

COUNCIL OF
**ONTARIO FACULTIES
OF MEDICINE**

An affiliate of the Council of Ontario Universities

POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF COFM

**RESOLUTION OF RESIDENT CONFLICT WITH ATTENDING PHYSICIAN OR
SUPERVISOR ON AN ISSUE OF PATIENT CARE**

**May 10, 2002
Revised Aug. 2009**

*(See also College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario Professional Responsibilities
in Postgraduate Medical Education.*

<http://www.cpso.on.ca/policies/policies/default.aspx?ID=1846>)

Purpose

This document provides a provincial guideline to resolve situations where a resident experiences conflict with his/her attending physician¹ or supervisor² 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 conflict resolution measures or processes.

Process

Each resident must be provided with the contact information for each site coordinator involved in their program. This should be readily available via the Resident Handbook or the internet.

When there is a conflict or disagreement between the postgraduate medical learner 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.

¹ Attending Physician: is the physician who has final responsibility and is accountable for the medical care of a patient.

² Supervisor: are clinical teachers who are delegated by their respective training programs to guide, observe and assess the educational activities of the learners. The supervisor of a learner involved in the care of a patient may or may not be the most responsible physician for that patient.

Examples of disagreements include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Perceived concerns regarding quality of care.
- (b) Perceived inappropriate professional behaviour.
- (c) Perceived inadequate supervision.
- (d) Perceived inadequate or unsatisfactory teaching.

Procedure for Academic Route of Resolution of Resident/Supervisor Disagreement:

1. Ideally the resident and supervisor have a face-to-face discussion about the concern.
2. The resident consults with the site coordinator about the issue.
3. The site coordinator will speak with the MRP/supervisor to inform him/her of the concern.
4. The site coordinator will arrange a joint meeting with the resident and attending physician/supervisor to reach a resolution.
5. If the resident does not believe that the issue has been resolved, she/he should approach the university program director.
6. If the issue still remains unresolved, the resident should approach the Associate Dean, Postgraduate Medicine.

In cases where immediate resolution is required, the resident will immediately contact the site coordinator for direction.

Recognizing that disagreements/conflicts occur, there is an expectation that a collegial, “no-fault” environment is in place. 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/or the service chief (hospital/site), when appropriate.