



**Researcher identity in undertaking work based doctoral research. Or:**

**Reflections on the identity and contribution of doctoral graduates.  
A work in progress**

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## **Background to the study:**



**The study was based on a panel presentation on the graduate experience that took place at an International Conference on Professional Doctorates in March 2018.**

**The three panel participants and chair decided to reflect further upon the graduate experience and write a paper exploring their experiences.**



# Formulating a research question





Underlying this research was a feeling held by G. Weller that the increasing number of doctoral candidates were driven largely by self interest. There seemed to be a lack of studies that considered any altruistic value of the prof doc graduate contribution, and more importantly, their responsibility to society for being given the title 'doctor' (this was a later reflection).

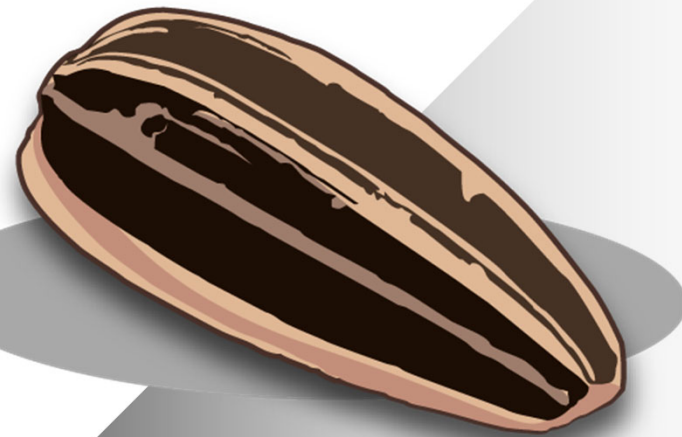
- **Research Question: 'what contribution does the professional doctorate researcher make to their own development and that of other stakeholders and society at large?'**



# Methodological approach

## Reflective discussion of three vignettes prepared by the graduates

-  Narrative analysis
-  Reflection on each of the vignettes
-  Ethical considerations
-  Thematic Analysis



# Narrative Analysis



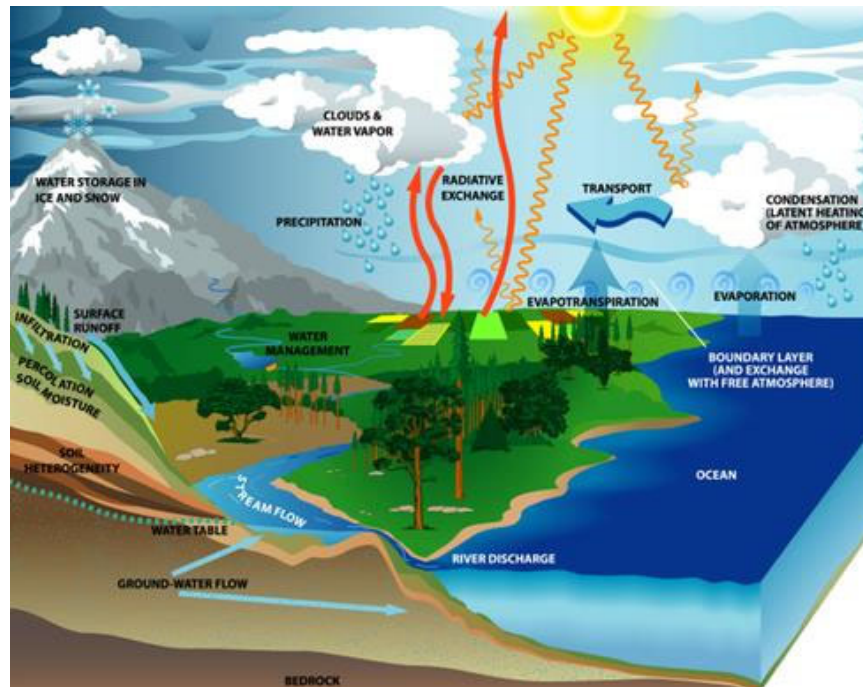
**We decided on each graduate preparing a vignette that would explore their experience in relation to our research question.**



## Vignettes in qualitative research

The Cambridge Dictionary describes a vignette as ‘a short piece of writing, music, acting, etc. that clearly expresses the typical characteristics of something or someone’. Barter and Reynold (1999:26) describe the vignette; ‘*In qualitative research, vignettes enable participants to define the situation in their own terms.*’. This seemed a useful way to explore the personal identities and meaning that the three panel members held in relation to their professional doctorate study and the focus of our inquiry.

