

Creating a positive work culture



*A set of **guidelines** for creating a positive and non-judgmental working environment for junior medical officers in their prevocational years*

For Yourself

DON'T WORRY ABOUT BEING JUDGED

Junior doctors often feel the pressure to demonstrate how good they are. The sense of failure from 'not knowing', fear of asking for help, and anxiety when escalating to a registrar or a consultant are detrimental to wellbeing and learning. It is important to normalize these feelings, adjust expectations, and recognize that prevocational training should be a positive learning experience.

- Recognise your limits
- Never feel discouraged to ask for help
- You are not expected to know all the answers, but you are expected to be able to gather the appropriate information and then approach a more senior clinician who can assist
- Recognise doctors are human - they get tired, sick, don't know everything, and even make mistakes

ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN CONTINUING EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Advocating education is beneficial in that, not only does it create more knowledgeable and skilled doctors, but also greatly serves to reinforce self-esteem and confidence in junior doctors as they begin to define their area of expertise.

- Identify gaps in your clinical knowledge or skills and actively seek opportunities to fill them
- Identify areas you enjoy and leverage your interest to further your understanding and skills
- Teach at every opportunity

WRITE IT DOWN

Often uncertainty and errors could be avoided with better documentation. Improving documentation would help reducing the uncertainty and stress faced by other junior doctors in dealing with unfamiliar patients during after-hour shifts and ultimately would help preventing errors and improving patients' outcome.

- Take the time to write a brief note - of your review, plan, reason for ceasing medications, etc.
- Take the time to write legibly - no point writing it down if it's completely illegible

ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN A SAFETY NET

- Identify trusted people (peers, senior doctors, friends, family) you can debrief with
- Recognise there is always someone you can reach out to
- Set reasonable expectations of your relationships - remember all relationships are two-way streets
- Foster good relationships with your peers - fellow residents understand what you are going through more than anyone else, and should be viewed as supports rather than competition

TAKE BREAKS, EAT YOUR LUNCH

- Recognise when to step away to mentally recoup - even just 10 minutes of fresh air, sunshine or coffee
- Recognise the world is very unlikely to end if you go and eat a sandwich

Interaction with Peers

DON'T JUDGE – BE A TEAM-PLAYER

In hospitals like in other working places there is a generalized tendency to engage in gossip - that is, express unprofessional, uninformed or out of context comments about other junior doctor that could affect their professional reputation – “That intern is completely unsafe, he does not know what to do...”

- Choose not to engage in gossip
- Actively promote camaraderie and cooperation amongst your colleagues
- Strenuously defend the idea of a working environment that ensure equity and respect for diversity
- Support each other and assist your colleagues during busy shifts

Interaction with other Teams

PROMOTE A POSITIVE COLLABORATION WITH NURSING STAFF

It is not unusual amongst junior doctors to sometime undermine nursing staff and/or to establish an antagonistic relationship – You will often hear... “The nurse called me to review a swelling that has been there for more than 3 years!” or “The nurse paged me and when I called back straight away she/he was not there anymore, seriously?!”

- Recognise that poor collaboration with nursing staff contributes to suboptimal patient care
- Contribute creating an environment of open communication, mutual respect and trust.
- Ensure a timely and satisfactory response to nursing staff concerns about patient care and wellbeing
- Recognise the role of nurses in providing a safety net for patients

PROMOTE A POSITIVE COLLABORATION WITH OTHER SPECIALTIES

- Recognise the knowledge and skills other specialties contribute to your patient’s care
- Recognise the high demand on consulting teams and give people the courtesy of assuming they are doing the best they can to manage their workload
- Choose not to engage with the “old” culture of denigrating other specialties
- Remember that, strangely enough, we are all actually on the same side

Interaction with Senior Clinicians

PROMOTE A SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE

- Be on time. Being punctual shows your respect for others and make you stand out as reliable and trustworthy
- Be confident asking registrars and consultants about investigations or examinations you don’t understand. You shouldn’t order anything if you don’t know why it’s being done.
- Encourage safe clinical practice, never perform anything unsupervised if you feel uncomfortable (e.g. lumbar puncture and chest drain)
- Uphold professionalism by avoiding talking negatively about any senior clinician

HAVE A ROLE MODEL – BE A ROLE MODEL

- Identify the characteristics and behaviours in the more senior doctors you admire that makes them a good registrar/consultant and incorporate these into your own practice
- Even consider characteristics/behaviours you find difficult or unhelpful, and rather than whinge, make a conscious effort to avoid these behaviours in your own practice as your progress into more senior roles
- Recognise the opportunities you have to make a positive impression on more junior doctors or students

