

Virtual Mentor

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THE CODE SAYS

The AMA *Code of Medical Ethics*' Opinion on Sexual Harassment of Medical Students and Residents

Opinion 3.08 - Sexual Harassment and Exploitation between Medical Supervisors and Trainees

Sexual harassment may be defined as sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) such conduct interferes with an individual's work or academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or academic environment or (2) accepting or rejecting such conduct affects or may be perceived to affect employment decisions or academic evaluations concerning the individual. Sexual harassment is unethical.

Sexual relationships between medical supervisors and their medical trainees raise concerns because of inherent inequalities in the status and power that medical supervisors wield in relation to medical trainees and may adversely affect patient care. Sexual relationships between a medical trainee and a supervisor even when consensual are not acceptable regardless of the degree of supervision in any given situation. The supervisory role should be eliminated if the parties involved wish to pursue their relationship.

Issued March 1992 based on the report "[Sexual Harassment and Exploitation Between Medical Supervisors and Trainees](#)," adopted June 1989; updated June 1994.

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