# Reflection on each of the vignettes



**Drawing on the work of Moon (2008), each participant prepared a critical reflection of their vignette, which was then amalgamated into a combined thematic analysis of the three vignettes.**



# Ethical considerations

- We wanted to consider the study in terms of how the three vignettes related to literature relevant to the research question. We also wanted to ensure that there was a degree of anonymity to protect those stakeholders at the institutions of the three graduate authors; (two were still working towards completion of their prof doc, and one had recently completed). We undertook minor alterations and in some cases changed institution details.





# Thematic analysis

The following themes have been derived:

**1. Differences between the PD and PhD:**

- Time to complete a part-time PD
- Employed , parent, family adult (demographic of PD student)
- Practitioner v theorist nature of PD
- Recognition (parity of esteem) of the PD and PhD

**2. Personal challenges in undertaking doctoral research:**

- Planning family, work, study life-balance
- Making the grade (accumulating module credit)
- Camaraderie amongst PD cohort students
- Risk of failure, confidence to undertake a PD
- Personal and professional advancement

**3. Contribution to practice and the wider community:**

- Improvements (from the research) to the lives of others
- Change to impact practice positively
- Role model, leadership to others
- Responsibility to others



## **Some quotes from the vignettes: 1 Gail**

“The PD structure is similar within each programme, with a common emphasis of making a contribution to practice. It is obvious that the PD focuses on professional practice linked to academia whereas the literature suggests the PhD has more of an academic focus (Burgess, Weller and Wellington, 2013; Rolfe and Davis, 2009; Yam, 2005). .From writing the initial vignette I presented my study with the acknowledgement of impact of the poor oral health of my study population at the Annual Speech and Language Therapy Symposium to raise awareness of the issue. Without embarking on the PD it is possible that my research interest would not be possible nor deemed credible. I still maintain that enrolling on the PD over the PhD was the best and most life changing decision I have made. The reward of gradually making an influence on local practice has been astounding and with completion of the PD it is with hope, that awareness is raised about the complexity of a learning disability and oral health.”



## Vignette 2, Jordan

- “In May 2016, my son had just turned three, my husband and I bought a new house, and I embarked on the doctoral journey. I will finish coursework over the summer of 2018 and embark on the dissertation over the next academic year, and my career goals have shifted from university program administration to teaching in a professional doctorate program in the field of Education. The transition for me has been from learning for learning’s sake in pursuit of better understanding the world around me to learning about how to practically help other adult students learn and benefit from the same programs I’ve had the benefit of attending through the education offered in the doctorate in Education (Ed.D) program.”



## Vignette 3, Richard

- “Given that the D.Prof degree concerns (among many other issues) the questions relating to professional status and skill, it can be perceived immediately that as professionals we offer 'a service' in order to demonstrate that the interests of those whom we serve are paramount,”
- “the declaration of the ethical position and pastoral activity all are embraced within the concept of role’. This statement alludes to an aspiration of responsibility to others and seems to also be implicit within the other vignettes. The concept of role and leadership in vignette 3 further implies a form of agency or aspiration to a higher responsibility of the PD graduate.



# Discussion of findings 1

- The thematic analysis presented many themes that were expected and which had been recognised in earlier studies on the professional doctorate experience (see for example Weller et al, 2010, Burgess et al, 2011, 2013). The first two main themes; **Differences between the PD and PhD and Personal challenges in undertaking doctoral research. The former** related more generally concerns about the future value of their doctorate and often unfair / biased views and parity of esteem. The second main theme related to the difficulties and anxieties that often more mature candidates feel when undertaking a doctorate.



