A Faculty Development Minute
Lake Erie Consortium for Osteopathic Medical Training

10 Commandments of Precepting Residents
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I. Thou shall not think for them

It is easy to give residents all the answers It is best to allow them to process the different diagnosis before you jump in and solve the problem for them.

To become competent diagnosticians-it is critical for residents to become critical thinkers.

II. Thou shall not lecture them

The key to being a great preceptor is to keep things short and sweet. Deliver one or two teaching points regarding the case. Preceptor sessions should be no longer than 5-10 minutes.

Be concise.

III. Thou shall Trust and Verify

Regardless of their year of training, residents can miss things. Make sure you have adequately examined the patient and thoroughly investigated what the reason for the visit is. Do not trust anything until you have a well-established track record with a particular resident-this can take several months Minimize errors by providing excellent supervision. Remember, all patients must be seen by the attending.

Assume nothing.

IV. Thou shall be prepared for Precepting

As a preceptor you need to be evidence based and on top of the current medical literature and guideline recommendations for treatment. You are going to be questioned about things you may not remember or have not dealt with in the recent past. Make sure you are reading and staying current with the medical literature. Various online resources are made available to you through the LECOM library, such as Dynamic Medical. Be aware of the topical monthly letters such as: Prescribers Letter, Medical Letter, and Journal Watch. Be prepared to share the current guidelines recommendations for treatment with your resident.

Bottom line is do not "wing it." Be ready for some very intelligent people to question your knowledge-base.

V. Thou shall not be preoccupied when Precepting cases

Precepting is actually an "active engagement". Even tthough they are not your patients, they are your resident's. Make sure you are taking appropriate interest, ownership, and time in the patient when precepting For example, if the resident's patient is clearly misdiagnosed; needs more aggressive care; or did not have appropriate tests ordered, take ownership as much as you can during that session. Do not let the patient get lost in "follow-up care".

Ultimately, patient safety is first; as a preceptor you must always remember that.

VI. Thou shall empower the resident

Residents will often expect you to give them a quick answer. Encourage and lead them to be critical thinkers and to be resourceful. Do not give them the answer; make the resident solve the problem or research the problem. Example: Require the resident to look up antibiotic dosages, lab interpretations or other questions they might have. We must effectively teach residents the critical art of being resourceful- you will not always be by their side.

Simply giving them answers leads to Robo Doc which is not what we wish to produce.

VII. Thou shall not speak poorly of another clinician, practitioner, resident, or any other healthcare provider

Many patients will transfer to our clinic from other providers. Always maintain professionalism and do not speak poorly of any other doctor or the care that was rendered. Remember, you are a role model to these young physicians.

It is not professional to besmirch another reputation-so do not do it!

VIII. Thou shall read over resident notes when they come to your file

Please look over resident notes before you are blindsided. Remember your name is going on these notes as well. Make sure that they make sense and they are in fact what you agreed upon and approved during your present session. Make sure the resident's documentation is adequate and meets appropriate guidelines.

Remember your signing off on this- so you are liable.

IX. Thou shall look at the entire chart during a preceptor session.

Do not just take a capsule summary of the particular note on hand. Make sure you are looking at the list of medications and any relevant labs. In other words, do not assume that the residents have a handle on everything; they may not.

Look at the whole chart.

X. Thou shall enjoy Precepting

There is nothing more fun than teaching doctors how to think and become competent physicians. That is exactly what you are doing. Engage them in thoughtful conversation and contemplation on how to think like doctors. Medicine remains an art, despite technology.

Act like you enjoy what you are doing.