medical and social history.

   14.3.3 Findings on physical examination.

   14.3.4 Assessment of therapeutic problems.
14.3.5 Any investigations done.

14.3.6 Treatment plan proposed and performed.

14.3.7 Treatment outcomes and progress of your patient

14.3.8 Discussions between yourself, your patient, family, and other professionals and including informed consent.

14.4 Entry into the records shall be made at the same time during patient contact or as soon as possible afterwards.

14.5 Patient records shall be stored securely and are not subject to unauthorized access.

14.6 You should ensure that medical records show respect for the patients and do not include demeaning or derogatory remarks.

14.7 You shall recognize the patients’ right to access information contained in their medical records and should facilitate that access.

14.8 You should promptly facilitate the transfer of health information through medical report when requested by the patient.

14.9 You must not tamper with or erase information that has been entered previously into any patient records.

14.10 If you are legitimately updating or amending the information, you must ensure that the previous information is not made difficult to read, and simply mark the error with a strike-through line, sign and date the amendment.
15. **RECOMMENDATION TWELVE: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

15.1 You must endeavor to promote and participate actively in continued learning, professional development and advancement of knowledge and skills.

15.2 You are responsible for keeping up-to-date of changes and developments in the field of your profession.

15.3 You are strongly encouraged to initiate, participate and engage in activities both within and between professions in developing, integrating and improving patient care.

16. **RECOMMENDATION THIRTEEN: PERSONAL CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOR**

16.1 Be honest and behave with integrity in dealings with patients, employers, insurers and other organizations or individuals.

16.2 You must not be involved in any criminal or unlawful activities.

16.3 You must not allow any personal interests you have, to affect the way you prescribe, treat, refer or commission services for patients. This includes unnecessary investigations requested for the patients.

16.4 You must not engage in any improper relationship or behavior with your patient and the immediate members of your patient’s family.

16.5 Ensure that your behavior, whether in your personal or professional capacity, does not damage the public confidence in you or your profession, or bring disrepute to your profession or organization.
16.6 You must not in your professional capacity, support the services provided by persons or organizations that do not provide legitimate allied health, medical or medical support services.

16.7 You must not ask for or accept – from patients, colleagues or others – any bribe, gift or free hospitality that may affect or be seen to affect the way you prescribe for, treat or refer patients or commission services for patients.

17. RECOMMENDATION FOURTEEN: EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

17.1 If you are a supervisor you must:

17.1.1 Ensure that any professional under your supervision has the necessary competencies prior to performing the tasks assigned.

17.1.2 Be responsible for ensuring that the safety of your patient is not compromised at all times when delegating duties to other personnel including trainees.

17.1.3 Not force any professional under supervision to undertake a task which he/she is not confident of handling.

17.1.4 Ensure that there is clear documentation of the supervision provided.

17.2 If you are a specialist under supervision or a clinical trainee then you must:

17.2.1 Follow the instructions of your supervisor.

17.2.2 Do not undertake any activities that you are not allowed to do or confident of.
17.2.3 Always wear your badge and inform the patient that you are a specialist under supervision or clinical trainee.

18. **RECOMMENDATION FIFTEEN: GENERAL RESEARCH ETHICS**

If you are conducting or participating in a research, you should abide with the following:

18.1 Strive to attain the highest possible standards in all aspects of conservation. All actions should be governed by an informed respect for cultural property.

18.2 Research aims should contribute to the good of society.

18.3 Research must be based on sound theory.

18.4 Research participants must voluntarily consent to research participation.

18.5 Research must avoid unnecessary physical and mental suffering.

18.6 The degree of risk taken with research participants cannot exceed anticipated benefits of results.

18.7 Proper environment and protection for participants is necessary.

18.8 Experiments can be conducted only by scientifically qualified persons.

18.9 Human subjects must be allowed to discontinue their participation at any time.

18.10 Must be prepared to terminate the experiment if there is cause to believe that continuation will be harmful or result in injury or death.

18.11 The results of research should be presented to the academic community and wider public in a responsible manner.
18.12 The results of research should be used and communicated through appropriate and timely activities.

18.13 Should keep in confidence all information obtained about research participants.
REFERENCES


