THE OATH OF HIPPOCRATES

I swear by Apollo, the physician and by Aesculapius and by Hygieia and Panacea and by all the gods as well as goddesses, making them judges, to bring the following oath and written covenant to fulfillment, in accordance with my power and my judgment;

To regard him who has taught me this technique as equal to my parents, and to share, in partnership, my livelihood with him and to give him a share when he is in need of necessities, and to judge the offspring from him equal to my male siblings, and to teach them this technique, should they desire to learn it, without fee and written covenant,

And to give a share both of rules and of lectures, and of all the rest of learning, to my sons and to the sons of him who has taught me and to the pupils who have both made a written contract and sworn by medical convention but by no other.

And I will use regimens for the benefit of the ill in accordance with my ability and my judgment, but from what is to their harm or injustice I will keep them.

And I will not give a drug that is deadly to anyone if asked for it, nor will I suggest the way to such a counsel.

And likewise I will not give a woman a destructive pessary.

And in a pure and holy way I will guard my life and my technique.

I will not cut, and certainly not those suffering from stone, but I will cede this to men who are practitioners of this activity.

Into as many houses as I may enter, I will go for the benefit of the ill, while being far from all voluntary and destructive injustice, especially from sexual acts both upon women’s bodies and upon men’s, both of the free and of the slaves.

And about whenever I may see or hear in treatment, or even without treatment, in the life of human beings -- things that should not ever be blurted out outside -- I will remain silent, holding such things to be unutterable, sacred, not to be divulged.

If I render this oath fulfilled, and if I do not blur and confound it making it to no effect, may it be granted to me to enjoy the benefits both of life and of technique, being held in good repute among all human beings for time eternal. If, however, I transgress and perjure myself, the opposite of these.

From Steven H. Miles – The Hippocratic Oath and the Ethics of Medicine. 2004 Oxford University Press
CONTEMPORARY OATH OF HIPPOCRATES

(As used at the Medical University of South Carolina)

Today, in the presence of family, friends, teachers and colleagues, I dedicate myself to the profession of Medicine.

I pledge myself to the service of humanity.

I will use my skills to care for all in need, without bias and with openness of spirit.

The health of my patients will be my first concern.

I vow to hold sacred the bond between doctor and patient.

I will hold in confidence all that my patients entrust to me.

I will strive to alleviate suffering.

I will respect the dignity and autonomy of my patients in living and in dying.

As a Physician, I recognize my duty to society.

I will work to promote health and prevent disease.

I will advocate for the welfare of my community.

Even under duress, I will not use my knowledge or my skills against humanity.

I will acknowledge my limitations and my mistakes so that I may learn from them.

To uphold these responsibilities, I will maintain my own well-being and the well-being of those close to me.

I will promote the integrity of the practice of Medicine.

In the tradition of my profession, I honor all who teach me this Art.

Through honest and respectful collaboration with my colleagues, I will seek new knowledge, reexamine ideas and practices of the past, and teach what I have learned.

Above all, the health of my patients will be my first concern.

This oath I take freely and upon my honor.
OATH AND PRAYER OF MAIMONIDES

The Oath of Maimonides

The eternal providence has appointed me to watch over the life and health of Thy creatures. May the love for my art actuate me at all times; may neither avarice nor miserliness, nor thirst for glory or for a great reputation engage my mind; for the enemies of truth and philanthropy could easily deceive me and make me forgetful of my lofty aim of doing good to Thy children.

May I never see in the patient anything but a fellow creature in pain.

Grant me the strength, time and opportunity always to correct what I have acquired, always to extend its domain; for knowledge is immense and the spirit of man can extend indefinitely to enrich itself daily with new requirements.

Today he can discover his errors of yesterday and tomorrow he can obtain a new light on what he thinks himself sure of today. Oh, God, Thou hast appointed me to watch over the life and death of Thy creatures; here am I ready for my vocation and now I turn unto my calling.

The Prayer of Maimonides

Almighty God, Thou hast created the human body with infinite wisdom. Ten thousand times ten thousand organs hast Thou combined in it that act unceasingly and harmoniously to preserve the whole in all its beauty the body which is the envelope of the immortal soul. They are ever acting in perfect order, agreement and accord. Yet, when the futility of matter and the passions deranges this order or interrupts this accord, then forces clash and the body crumbles into the primal dust from which it came. Thou sendest to man diseases as beneficent messengers to foretell approaching danger and to urge him to avert it.

