

Preceptor-Student Interactions:
Boundary Considerations



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I have nothing to disclose.



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Please indicate your gender

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to disclose

Objectives

1. Describe consequences/harms (personal and professional) that can result from teacher-student boundary crossings.
2. Describe the standards/documents (COCA/LCME/Title IX) that speak to teacher-student boundaries.
3. Given case examples of teacher-student situational interactions, determine if a boundary was crossed and if so, how the boundary crossing could have been avoided.
4. Describe the STAT process for practicing mindfulness with regard to T-S boundaries.
5. Develop personal guidelines that will help prevent teacher-student boundary crossings.

Importance of Knowing & Thinking About Boundaries

• Helps you protect:

1. Yourself
2. Family
3. Colleagues
4. Institution
5. Learners

Primary Prevention

Interventions designed to prevent the onset or future incidence of a specific problem

Secondary Prevention

An early intervention that decreases the prevalence of a specific problem

Tertiary Prevention

Treatment designed to improve quality of life and reduce the symptoms after a disease or disorder has developed
Does not reduce incidence or prevalence

Title IX Areas

1. **Gender Discrimination**
 - Derogatory or sexist remarks
2. **Sexual Harassment**
 - Inappropriate touching
3. **Sexual Violence** <https://www.venturacollege.edu/college-information/about-ventura-college/title-ix/definitions>
 - Inappropriate touching
4. **Retaliation**
 - Discrimination due to filed complaint
5. **Hostile Environment**
 - Offensive comments of a sexual nature

Example Journal Articles About Boundaries

1. Teacher-student Relationships in Medical Education: Boundary Considerations by M. Plaut & D. Baker
2. Supervisor-trainee Relations Boundaries in Medical Education
3. Medical Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Sexual Misconduct in the Student-Teacher Relationship
4. Negotiating Learner-Teacher Boundaries in Medical Education
5. Doctors Without Boundaries: The Ethics of Teacher-Student Relationships in Academic Medicine



Article Practice Points

1. A balance between closeness and distance is necessary in all T-S relationships.
2. A certain level of collegial & social closeness between T & S helps acculturate students into the professional community.
3. Inappropriate intimacy (sexual or non-sexual) can/will be damaging.
4. Teachers should be good role models for boundary setting, especially as has implications for physician-patient boundaries.
5. **Boundary issues/dilemmas should be openly discussed among faculty, and students.**



What This Session Is About

- There are times when we may innocently cross a boundary without even realizing the possible consequences simply because we have not thought about the consequences of our actions.
- Mindfulness when interacting with learners
Thinking about the impact of our actions on ourselves, our learners and others.



What This Session is **Not** About

- 1. Fearing or avoiding interactions with students.
- 2. Avoiding developing a positive relationship with students.
- 3. Walking on eggshells when interacting with students.



Mistreatment vs Boundary Crossing

Crossing a boundary **may** not be mistreatment, but mistreatment is **always** a boundary crossing.

Mistreatments AND Boundary Crossings

- 1. Sexual harassment (any Title IX violation)
- 2. Physical punishment or threats
- 3. Discrimination on basis of gender, race, sexual orientation.
- 4. Humiliation (belittling student in front of others)
- 5. Intentional lack of communication
- 6. Asking/Requiring personal services (e.g. " Pick up my cleaning.")

Boundary Crossing and Mistreatment

- Having sexual relations with a student/learner.

**Potential Impact of Mistreatment on Learners:
Especially Sexual Boundary Crossing**

1. Conflicting feelings (flattered, threatened)
2. Tendency to remain silent (e.g. suffer in silence)
3. Anxiety, depression, anger,
4. Generalization of mistrust
5. Loss of self-esteem
6. Reduced career achievement

Boundary Crossings But Not "Mistreatment"

1. Providing medical care for student you are teaching.
2. Socializing (e.g. drinking, Facebook friending) with students.
3. Self-disclosure. (My husband and I had the same issues when I was a medical student and this is what I did,)
4. Giving things (e.g. gifts, money) to student.

COCA Accreditation Standard

- Element 9.10: Non-Academic Health Professionals
 - A COM must ensure that any health professional providing health services, via a therapeutic relationship, much recuse him/herself from the academic assessment or promotion of the student receiving those services.

• Page 35 of COCA Continuing Accreditation Standards

Have you or someone you have known, experienced mistreatment or crossing of a boundary when you were a medical student or resident?

- Polling question with following responses
- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

Factors That Can Put You at Risk for Crossing a Boundary or Unknowingly Mistreating a Learner

1. Underestimating the power differential between teachers & students.
2. Misjudgments about "closeness."
3. Taking the perspective of how it was when you were a student.
4. Unknowingly modeling those who taught you.
5. **Just not being mindful about crossing a boundary or mistreating a student.**

Example Situations/Cases

I will

- Present a situation/case
- Ask a polling case
- Show polling result
- Provide Comments

Case #1: Football & BBQ

- A single male preceptor at a regional clinical campus teaches many of the COM students for the required IM clerkship. He invites all the male students to his home to an afternoon of watching football and BBQ but does not invite the female students as he doesn't think they would be interested in football and additionally he is single so he did not invite the female students for fear of how it might look.
- As the afternoon progressed, some of the male students became a little inebriated and started taking selfies, until it got too dark. They insisted that Dr. Jones be in the pictures so they could post them up on Facebook. He complied.

Did Dr. Jones potentially cross one or more boundaries?

- A. Yes B. No C. Not Sure

Case #2: Camping

- A male FM preceptor at a regional campus has a male student on the required 3rd year 4 week rotation with him. During the second week of the rotation, the preceptor invites the student to go on a weekend camping trip with him, his wife, and 2 small children. The preceptor's exact words on the Thursday prior to the weekend were, *"I would really like it if you would join me and my family on a camping trip this weekend. I know you will have a good time."*
- The preceptor's intent was to show the student that the life of a busy physician is not all work and no play.

Did the FM preceptor cross a boundary by inviting the student to go camping?

- A. Yes B. No C. Not Sure

Case #3: Please Write Me a Prescription

- A student asks her preceptor to write her a prescription to help her sleep better.
 - The student said to her IM preceptor, "Dr. Jones, I think worrying about my up-coming shelf-exam for this clerkship has made me feel so much pressure that I am having trouble sleeping. Additionally, I want to be at my best here in the office and setting up some audition rotations with a couple of IM residencies is more difficult than I thought. It would really help me if you could write me a script for something that would make me sleep better."
 - Dr. Jones wrote her the prescription.
- Did he cross a boundary?
- A. Yes
B. No
C. Not sure

Case 4: "You can just ride with me."

- A male IM preceptor, Dr. Jones, has a 3rd year female student, Mary, with him for the 4-week clerkship. He has his private practice and goes to the hospital periodically to see his hospitalized patients. The hospital is 2 miles from the office and with traffic the ride from the office to the hospital takes about 15 minutes. Generally, the preceptor likes to see his hospitalized patients over the noon hour so he can return to his office and see his ambulatory patients starting at 2:00 PM. It is the first day of the clerkship and Dr. Jones says to Mary, "Mary, I need to go and check on patients at the hospital. You can just ride with me, and I can tell you about the patients before we see them together. If time permits, I can buy you lunch on the way back."
- Did Dr. Jones create a situation that constitutes a potential boundary crossing?
A. Yes B. No C. Not Sure

3 Important Take-Away Principles From This Session

1. Don't do anything as a teacher that might compromise your ability to evaluate the student objectively.
2. If it does not feel right, don't do it.
3. Make it your goal to build a "trust-based relationship" with students.


