

Guidelines for Clinical Shadowing Experiences for Pre-medical Students

Purpose:

The following guidelines are intended to be used as a model and by no means are intended to supersede any agreements already established. Advisors, students and others are welcome to adopt all or portions of this document for the use of pre-medical students interested in pursuing a career in medicine. These guidelines also suggest a protocol for a physician – pre-medical student agreement as it relates to patient interaction. These guidelines are not a legal document. It is a framework established to help pre-medical students understand the difference between shadowing and volunteering, potential learning objectives of the experience, their expected responsibilities, as well as appropriate code of conduct. These guidelines are intended to be used by either the pre-medical student or the physician to initiate the conversation of expectations related to the shadowing experience.

Contributors:

These guidelines were established by the Association of American Medical College's (AAMC) Group on Student Affairs (GSA), Committee on Admissions (COA) in consultation with National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (NAAHP) and the American Medical Association (AMA), and Dr. Elizabeth Kitsis, director of bioethics education, assistant professor, Epidemiology and Population Health and Medicine of Albert Einstein COM. Dr. Kitsis authored several commentaries in JAMA addressing Clinical Shadowing. These groups addressed a need to develop standard criteria for students to shadow physicians in medical facilities. The need for standard criteria arose from a concern that high school and pre-medical students are "strongly encouraged" by medical school admissions committees to have clinical shadowing experience. However, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other regulations often serve as impediments to many physicians who might otherwise provide student shadowing experiences. In addition, individual hospitals may have standards for shadowing of physicians by students, but these vary widely from one institution to the next, with no recognized national standard. These guidelines were also developed to emphasize the importance of patient rights, privacy, and confidentiality.

Introduction:

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Appendix B

Confidentiality and Privacy of Patient Information

Dear Student,

As a student who is rotating in this health care setting and office practice, you have an ethical and legal duty to keep patient information confidential. Federal law known as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) allows health care providers to use and disclose patient information for certain reasons, such as treatment, but at times it is necessary for the patient to agree to have his/her information used or disclosed. Health care providers also must consider who has access to the information and how much they need to see. Allowing a student to observe an encounter between a provider and a patient requires patient authorization. Failure to maintain the confidentiality of patient information as required by HIPAA is considered a violation of the law and may have serious consequences.

Some general guidelines:

Access patient information only under the direction and supervision of the health care provider you are shadowing.

Share or discuss patient information only when necessary and only in locations where the confidentiality of that information can be maintained.

Patient information should never be disclosed in any form of social media.

Be familiar with and follow the health