

Professionalism: Nursing and Midwifery Conduct

Code of Professional Behavior and Ethics for Nurses and Midwives



مؤسسة حمد الطبية
Hamad Medical Corporation

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Code of Professional Behavior and Ethics for Nurses and Midwives

Introduction

The Code of Professional Behavior and Ethics for Nurses and Midwives is a set of standards defined by Hamad Medical Corporation's (HMC) Nursing Executive Committee. The Code describes the behaviors, or conduct, that nurses and midwives employed at HMC are expected to uphold. The Code of Professional Behavior and Ethics for Nurses and Midwives provides guidance on appropriate professional behavior for all nurses and midwives and can be used

by patients, nurses, midwives, employers, the Qatar Council for Healthcare Practitioners and other bodies, to evaluate the professional behavior of nurses and midwives at HMC. It builds on HMC's Code of Conduct, which applies to all staff.

Nurses and midwives are expected to uphold exemplary standards of conduct while undertaking their professional role. As nurses and midwives must have the trust of the public to undertake their professional role, they must also maintain a high standard of behavior in their personal lives.

This Code is the overarching document that describes professional nursing and midwifery conduct and is based on four important values which underpin professional conduct, namely respect, trust, partnership and integrity.

Values Underpinning the Code of Professional Behavior and Ethics for Nurses and Midwives

Respect

A fundamental requirement of the practitioner-patient relationship is treating patients, and their families, with respect. This means behaving towards them in such a way which values them as individuals, recognizing and respecting their dignity and worth.

Trust

Nurses and midwives hold a unique and privileged relationship with patients. Patients must be able to trust nurses and midwives to keep them safe and to protect them from harm. Patients must be able to trust nurses and midwives to be safe and competent practitioners. Nurses and midwives must establish trusting relationships with their patients to effectively provide care. This involves using personal information, providing emotional support and physical comfort. Nurses and midwives must also take care not to abuse their position of trust.

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Partnership

Patients become partners in their care when they receive and understand enough information to make decisions about their own care, to exercise choices based on provided information and are fully involved in their care. This means that patients' independence, views and preferences must be taken into account, especially when the patient has limited knowledge, is vulnerable or is part of a marginalized group.

Integrity

Nurses and midwives are personally accountable for their actions and any omissions in their practice. Nurses and midwives must be able to justify their decisions. Being honest, acting consistently and honoring the commitment to deliver safe and competent care is the basis of establishing patient trust. Integrity means consistently acting according to ethical values and being responsible for one's actions.

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Twenty-four standards, grouped around four elements, form the framework for the Code. The four elements of the Code of Professional Behavior and Ethics for Nurses and Midwives are:

- Nurses and Midwives and People
- Nurses and Midwives and Practice
- Nurses and Midwives and the Profession
- Nurses and Midwives and Co-workers

Nurses and Midwives and People

1. The first concern of the nurse/midwife is to care for people, treating them as individuals and respecting their dignity. You must direct care towards the prevention and relief of pain as well as the patients' other needs and concerns. You must share with society the responsibility for initiating and supporting actions which meet the health and social needs of the public, in particular those of vulnerable populations.
2. You must provide care that promotes an environment in which the human rights, values, customs and spiritual beliefs of the individual, their family and the larger community are respected.
3. You should do no harm. It is the responsibility of the nurse/midwife to ensure that the environment in which care is delivered is safe, clean, secure and free from hazard.
4. It is essential that informed consent is taken from a patient prior to any procedure; it is the patient's right to refuse care. You should provide impartial, truthful and correct information to the patient in a professional and integrated manner.
5. You should collaborate with those in your care. This includes:
 - Listening to the people in your care and responding to their concerns and preferences.
 - Supporting people in caring for themselves to improve and maintain their health.
 - Understanding and respecting the contribution that people make to their own care and well-being.
 - Making arrangements to meet people's language and communication needs.
 - Sharing information that people wish to know in a way they can understand.
6. You must respect confidentiality:
 - Inform people how and why information is shared by those involved in providing their care.
 - You should only disclose confidential information to another authority if you believe that, without such disclosure, someone may be at risk of harm, and only in line with the laws of Qatar.
7. You must treat patients, their families, employees and others with respect, dignity and fairness:
 - You must treat people kindly and considerately as individuals and respect their dignity.
 - You must not discriminate in any way against those in your care. A nurse/midwife will work with diversity and will not discriminate on the basis of nationality, age, gender, disability, occupation, ethnicity, race, religion, spiritual and cultural beliefs, politics, socio-economic status, lifestyle, or any other aspect of individualism.
 - You must act as an advocate for those in your care, helping them to access relevant healthcare.
8. You have a responsibility to promote trust through your professional conduct and personal behavior by acting with honesty, compassion and integrity in all your dealings with people. This trust is essential to promote safe, appropriate and competent standards of care that encompass best practice for the health and well-being of the patient; assist the patient to make informed choices by providing impartial, honest and correct information regarding their care and acting as a responsible advocate to protect vulnerable populations.