## Discussion of findings 2

- However, the third theme (**Contribution to practice and the wider community**) presented another dimension with sub themes of:
  - **Role model, leadership to others**
  - **Responsibility to others**
- The last theme of Responsibility to Others has influenced further reflections on what the doctoral graduate may wish to aspire to and ultimately, to their identity in calling themselves 'doctor'.
- There seemed to be a recognition that the doctoral status and identity would include certain expectations from society in general, for example, around trustworthiness and (ethical) responsibility.



# How other professions instil identity and ethical responsibility

- This study is very small scale and limited in terms of validity of findings. The aim was to try to find any potential alternative views to the often promoted concept of economic IMPACT and advancement potential in attaining the doctorate.
- The professional doctorate attracts people from often diverse professional areas
- Some established professions seem to try to instilled the concept of ethical responsibility in the form of a personal and professional oath or pledge.

# The original Hippocratic Oath, around 500BC





# A translation of the original Hippocratic Oath (Edelstein, 1943)

I swear by Apollo the Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panacea and all the gods, and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfill according to my ability and judgment this oath and this covenant:

To hold him who has taught me this art as equal to my parents and to live my life in partnership with him, and if he is in need of money to give him a share of mine, and to regard his offspring as equal to my brothers in male lineage and to teach them this art –if they desire to learn it– without fee and covenant; to give a share of precepts and oral instruction and all the other learning to my sons and to the sons of him who has instructed me and to pupils who have signed the covenant and have taken the oath according to medical law, but to no one else.

I will apply dietic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment; I will keep them from harm and injustice.

I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy. In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my art.

I will not use the knife, not even on sufferers from stone, but will withdraw in favor of such men as are engaged in this work.

Whatever houses I may visit, I will come for the benefit of the sick, remaining free of all intentional injustice, of all mischief and in particular of sexual relations with both female and male persons, be they free or slaves.

What I may see or hear in the course of treatment or even outside of the treatment in regard to the life of men, which on no account one must spread abroad, I will keep myself holding such things shameful to be spoken about.

If I fulfill this oath and do not violate it, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and art, being honoured with fame among all men for all time to come; if I transgress it and swear falsely, may the opposite of all this be my lot.

The oath has frequently been modified and modernised throughout recent centuries. This is my proposal for a modern version adapted for hypnotherapy and psychotherapy,

I pledge a moral oath before my peers and colleagues, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfil to the best of my ability and judgement this covenant and undertaking,

I will respect the clinicians and researchers in my field, study their work diligently, critically, and with care, and extend their contributions by my own efforts to advance the therapeutic art and science.

I will apply therapeutic methods for the benefit of others according to my ability and judgement; I will keep them free from distress and respect their human rights.

I will never offer treatment or advice which might needlessly harm a client.

I will only offer treatment or advice within my sphere of professional competence, and will respect the judgement and actions of other professionals within their own.

I will act with honesty and integrity, and in particular I will avoid any potential exploitation of clients.

What I see or hear in the course of the treatment or even outside of the treatment, in regard to the life of my clients, which falls within the bounds of professional confidentiality, I will keep private, as far as it is legal, reasonable and practicable to do so.

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I will fulfil this pledge and refrain from violating it: If I break it and swear falsely, may my colleagues hold me to account for doing so.



# The Physicians Pledge:

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AS A MEMBER OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION:

I SOLEMNLY PLEDGE to dedicate my life to the service of humanity;

THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MY PATIENT will be my first consideration;

I WILL RESPECT the autonomy and dignity of my patient;

I WILL MAINTAIN the utmost respect for human life;

I WILL NOT PERMIT considerations of age, disease or disability, creed, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, social standing, or any other factor to intervene between my duty and my patient;

I WILL RESPECT the secrets that are confided in me, even after the patient has died;

I WILL PRACTISE my profession with conscience and dignity and in accordance with good medical practice;

I WILL FOSTER the honour and noble traditions of the medical profession;

I WILL GIVE to my teachers, colleagues, and students the respect and gratitude that is their due;

