

Objectives:-

- Understand the meaning of accountability.
- Discuss the place of accountability in professionalism.
- Understand why accountability is needed in the medical profession.
- Understand the key components of accountability.
- Discuss some practical examples about accountability.
- Apply knowledge learnt to a case scenario.

Definition of Accountability:- “...Procedures and processes by which one party justifies and takes responsibility for its activities”

It comprises of:-

- 1) responsibilities to the profession.
- 2) responsibilities to colleagues.
- 3) patient-physician relationship.
- 4) responsibilities to patients.
- 5) responsibilities to the society and public.

Accountability and responsibility are one of the key elements of professionalism.

Meanings of accountability

1) Responsibility:

- Become responsible (accountable) to patients, their families, society and community.
- Become accountable for quality of care, resolving conflict, and upholding principles.

2) Self-regulation in activities:

- The physicians' actions and behavior should reflect legal, good ethical conduct, and no financial conflict in their performance.

3) Standard setting for current and future members of the profession:

- Accountability is about our willingness to maintain these professional standards in our day-to-day practices.

4) Ability to resolve conflict:

- Conflict might be financial, pharmaceutical. There is a need to disclose any conflict that could damage doctor's accountability.

5) Free acceptance of duty to serve public:

- A doctor is accountable for improving the standards of the health care of their community, their country and worldwide.

6) Explain and give reasons for actions that could have caused harm to the patient, colleagues, and community:

- A doctor is accountable for actions that could cause harm.

Responsible style

- **Promise only what can be delivered**
Commitment, delivered on time, accountability
- **Support the basic tenets of the profession**
Develops a philosophy and sound rationale for professional practice
- **Thinks before reacting**
Foresees possible outcomes of professional, actions
- **Evaluates his/her professional practice**
Confronts discrepancies between intentions and actions

Q: Why do we need accountability?

Practical Examples

1) Dr. Jamal Ahmad is a known urology surgeon working in one of the Ministry of Health hospitals. One of his patients has a chronic renal failure and is recommended for kidney transplantation. Dr. Jamal agrees to conduct the operation. Over the next four weeks he works on preparing the patient for the operation. Two days before the operation, Dr. Jamal's nurse rang the family and informed them that Dr. Jamal is travelling overseas and the operation will be postponed. They will be informed about the time of the operation when Dr. Jamal is back in two months.

1. What do you think about Dr. Jamal attitude? Explain your views.
2. What would you do differently if you were doctor Jamal?

2) Dr. Hamdy is a known surgeon. One of his patients has undergone an abdominal operation. Although the operation was successful several complications occurred postoperatively. Dr. Hamdy became unhappy with these outcomes. Instead of helping the patient to recover, he blamed his registrar and the nursing staff for the patient's problems. He became unable to resolve the conflict with the patient. The patient's family also was not happy with these outcomes.

1. What do you think about Dr. Hamdy attitude?
2. What would you do if you were in Dr. Hamdy situation? Explain why

Take home message

- Accountability = Responsibility.
- To be accountable you need to have self-regulation in your day-to-day actions.
- Accountability requires that we maintain standard setting.

- Accountability requires that we resolve conflicts (financial, ethical, moral, pharmaceutical etc).
- Accountability requires that we accept duties for the public.
- As medical students we need to demonstrate accountability in our small group discussion, student-led seminars, and when we are working with others in teams.