Thou hast blest Thine earth, Thy rivers and Thy mountains with healing substances; they enable Thy creatures to alleviate their sufferings and to heal their illnesses. Thou hast endowed man with the wisdom to relieve the suffering of his brother, to recognize his disorders, to extract the healing substances, to discover their powers and to prepare and to apply them to suit every ill. In Thine Eternal Providence Thou hast chosen me to watch over the life and health of Thy creatures. I am now about to apply myself to the duties of my profession. Support me, Almighty God, in these great labors that they may benefit mankind, for without Thy help not even the least thing will succeed.

Inspect me with love for my art and for Thy creatures. Do not allow thirst for profit, ambition for renown and admiration, to interfere with my profession, for these are the enemies of truth and of love for mankind and they can lead astray in the great task of attending to the welfare of Thy creatures. Preserve the strength of my body and of my soul that they ever be ready to cheerfully help and support rich and poor, good and bad, enemy as well as friend. In the sufferer let me see only the human being. Illuminate my mind that it recognize what presents itself and that it may comprehend what is absent or hidden. Let it not fail to see what is visible, but do not permit it to arrogate to itself the power to see what cannot be seen, for delusive and indefinite are the bounds of the great art of caring for the lives and health of Thy creatures. Let me never be absent-minded. May no strange thoughts divert my attention at the bedside of the sick, or disturb my mind in its silent labors, for great and sacred are the thoughtful deliberations required to preserve the lives and health of Thy creatures.

Grant that my patients have confidence in me and my art and follow my directions and my counsel. Remove from their midst all charlatans and the whole host of of fiscous relatives and know-all nurses, cruel people who arrogantly frustrate the wisest purposes of our art and often lead Thy creatures to their death.

Should those who are wiser than I wish to improve and instruct me, let my soul gracefully follow their guidance; for vast is the extent of our art. Should conceited fools, however, censure me, then let love for my profession steel me against them, so that I remain steadfast without regard for age, for reputation, or for honor, because surrender would bring to Thy creatures sickness and death.

Imbue my soul with gentleness and calmness when older colleagues, proud of their age, wish to displace me or to scorn me or disdainfully to teach me. May even this be of advantage to me, for they know many things of which I am ignorant, but let not their arrogance give me pain. For they are old and old age is not master of the passions. I also hope to attain old age upon this earth, before Thee, Almighty God!
Let me be contented in everything except in the great science of my profession. Never allow the thought to arise in me that I have attained to sufficient knowledge, but vouchsafe to me the strength, the leisure and the ambition ever to extend my knowledge. For art is great, but the mind of man is ever expanding.

Almighty God! Thou hast chosen me in Thy mercy to watch over the life and death of Thy creatures. I now apply myself to my profession. Support me in this great task so that it may benefit mankind, for without Thy help not even the least thing will succeed.

≈ Translated by Harry Friedenwald, Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital 28: 260-261. (1917)
DECLARATION OF GENEVA

“At the time of being admitted as a Member of my Profession:

I solemnly pledge myself to consecrate my life to the service of humanity;

I will give to my teachers the respect and gratitude which is their due;

I will practice my profession with conscience and dignity;

The health of those in my care will be my first consideration.

I will respect the secrets that are confided in me, even after the patient has died;

I will maintain by all the means in my power, the honor and the noble traditions of my profession;

My colleagues will be my sisters and brothers;

I will not permit considerations of age, disease or disability, creed, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, or social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient;

I will maintain the utmost respect for human life from its beginning even under threat, and I will not use my specialist knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity;

I make these promises solemnly, freely, and upon my honor.”
CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFESSIONS

A profession possesses a discrete body of knowledge and skills over which its members have exclusive control.

The work based on this knowledge is controlled and organized by associations that are independent of both the state and capital.

The mandate of these associations is formalized by a variety of written documents which include laws covering licensure and regulations granting authority.

Professional associations serve as the ultimate authorities on the personal, social, economic, cultural, and political affairs relating to their domains. They are expected to influence public policy and inform the public within their area of expertise.

Admission to professions requires a long period of education and training, and the professions are responsible for determining the qualifications and (usually) the numbers of those to be educated for the practice, the substance of the training, and the requirements for its completion.

The professions are responsible for the ethical and technical criteria by which their members are evaluated, and they have the exclusive right and duty to discipline unprofessional conduct.

Individual members remain autonomous in their workplaces within the limits of rules and standards laid down by their associations and the legal structures within which they work.

It is expected that professionals will gain their livelihood by providing service to the public in the area of their expertise.

Members are expected to value performance above reward, and are held to higher standards of behavior than are non-professionals.

