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

ONTARIO POLICY
Also see “Ontario policy re Principles re Supervision of Postgraduate Medical Trainees”

Purpose
This document provides a provincial guideline to resolve situations where a resident disagrees with his/her attending physician or supervisor on an issue of patient care.

It is recognized that it may be very appropriate for two professional individuals to disagree on a medical issue. Most disagreements do not require the initiation of this process. Individual universities may also consider additional resolution measures or processes.

Process
At the beginning of each rotation, the program director must provide the resident with the phone/pager number of the site coordinator to call in case of a disagreement while in training.

When there is a conflict or disagreement between the postgraduate medical trainee and the attending physician or supervisor, the premise is that the issue will be dealt with as close to the source as possible thereby limiting the number of people involved.

The conflict can be handled either through the academic or hospital/site protocol, with the understanding that all involved parties will keep each other informed.

It is expected that collegiality in a “no-fault” environment will be such that the resident will feel comfortable discussing the issue with a staff person.

Examples of disagreements include, but are not limited to:
(a) Perceived inadequate or inferior patient care;
(b) Perceived inappropriate professional behavior;
(c) Perceived inadequate supervision;
(d) Perceived inadequate or unsatisfactory teaching.

Procedure for Academic Route of Resolution of Resident/Supervisor Disagreement
1. The resident consults with the site coordinator about the issue.
2. The site coordinator will speak with the attending physician/supervisor and attempt to resolve the issue.
3. If the resident does not feel that the issue had been resolved, she/he may approach the university program director.
4. If the issue still remains unresolved, the resident may approach the Assistant Dean Postgraduate Medicine. In cases where immediate resolution is required, it is expected the resident will telephone those involved. Regardless of the outcome of the
immediate intervention and/or resolution, there shall be no repercussions to the resident
for lodging a complaint made in good faith. The site coordinator will provide a follow-up
written report of the incident to the university program director (academic), and the
service chief (hospital/site).

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