

McMaster Guidelines for the Supervision of Clinical Activities of Postgraduate Medical Students

Adequate clinical supervision requires meaningful involvement and visibility by the supervising physician in all aspects of patient management. This includes:

1. validation, preferably in writing and within a reasonable time, of pertinent aspects of the history and physical findings
2. a discussion of the findings and their significance and of plans for management
3. involvement and agreement concerning major decisions relating to management and disposition
4. appropriate involvement with the planning and performance of procedures
5. identification of aspects of the case affording educational emphasis
6. when a disagreement between a trainee and a clinical supervisor involves the appropriateness of patient care, and in the mind of the trainee the patient's care is in jeopardy, the same mechanism as already exist in the hospitals to guarantee patient safety shall be used.

Specifically these include contact with the head of the appropriate service, the chief of the appropriate department or the Chief of Staff of the hospital

N.B. Use of such mechanisms does not implicitly reaffirm the suspicions of either party, but patient safety is "of paramount importance".

The adequate supervision of the trainee is dependent upon the appropriate and timely notification of the responsible physician. Supervision promotes a high standard of patient care and medical education. When a postgraduate student is involved in the care of the patient, the notification of the attending (responsible) physician is the responsibility of the trainee. Notification implies direct contact with the responsible physician.

It must be understood that every patient must have an identified medical staff person who is ultimately responsible for their care. This ultimate responsibility cannot be delegated to a postgraduate student.

It is expected that the postgraduate student will indicate clearly to the patient (or responsible family member) the name of the responsible (supervising) physician and the fact that he/she has been contacted. It is advisable that the postgraduate student note, in writing, that such communication has occurred.

It is expected by the Faculty of Health Sciences and the teaching hospitals that all postgraduate students will comply with the following policy. This is a general statement of policy which may require interpretation by programs, hospitals, and clinical or laboratory services. It is expected that ongoing assessment should be documented at appropriate intervals to substantiate the delegation of responsibility. Exceptions may be negotiated as follows.

programs, in order to promote graded responsibility may permit their more experienced trainees to use their discretion in the following guidelines. Such arrangements should only be undertaken with the understanding and agreement of the trainee, attending physician, CTU director and program director involved. This delegation should in no way be thought to lessen the responsibility of the supervising physician. Particular care must be taken when such arrangements may involve other department(s). It must be recognized that this policy applies to all settings eg. ambulatory clinics, in-hospital, etc.

POLICY FOR NOTIFICATION OF THE RESPONSIBLE PHYSICIAN BY THE POSTGRADUATE TRAINEE

A. Prior to or At the Patient's Entrance to the System

The responsible physician must be notified prior to the patient's admission to hospital for all emergency admissions and for elective admissions arranged by residents. Patients whose admission have been arranged by the attending physician, the intern or resident will ensure that the attending physician is notified of the admission.

B. While the Patient is Within the System - notification of the responsible physician must occur:

- (a) whenever there is significant change in the patient's condition
- (b) whenever an unusual or unexpected finding is observed
- (c) whenever the diagnosis or management is in doubt
- (d) PRIOR to the undertaking of a procedure or therapy which has the potential for immediate or future serious morbidity
- (e) whenever the trainee becomes involved because of a patient referral from another service
- (f) prior to arranging a patient referral to another service.

C. Prior to the Patient's Exit from the System - notification of the responsible physician must occur:

- (a) prior to the patient's discharge from the emergency department
- (b) prior to the patient's discharge from an ambulatory setting - whenever the diagnosis or immediate management is in doubt
- (c) prior to discharge from hospital (unless previously approved by the responsible physician).