Patient-Physician Covenant

Medicine is, at its center, a moral enterprise grounded in a covenant of trust. This covenant obliges physicians to be competent and to use their competence in the patient’s best interests. Physicians, therefore, are both intellectually and morally obliged to act as advocates for the sick wherever their welfare is threatened and for their health at all times.

Today, this covenant of trust is significantly threatened. From within, there is growing legitimization of the physician’s materialistic self-interest; from without, for-profit forces press the physician into the role of commercial agent to enhance the profitability of health care organizations. Such distortions of the physician’s responsibility degrade the physician-patient relationship that is the central element and structure of clinical care. To capitulate to these alterations of the trust relationship is to significantly alter the physician’s role as healer, caregiver, helper, and advocate for the sick and for the health of all.

By its traditions and very nature, medicine is a special kind of human activity—one that cannot be pursued effectively without the virtues of humility, honesty, intellectual integrity, compassion, and effacement of excessive self-interest. These traits mark physicians as members of a moral community dedicated to something other than its own self-interest.

Our first obligation must be to serve the good of those persons who seek our help and trust us to provide it. Physicians, as physicians, are not, and must never be, commercial entrepreneurs, gate-closers, or agents of fiscal policy that runs counter to our trust. Any defection from primacy of the patient’s well-being places the patient at risk by treatment that may compromise quality of or access to medical care.

We believe the medical profession must reaffirm the primacy of its obligation to the patient through national, state, and local professional societies; our academic, research, and hospital organizations; and especially through personal behavior. As advocates for the promotion of health and support of the sick, we are called upon to discuss, defend, and promulgate medical care by every ethical means available. Only by caring and advocating for the patient can the integrity of our profession be affirmed. Thus we honor our covenant of trust with patients.

To the Class of 2024,

One of the privileges of becoming a member of a profession such as medicine is that the body of the profession does not have to rely on outside sources for its regulation. Just as the human body monitors each of its members, the organ systems, to ensure that they are not sick or injured and are functioning at highest capacity for the good of the body as a whole, so does the body of the medical profession have the honor and responsibility of monitoring each of its members, each student and each doctor, to make sure that they are upholding the standards of honor, integrity, truthfulness, and fairness that are associated with the practice and the art of medicine. Just as each member of the human body plays a vital role in maintaining the overall balance and harmony of the whole, so does each member of this esteemed profession have a role to play in maintaining a healthy, effective body, deserving of the respect and esteem that it is given without question. Each student and each physician is responsible not only for the conduct of himself or herself, but also for that of their peers and associates. After all, no body is completely healthy unless each member is contributing its best.

The code of honor that belongs to the practice of medicine is something that we believe in very strongly here at Tulane. The Honor Code of Tulane Medical School is merely a written expression of what we all already keep close to our hearts and minds. It is an expression of what is good and just and right in our profession. The Honor Code is not something that should be enforced from the outside. It belongs to you as a student and future physician. It is yours to nurture and sustain. Therefore, today we ask that each of you profess, in front of family, friends, and peers, your dedication to upholding the Honor Code and to encouraging the same in your classmates.

Congratulations on becoming a member of the most challenging and fulfilling profession in the world!

Sincerely,
Tulane Medical School Honor Board

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SPECIAL THANKS TO
The Arnold P. Gold Foundation for the Humanism in Medicine lapel pins,
Tulane Medical Alumni Association for the stethoscopes, and
Tulane University Bookstore for the white coats.

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PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION .................................................. Elma I. LeDoux, MD
Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs

INVOCATION.............................................. Reverend William Terry, MPS, MDiv

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW .............................. L. Lee Hamm, MD
Senior Vice President and Dean

INTRODUCTION OF THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER ............. Elma I. LeDoux, MD
Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs

DR. WALLACE K. TOMLINSON LECTURE ................. Rodney Davis, MD (M’82)

HONOR BOARD PRESENTATION ............................ Jackson Roos, T4

TULANE MEDICAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ... Amalia M. Landa-Galindez, MD
President (M’90)

PRESENTATION OF CLASS
L. Lee Hamm, MD
Senior Vice President and Dean
N. Kevin Krane, MD
Vice Dean of Academic Affairs

RECITATION OF THE TULANE PHYSICIANS’ OATH
Elma I. LeDoux, MD

BENEDICTION................................. Reverend William Terry, MPS, MDiv

DR. ARNOLD P. GOLD

Arnold Perlman Gold was a world-renowned pediatric neurologist, a professor at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians & Surgeons for 58 years, and a master diagnostician who became an international leader and advocate for humanism in healthcare. He died on January 28, 2018, in New York City at the age of 92. His legacy lives on in the work of the Gold Foundation. Learn more at gold-foundation.org.
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Arvind Annamalai
Ruby Arora
Michael Artov
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Kristen N. Worth
Marcus T. Wright
Hanlin Yang
Anna Yee
Brianna N. Young
Yinghong Zhao