Cruess SR, Cruess RL. Professionalism must be taught. BMJ 1997; 315: 1674-1677.
References for Professionalism


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COMMENTARY

Going Forth with PRIDE: The Graduating Oath Ceremony Address to the MUSC Class of 2009

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On September 19, 1981, a date before most of our graduating class members were born, a singing duo, who had been one of the most popular musical acts way back in the 1960’s, performed a free “neighborhood” concert. This neighborhood concert was performed in Central Park, NY and attracted over 500,000 people. Now, there aren’t quite that many people here tonight but the sentiments that the lead singer, Paul Simon, made as he overlooked the crowd that September evening are similar to the thoughts I had walking through this beautiful chapel short while ago, “Wow – what a night. I thought it might be crowded but we seem to have filled up the place!” If you listen to the recording that was made of this concert as Simon and Garfunkel played their music that evening, you could sense the pride they had playing together, sharing their songs with their neighbors, and the pride they had for their “neighborhood”. It is this aspect – this pride – that I want to touch on briefly this evening.

It is with considerable pride that your family, your friends, and others with whom you have shared your dreams and aspirations, are now about to witness this ceremony celebrating the close of this phase in your professional growth. It is also with pride that the academic leaders, course directors, and faculty teachers, along side whom you have worked, are also here witnessing this event. And finally it is the pride within all of you as that which is so richly deserved for the hard work, dedication, and sacrifices you inevitably made in order to become a physician -- we all vicariously revel in tonight.

As you all leave the relative comforts of medical school for the general uncertainty of internship and residency, I urge you to feel pride for what you’ve accomplished. Pride, as with most things in life, is not just a simple concept. Pride, as Webster’s collegiate dictionary (1) defines, is “reasonable and justifiable self-respect” as well as, “the relation or delight arising from some act.” However, it is also defined as, “inordinate self-esteem or conceit” as well as, “disdainful behavior or treatment.” I encourage you to indulge yourself in the former of these definitions and caution you to be mindful of the latter definitions, striving always to avoid falling into them.

Focusing on the positive aspects of pride, it might ultimately be defined as self-respect and a feeling of satisfaction over an accomplishment. Duke University basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski notes in his book Beyond Basketball – Coach K’s Key Words to Success (2) that there is “a dignity that comes from doing something well or being part of a group the does something well. Pride means having an understanding that you put your signature on everything that you do and ensuring that what you do is done in the best manner possible.” He goes on to say that, “you do not have pride in something because it earns you accolades or because someone gives you a trophy or tells you it’s great. The pride comes not in the recognition you receive for something, but merely in doing that thing to the best of your ability. You should take deliberate pride in that task because it is a reflection of you. It will always carry your signature.”

So, in short, pride means ensuring that anything that you do, anything that has your name on it, is done right. I believe that the word, “Pride” may also be a useful mnemonic for remembering success attributes to aspire toward as you enter your internship.

P is for Pride – but it also stands for Passion. Being passionate about what you’re doing can better ensure that it is done in the best way possible.

R is for Respect. The respect that one must feel for one’s patients, one’s colleagues, and one’s profession is a critical component for bringing this all together.

I is for Integrity – a useful operational definition is doing the right thing even when it is difficult to do and when there is no one else watching you. Persons of integrity can justifiably take pride in their work.

D stands for Discipline – an operational definition for discipline is doing the correct behavior at the correct time. Having discipline in performing your tasks can best ensure they are completed with the highest quality possible.

And finally, E is for Excellence – medicine is not a profession in which mediocrity is acceptable. Likewise, excellence is not a state of being, but rather it is a quality that must be constantly pursued. Continually striving for excellence will allow you to
take pride in your work.

PRIDE – Passion, Respect, Integrity, Discipline and Excellence.

While a good proportion of you are staying with us at MUSC, the vast majority of you are leaving to go elsewhere for this next stage of your professional growth. To those of you leaving, we hope you'll share your pride of MUSC with your new colleagues. And we hope that some, perhaps many of you, will choose to return to once again become part of the MUSC family. As some of you might know, after Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel's considerable success in the 1960's, they parted ways – each developed and grew professionally but quite separately. The concert in Central Park, to which I referred at the beginning of this piece, was a reunion for them – and they have enjoyed a professional collaboration since that time. Not the same sort of collaboration as they once had, but one befitting where they are now in the stage of their respective careers. As we, the teaching faculty members of MUSC, take collective pride in helping you all achieve this wonderful milestone, please keep in mind we are always open for later collaborations with you in the future. Good luck and best wishes always.