Student Mistreatment

The School of Medicine believes that students are entitled to be treated by others (faculty, staff, patients and fellow students) in a professional manner. In order to address possible mistreatment issues that may arise, the School has developed a Student Mistreatment Policy.

Student Mistreatment Policy

This policy encourages medical students who believe they were mistreated by other students, faculty, residents, staff or patients to bring the conduct to the attention of appropriate individuals within the school and/or the university.

Concerning Mistreatment at the University of Missouri:

The University of Missouri System is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution and is nondiscriminatory relative to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability or status as a Vietnam-era veteran. The University is committed to providing a positive work and learning environment where all individuals are treated fairly and with respect, regardless of their status. The University does not tolerate mistreatment by or of its students, faculty, residents, staff or patients.

The University’s formal policy on maintaining a positive work and learning environment can be found at the following address: http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/departments/gc/rules/personnel/330/080.shtml

Mistreatment comes in many forms, including but not limited to the following:
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- verbal abuse
- discrimination
- harassment (sexual or otherwise)
- public humiliation
- intentional neglect
- intentional lack of communication
- the assignment of tasks for punishment or in retaliation
- belittling of a student or their field of choice
- unreasonable or intentional exclusion of a student from an educational opportunity

In our investigations, educational efforts, policies and procedures, the School of Medicine recognizes that, in some instances, the perception of the individual who believes s/he were mistreated and the intent of the other person(s) involved are discrepant. Whatever the circumstance, students who believe they were mistreated are strongly encouraged to bring it to the attention of appropriate school or university officials (see below for contact information).

It is the university's special responsibility to provide a positive climate in which students can learn. The University expects that the School of Medicine will provide educational programs and otherwise direct resources to creative and serious measures designed to improve interpersonal relationships, to help develop healthy attitudes toward different kinds of people, and to foster a climate in which students are treated as individuals rather than as members of a particular category of people. The university specifically prohibits consensual amorous relationships between individuals where one has direct
supervisory or evaluative responsibility for the other (as between, for example, faculty member and student). The university’s policy in this regard can be found at the following address:  
http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/departments/hr/manual/519.shtml

Concerning Mistreatment at the School of Medicine:

The University of Missouri School of Medicine’s commitment to the provision of a professional learning environment for our students is made explicit in our Vision Statement for Education in the following words:

“Our educational processes promote intellectual curiosity, professionalism and the skills for life long learning.”

The School’s commitment is reiterated in the Foundation Values. The Foundation Values emphasize

• respect for one’s self, for others and for the truth
• commitment to act ethically, to welcome difference and to engage in an open exchange
• responsibility in our duty to our patients, colleagues and learners
• interactions that model the professionalism expected of physicians

The Foundation Values reiterate that prejudice or bias directed against others is not permissible. Prejudice or bias directed toward others, whether based upon race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age or sexual preference, is prohibited by University regulation.

Whom Should You Ask?

Medical students are sometimes reluctant to discuss mistreatment for fear of being identified or even receiving reprisals; yet often want alleged mistreatment incidents to be investigated. The School does not tolerate retaliation or reprisals against students who bring incidents of possible mistreatment to the attention of faculty and/or school officials.

The mistreatment of students by patients may be particularly painful. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss such incidents with a trusted supervisor, mentor or colleague.

A range of school and university resources are available to students who may wish to discuss issues informally and confidentially. Those resources include individual medical school faculty, deans and department chairs, advisors, clerkship directors, preceptors and others. Concerns, problems, questions and complaints may be discussed anonymously and confidentially with the Associate Dean for Student Programs, whose role specifically includes student advocacy and who is available to all enrolled MU medical students.

The Associate Dean for Student Programs is Rachel Brown MD

Office of Medical Education (MA215)
Telephone: 573-882-2923
Email: brownrac@health.missouri.edu

The same definitions, policies and procedures apply in all sites where University of Missouri School of Medicine students receive education and clinical training under the supervision of university faculty.
Students on offsite, community and rural rotations may feel somewhat isolated from their usual support systems and are particularly encouraged to utilize telephone and electronic means to discuss any issues that should arise.

A listing of university wide resources is available through the MU Equity website. MU Equity is the University office responsible for helping all members of the university community satisfactorily resolve equity-related problems. MU Equity is located in Memorial Union (telephone 882-9069). Their website can be accessed at http://equity.missouri.edu.

Medical students should be aware that the same standards of behavior are expected by and towards all students in the health professions. Medical students will, of course, undertake much of their education in working hospitals and clinics. Many health care systems, including the University of Missouri Health Care (UMHC), have policies concerning staff and physician “disruptive behavior” that are directed at supporting an environment where all individuals are treated with respect, courtesy and dignity.

**Informal Procedures:**

Students may choose to resolve a problem informally, either directly with another individual or group of individuals (faculty, staff, residents or other students) and/or after involving school or university administration. The Associate Dean for Student Programs is available within the School of Medicine to assist in such an informal resolution. Other faculty, staff and students may also be very helpful in the informal resolution of issues. Hospital ‘disruptive behavior’ policies and procedures may also be supportive. MU Equity is the university resource for informal inquiry and mediation. The circumstances of a particular case will determine the specific outcome.

MU Equity also provides an anonymous web based bias reporting process. Information about the bias reporting process can be found at: http://equity.missouri.edu/bias-reporting/form.php

**Formal Procedures:**

Assistance to students wishing to file formal complaints is available from the Associate Dean for Student Programs in the School of Medicine (MA215, telephone: 573-882-2923) and from MU Equity (Memorial Union: telephone: 573-882-9069).

The University of Missouri System is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action institution and is nondiscriminatory relative to race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability or status as a Vietnam-era veteran. Any person having inquiries concerning the University of Missouri-Columbia's compliance with implementing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, or other civil rights laws should contact the Assistant Vice Chancellor, Human Resource Services, University of Missouri-Columbia, 130 Heinkel Building, Columbia, Mo. 65211, 573-882-4256, or the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

The university’s formal discrimination grievance procedure can be found at the following address: http://www.umsystem.edu/ums/departments/gc/rules/grievance/390/010.shtml.
Formal complaints about faculty, residents and staff are made through University procedures utilizing the formal grievance procedure at the address above. Local hospital and health system Human Resource departments and physician Chiefs of Staff at particular sites may also need to be involved.

Formal complaints about other medical students are handled through the School of Medicine’s conduct codes. The bylaws of the School give the Committee on Student Promotions responsibility for determining whether students “have demonstrated the likelihood that they will be able to achieve and maintain the academic competencies and personal qualities required of the physician.” The personal qualities referred to include emotional stability and high ethical standards. Students wishing to proceed with formal complaints about other medical students should contact the Associate Dean for Student Programs (MA215: telephone 573-882-2923).