

Professionalism

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There's been a lot in the news about bullying and harassment, so now seems like a good time to talk about Professionalism (capital P). Many of you will have held part time jobs before, but unless you took a year off somewhere this may well be your first real 9-5 (or 8-4) job – especially those of you who entered Med via the HSFY. Probably most of the lectures on Professionalism washed over you much as they did over me – something you knew on paper but unrelated to most of your daily life. Even as a TI you're fairly shielded from it – you're rarely the person actually dealing directly with patients, families, other doctors and allied health professionals – but as a house officer you are often the first point of call for everyone.

One of the first things you'll realise is that other people don't know what you know. It may seem silly to point it out, but it's true. I remember thinking nurses must be incredibly stupid for not knowing even the most basic medical facts. For years you have sat at the bottom of the knowledge heap and the idea that you might know more about something than someone else seems implausible, but you really actually do. Remember this when they page you with apparently inane questions. Take the time to explain so they understand. Remember that they think we're stupid for not knowing how to dress a wound or program an IV infusion pump.

Above all try not to shout at them – their day is just as busy and stressful as ours is and they're not deliberately trying to make your life more difficult (mostly, anyway).

Be kind to your fellow house officers. If you can't do that, be civil. Many of you will not be working with your best friends from Med school – you will have to interact and socialise with a group of entirely new and unknown people. Whether you like them or not (and there will always be people you don't like) they are your co-workers and you should respect them as such – especially the ones you don't like.

I wish this went without saying, but unfortunately it doesn't so I'll say it: do not badmouth your co-workers to other staff, even as a joke. If you tried a joke and it went south, then accept that your humour tanked and

apologise sincerely (we're only human). Don't be racist or sexist at them or about them. Don't call them names, and especially don't call them names in front of other co-workers. Don't shout at them, even if you think they really deserve it (chances are there has been some misunderstanding). Do not throw tantrums.

You may end up socialising a lot with your cohort of PGY1s, other house officers, registrars and allied health professionals – remember that you still have to work with these people in the morning. Friendships and relationships are fine, but make sure it doesn't impact the working relationship you still need to have. Not everyone in the cohort will be your BFF – we all need to vent from time to time (including about each other) but think carefully about whom you choose to talk to and what you say.

Don't forget that things you do outside of the hospital can still have work-based, real-world consequences. You are not in high school anymore, you are a working professional with status in society – try and comport yourself appropriately.

If it seems like a lot of this is about not shouting, it's because that's the really basic stuff – Professionalism 101. If you've got it down, then you've got a good base to build on as you take on more responsibility in your career. Obviously professionalism encompasses much more than not being a jerk, but keeping it up all day every day – even when your pager has been going every 5 minutes, you're hangry because you missed dinner, and you've just fielded the most idiotic query in the history of medicine – is actually quite hard.

If you can manage to keep your cool in those moments you're doing well. It's a stressful year and we all slip up – some weeks it's like I can't keep my foot out of my mouth or my temper in check. This is the obvious stuff that can get you a bad reputation. Remember – shouty house officers turn into shouty consultants, and that's how bullying and harassment scandals happen. Nobody wants that.