

Resolution of Resident Conflict with Attending Physician or Supervisor on an Issue of Patient Care

Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM)

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(See also *College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario Professional Responsibilities in Postgraduate Medical Education* [CPSO](#))

Purpose

This document provides a principled approach to resolve situations where a resident experiences conflict with his/her attending physician¹ or supervisor² on an issue of patient care.

Examples of disagreements include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Perceived concerns regarding quality of care.
- (b) Perceived inappropriate professional behaviour.
- (c) Perceived inadequate supervision.
- (d) Perceived inadequate or unsatisfactory teaching.

Resolution of Conflict Principles

- It is recognized that it may be very appropriate for two professional individuals to disagree on a medical issue.
- There is an expectation that a collegial, “no-fault” environment exists in all clinical settings.
- Individual universities have conflict resolution measures or processes. Residents should be made aware of these policies when they register and annually throughout their training.
- Each resident must be provided with the contact information for each site coordinator (or equivalent) involved in their program. This should be readily available via the Resident Handbook or the internet.
- When there is a conflict or disagreement between the postgraduate medical learner and the attending physician or supervisor, the premise is that the issue

¹ Attending Physician: is the physician who has final responsibility and is accountable for the medical care of a patient.

² Supervisor: are clinical teachers who are delegated by their respective training programs to guide, observe and assess the educational activities of the learners. The supervisor of a learner involved in the care of a patient may or may not be the most responsible physician for that patient.

will be dealt with as close to the source as possible thereby limiting the number of people involved.

- Ideally the parties involved will have a discussion about the concern. If a mutually acceptable resolution is not reached a resident may involve other appropriate people as needed eg. site coordinator, university program director and or the Dean, Postgraduate Medicine.
- The conflict can be handled either through the academic/university or hospital/site protocol, with the understanding that all involved parties will keep each other informed.
- Regardless of the outcome of the immediate intervention and/or resolution, there shall be no repercussions to the resident for, in good faith, identifying a concern or lodging a complaint.
- When appropriate, a written report of the incident will be provided as per each medical schools policy.