

Trust and Respect

Stethoscope Ceremony

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Welcome to the first U of T Stethoscope Ceremony — and since we made it up, it might be the first ever stethoscope ceremony anywhere. We want to welcome the new students to the PROFESSION of Medicine

I have some questions for the new students. Who has ever seen an episode of *House*? *Grey's Anatomy*? *Scrubs*?

I have sad news: this is real life and this is a real medical school. It's not *House* — brilliance (not that he is brilliant) is not an excuse for any behaviour. It's not *Grey's* — boundaries exist, and sex is not the primary motivator. It's not *Scrubs* — it will not be a farce (although there will be joyful as well as sad times.)

This is a real medical school. There are expectations. "Meets Expectations," if it is not a term you are familiar with, will take on a very important meaning. And there will be Professional expectations, as well as knowledge based expectations.

Today I want to concentrate on two words that I think are at the core of professionalism: **TRUST** and **RESPECT**

TRUST

Starting very soon people are going to treat you differently because you are a medical student. It will be a progressive change as you progress through the next four years. They will trust you because you are a medical student and are going to be a doctor. They will tell you things they will not tell their friends or family. They will trust you physically: to see and to touch them; and eventually to do procedures for them.

The Professional honours that trust and is worthy of it and there are a set of characteristics that make up being worthy of that trust.

Some of the characteristics are things that your parents — and many are here today — have taught you:

- integrity, telling the truth, keeping your promises
- being courteous and polite;
- being clean and dressing appropriately. (Looking at you today, I see that they did a good job on that one.)
- putting the needs of others before your own

- being responsible

Some are things that you will learn here:

- having the knowledge and skills to be good at what you do
- respecting privacy and confidentiality
- setting proper boundaries between yourself and patients

And there are traps to avoid, traps of being in a prominent profession:

- the trap of arrogance and elitism
- the trap of believing that you are entitled
- the trap of conflicts of interest

Professionals are worthy of the trust that patients and colleagues need to be able to put in them.

RESPECT

The second word for professionals today is “Respect” — but as an active verb, meaning to show respect; not as something you are owed. As professionals we should always show respect:

- for PATIENTS: respect their concerns and goals; respect their privacy and their confidences; respect their individuality
- for members of the TEAM: be courteous; respect their knowledge and viewpoints; avoid arrogance
- for YOURSELF: know your values and keep them; stay human; remember that humility is a virtue.

STETHOSCOPE CEREMONY

So now we come to the stethoscope ceremony. As you know, some medical schools have a white coat ceremony for new students but there are some of us here who are uncomfortable with the white coat as a symbol of the profession. We fear that it emphasizes differences between the doctor and the patient. It can set doctors, and medical students, apart. It can be seen as elitist.

We have chosen the stethoscope as our symbol. It is only functional if there is a person at each end — and it is all about listening.

Throughout your career, remember the symbolism of the stethoscope: stay humble; listen; show respect.