

Clinical CONNECTIONS

INFORMATION ON
MEDICAL TRENDS
THAT DIRECTLY IMPACT YOU
AND YOUR PRACTICE

Medical professionalism: Is it relevant today?

By Erik Swenson, MD, FACS
Chief Medical Officer, Capella Healthcare



To be a professional in any endeavor is a personal decision followed by unwavering commitment. Medical professionals historically have been held in high esteem, but unfortunately society's relationship with the medical profession has been deteriorating for decades. This, however, does not mean that physicians should follow suit. Our patients expect and deserve our very best professional behavior and expertise. The term "professional" is used loosely today, but what does it

mean? Professionalism has characteristics or core values that define it, such as the following:

1. Professionals have a unique and special skill set founded in **a broad base of knowledge**.
2. There is **a special relationship** between the professional and their client (and/or patient).
3. Professionals have a responsibility to society and to its own members to be **self-regulating**. Because of

their unique education and training, the professional is expected to create a process that accurately and fairly protects society from harm as well as protecting their own members from unfair and unnecessary harassment and judgments.

4. There must be **a clear lack of conflict of interest** between the professional and their client with the interests of the client (patient) always coming first.
5. Professionals have **a duty to speak out** on matters and policies that affect their ability to provide services to their clients (patients).
6. There must be a commitment and effort to **lifelong education and improvement**.

To live by these ideals does not require pre-approval from the government, insurance companies or our employers. It does require intellectual honesty to do a self-evaluation, and to determine what we can, and will do, to fulfill as many of these values as possible.

Changes within society have brought tremendous pressures to bear upon the medical professional. There are conflicts we face daily that we must resolve, including balancing the needs and desires of our families versus our patients, resolving the risk benefit ratio of all the treatment options now available to us, and dealing with patients who question our authority in a setting of unchecked liability. We are beholden to governmental agencies or insurance companies to put a dollar value on our work and yet our expenses continue to rise.

Because as a group, we have done an inadequate job of policing ourselves, we are now overburdened with regulations, auditors, and more questions about our decision-making which are annoying at best and insulting at their worst. In many circles, we are not even addressed as physicians, but as "healthcare providers." Some may believe that there is a conspiracy against our profession, and it is easy to see how many of our colleagues feel they are under attack. They have become disheartened, sarcastic, and even depressed about the state of their own practice and the overall state of the medical

CAPELLA HEALTHCARE LAUNCHES BRAND INITIATIVE

Building on the excitement of recent growth with the addition of two new hospitals to the Capella Healthcare family, the company has unveiled a new brand initiative. Visually captured in a refreshed logo mark and a revised color palette, the initiative is also carried out through the new Capella website and YouTube Channel, designed to work together in conveying the company's distinct personality. Learn more at CapellaHealthcare.com





EDUCATION

An encore presentation of The Advisory Board's webinar "Playbook for Accountable Care" is Friday, July 29, from noon to 1 pm CST. For details or to register, visit the "For Physicians" section at CapellaHealthcare.com

NATIONAL CONFERENCES

- The National Physician Leadership Group (NPLG) will meet August 19–21. The agenda includes discussions on quality and service, strategic planning, health reform, information technology, leadership and other topics that physicians choose. All medical staff members are invited to share ideas and input with their NPLG representative prior to the meeting.
- Medical staff leaders from all Capella hospitals will be attending a Physician Leadership Conference set for October 20–21 in Nashville. The featured speaker will be Paul Verardi, partner with the law firm of Harty, Springer & Mattern.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ...

Victoria Damba, DO, who was recently installed as President of the Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons. Learn more about Dr. Damba and other outstanding physicians in the "For Physicians" section of Capella's website at CapellaHealthcare.com

profession. Many physicians have retired early because of one or more of these conflicts. Given these difficult times, how do we as physicians persevere – and even prevail – while living up to our core values?

It is by first acknowledging that to be a medical professional is difficult. We should expect to find ourselves in uncomfortable situations, and we should deal with them with patience and integrity, and not disenchantment or disgust. These situations will present themselves in the office, the hospital, and even at home, but we must recognize that we have not chosen an easy way of life.

Fortunately, we will find fortitude and solace if we live and practice in the true sense of

being a professional. If we don't behave professionally, these pressures inherent to the practice of medicine can become overwhelming. In his book *Practicing Excellence*, Stephen Beeson, M.D., writes "the dedication to others is what allows certain physicians to rise above, lead by example, and make everyone they touch better."

The medical profession is still the most gratifying and noblest of professions. Fully realizing, accepting, and practicing medicine as a professional can lead to great personal and community satisfaction. We must recognize that professionalism in medicine is more relevant today than ever before.

Corporate and hospital officials celebrated a new partnership when DeKalb Community Hospital and Stones River Hospital in Tennessee joined the Capella Healthcare family on July 1.

Shown here (from the right) are: Dr. Hugh Don Cripps, Dr. Melvin Blevins, and CEO Bill Little representing Cannon County Hospitals, LLC, with Mike Wiechart, Dan Slipkovich and Mark Medley of Capella Healthcare.



Physician Advisory Group (PAG) – Ten physicians have been appointed to serve on the PAG, which will provide guidance for implementation of new IT initiatives. The group met in Nashville in June to review the new Meditech 6.0 platform and EHR development. In addition, monthly webinars are being held to solicit continued input from physicians. To provide input or attend the monthly updates, contact your hospital's CEO or PAG representative.

| PAG Members | Facility | Specialty |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Robert Collins, MD | Grandview | Orthopedic Surgeon |
| Krista Gordon | Southwestern | Family Medicine |
| Kevin Hale, MD | National Park | Family Medicine |
| Kari Kubik, MD | Parkway | Urogynecology |
| Brad McIntosh, MD | Muskogee | Family Medicine |
| Carl Ott, MD | Capital | Hospitalist |
| Kyle Shaver, MD | Willamette | Emergency Medicine |
| David Siepmann, MD | Willamette | Radiology |
| Todd Stewart, MD | River Park | Family Medicine |
| Erik Swensson, MD | Capella, CMO | General Surgeon |
| David Tollefson, MD | Capital | Vascular Surgery |
| Richard Young, MD | St. Mary's | Emergency Medicine |



501 Corporate Centre Drive, Suite 200
Franklin, TN 37067
(615) 764-3000
Connections@CapellaHealth.com
CapellaHealthcare.com