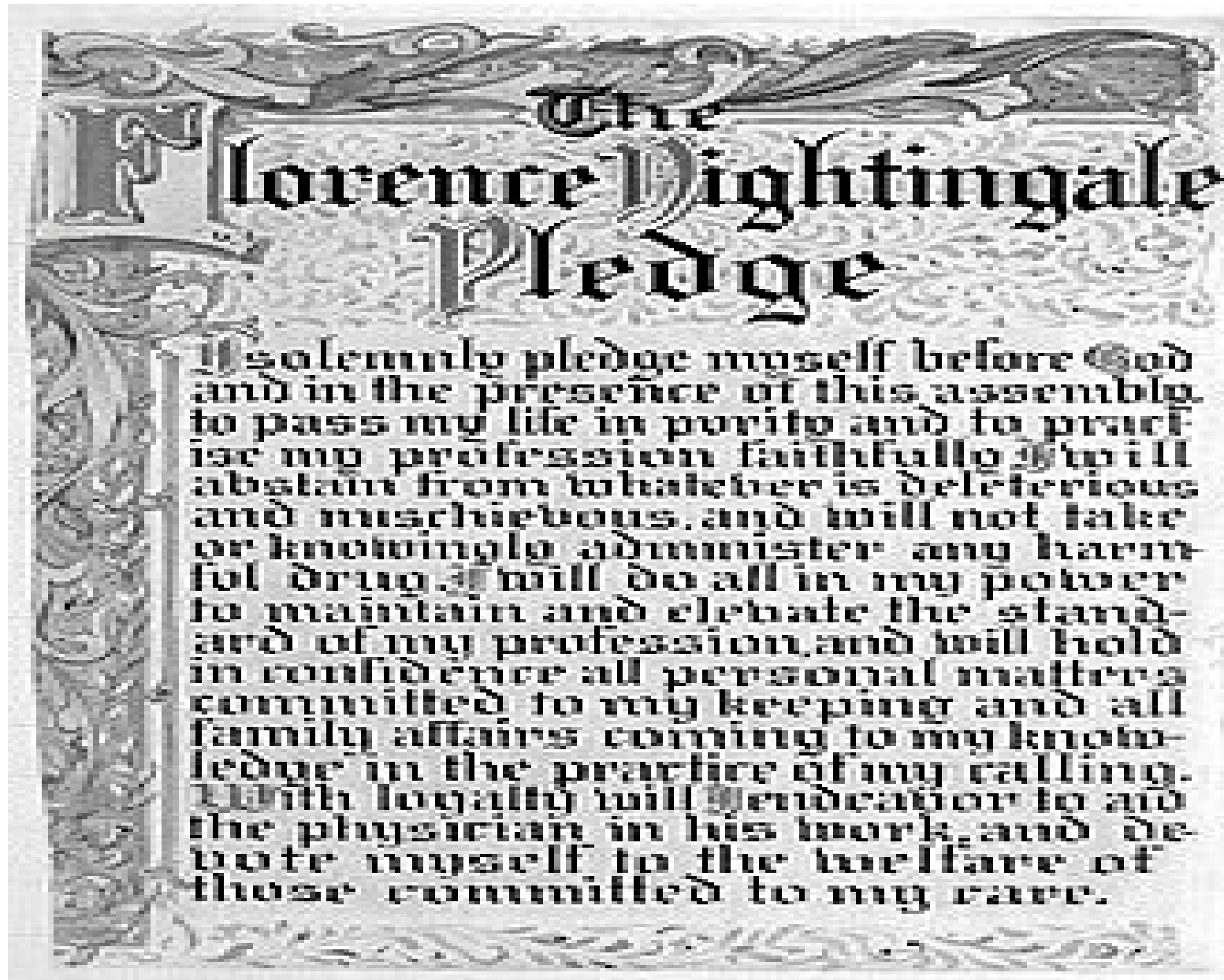
I WILL SHARE my medical knowledge for the benefit of the patient and the advancement of healthcare;

I WILL ATTEND TO my own health, well-being, and abilities in order to provide care of the highest standard;

I WILL NOT USE my medical knowledge to violate human rights and civil liberties, even under threat;


I MAKE THESE PROMISES solemnly, freely, and upon my honour.

