



BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS

Text Button C

POLICY REGARDING GIFTS

Patients frequently want to express gratitude to their physicians, sometimes with gifts. Physicians need to balance acceptance of legitimate gratitude, while avoiding any perception that a gift affects the physician-patient relationship and results in preferential treatment (e.g., longer visits than are typical or off-hours appointment times). Common advice to physicians is to decline valuable gifts. Of course, value is relative. A gift certificate to a nice restaurant may be financially trivial to a wealthy patient, yet the same gift may be quite significant to a patient making only the minimum wage

Consider discussions about gift giving with all trainees and faculty to develop reasonable policies, or refer residents to the pertinent policies of the sponsoring institution. Provide opportunities for residents to reflect on the many issues involved and to rehearse ways to respond to the gratitude of patients.

Gifts can be accepted graciously on behalf of the entire team. This acknowledges that the patient experience is usually a group effort. For instance:

Thank you for your thoughtful gift of chocolates (or flowers). I am going to put them in our lounge so that all of the doctors and nurses who worked with you can enjoy them. I am glad you were pleased with your care.

Or:

I am glad you were pleased with your care. Our hospital policy is not to accept individual gifts, but let me give you the address and phone number of our development office so that you may send this as a contribution to our new children's wing, if you would like to do so. In this way many other children can receive the same good care as your child in the future.