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Nurses and Midwives and Practice

1. You are personally and professionally accountable for your actions – and any omissions in your practice – and must always be able to justify your decisions.
2. You must be able to recognize and work within the limits of your competency in order to be able to practice safely with autonomy. You have a responsibility and obligation to report unsafe and unlawful conduct in colleagues and other health providers in order to safeguard people and protect the public interest.
3. You have a responsibility to conduct yourself within the standards, laws and regulations of the profession by practicing reflectively, ethically and safely. This includes following international laws and the laws and policies that are specific to the State of Qatar and your place of employment. You must not be compromised by personal health limitations that affect your fitness to practice.
4. You must keep clear and accurate records of the discussions you have, the assessments you make and the treatments and medicines you provide. You must also keep clear and accurate records outlining the effectiveness of provided treatments and medicines, encompassing all the requirements of effective communication of care between health professionals:
 - You must complete records as soon as possible after an event has occurred.
 - You must not tamper with original records in any way.
 - You must ensure any entries you make in paper records are clearly and legibly signed, dated and timed.
 - You must ensure any entries you make in electronic records are clearly attributable to you.
 - You must ensure all records – including electronic records – are kept confidential and secure.
5. You must take responsibility for addressing problems:
 - You must give a constructive and honest response to anyone who complains about the care they have received.
 - You must not allow someone's complaint to prejudice the care you provide.
 - You must act immediately to put matters right if someone in your care has suffered harm for any reason.
 - You must explain fully and promptly to the person(s) affected what has happened and the likely effects.
 - You must co-operate fully with any internal or external investigation.

Nurses and Midwives and the Profession

1. You must assume a major role in determining acceptable standards of nursing and midwifery practice, management, research and education.
2. You should participate in creating a positive practice environment which maintains safe, equitable, social and economic working conditions for nursing and midwifery.
3. You must practice to sustain and protect the natural environment and be aware of its consequences on health.
4. You must provide a high standard of nursing and midwifery care at all times:
 - You must deliver care that is based on the best available evidence or best practice.
 - If you are suggesting healthcare products or services, you must ensure any advice you give is evidence based.
 - You must ensure that the use of complementary therapies are safe and in the best interest of those in your care.
5. You must be accountable for your professional development to maintain safe and effective practice:
 - You must have the knowledge and skills for safe and effective practice when working without direct supervision.
 - You must recognize and work within the limits of your competence.
 - You must keep your knowledge and skills up to date throughout your working life.
 - You must take part in appropriate learning and practice activities that maintain and develop your competence and performance .
6. You must act with integrity at all times:
 - You must inform the regulatory body* if you have been cautioned, charged or found guilty of a criminal offence.
 - You must inform your employer if your fitness to practice is impaired or is called into question.
7. You must be open, honest and maintain clear professional boundaries:
 - You must refuse any gifts, favors or hospitality that might be interpreted as an attempt to gain preferential treatment or business advantage from a supplier.
 - You must not ask for, or accept, loans from anyone in your care or from anyone close to persons in your care.
 - You must establish and actively maintain clear professional boundaries at all times with people in your care, their families and caregivers.

*The Qatar Council for Healthcare Practitioners has received Emiri Decree and is currently under development.

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Nurses and Midwives and Co-Workers

1. You must work with others to protect and promote the health and well-being of those in your care, their families and caregivers and the wider community.
2. You must delegate effectively to the right person, confirm that the outcome meets the required standards and support and supervise every one responsible to you.
3. You must provide compassionate, high quality, cost effective and comprehensive nursing and midwifery care in collaboration with other members of the healthcare team, treating your colleagues fairly and without discrimination in delivering care that is directed towards health promotion, health maintenance and disease prevention.
4. You must manage risk, acting without delay, if you believe that you, a colleague or anyone else may be putting someone at risk.

Failure to comply with this Code may bring your fitness to practice into question and endanger your registration. This Code must be considered together with the Supreme Council of Health's rules, standards, guidance and advice.

References and Bibliography

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