# The Nightingale Pledge, c.1893 (Dock and Stewart, 1920)



# “Practical Nurse Pledge”, a modern version based on the “Nightingale Pledge”

- Before God and those assembled here, I solemnly pledge;  
To adhere to the code of ethics of the nursing profession;  
To co-operate faithfully with the other members of the nursing team and to carryout *[sic]* faithfully and to the best of my ability the instructions of the physician or the nurse who may be assigned to supervise my work;  
I will not do anything evil or malicious and I will not knowingly give any harmful drug or assist in malpractice.  
I will not reveal any confidential information that may come to my knowledge in the course of my work.  
And I pledge myself to do all in my power to raise the standards and prestige of practical nursing;  
May my life be devoted to service and to the high ideals of the nursing profession. (Basavanthappa,2014)



# The Teachers Oath, (Cody, 2007, BBC, 2014 (UK))

## The Teacher's Oath

*I swear to fulfill, to the best of my ability and judgment, this covenant:*

- *I will respect the hard-won gains of those educators in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow.*
- *I will apply, for the benefit of my students, all strategies known to be effective, avoiding busy-work in favor of work with real meaning to the students and their families.*
- *I will remember that there is art to teaching as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the textbook reading or the multiple choice test.*
- *I will work with my colleagues to inspire one another to achieve excellence. I will not be ashamed to say "I know not," nor will I fail to call in my colleagues when the skills of another are needed to help my students.*
- *If it is given me to enhance a life through teaching, all thanks. But it may also be within my power to cast a shadow over a life; this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty.*
- *I will remember that I do not teach a lesson plan, or a reading deficiency, but a human being, whose skills may affect the person's future family and economic stability. My efforts will aim to teach the whole child, and help that child develop in mind and spirit.*
- *If I do not violate this oath, may I enjoy life and art, respected while I live and remembered with affection thereafter. May I always act so as to preserve the finest traditions of my calling and may I long experience the joy of teaching those who seek my help.*



# **MBA Management Pledge** (Harvard, 2009, Wayne, 2009)

**As a business leader I recognize my role in society. • My purpose is to lead people and manage resources to create value that no single individual can create alone. • My decisions affect the well-being of individuals inside and outside my enterprise, today and tomorrow. Therefore, I promise that: • I will manage my enterprise with loyalty and care, and will not advance my personal interests at the expense of my enterprise or society. • I will understand and uphold, in letter and spirit, the laws and contracts governing my conduct and that of my enterprise. • I will refrain from corruption, unfair competition, or business practices harmful to society. • I will protect the human rights and dignity of all people affected by my enterprise, and I will oppose discrimination and exploitation. • I will protect the right of future generations to advance their standard of living and enjoy a healthy planet. • I will report the performance and risks of my enterprise accurately and honestly. • I will invest in developing myself and others, helping the management profession continue to advance and create sustainable and inclusive prosperity. In exercising my professional duties according to these principles, I recognize that my behavior must set an example of integrity, eliciting trust and esteem from those I serve. I will remain accountable to my peers and to society for my actions and for upholding these standards. This oath I make freely, and upon my honor.**



## Hippocratic oath for scientists (Rotblat, 1999, MacLeod, 2006)

- Despite being a code rather than an oath, this was widely reported as a Hippocratic oath for scientists. In contrast to the earlier oaths, King's code was not only intended to meet the public demand that "scientific developments are ethical and serve the wider public good" but also to address public confidence in the integrity of science, which had been shaken by the disgrace of cloning pioneer [Hwang Woo-suk](#) and by other research-fraud scandals.
- The code is designed around three core principles:
- **Rigour**
- **Respect**
- **Responsibility**





## The graduate pledge (Manchester College, 1987)

the Graduation Pledge for scientists and engineers was started at Manchester College, USA, the Graduation Pledge seeks to raise the awareness of individuals and society to the societal and environmental consequences of their actions. Since the pledge was written in 1987, it has been sworn by between 25,000-70,000 graduating students at over 70 colleges and universities in the USA. The Pledge states: **“I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organization for which I work.”**

The conduct of those taking the pledge is not formally monitored, but a survey of alumni has indicated that the pledge has influenced the decisions and actions of at least some. The pledge can be taken by students from all disciplines, not only those in science and engineering.



# Potential benefits of Oaths for personal and professional practice

- Instils a sense of 'moral compass' and trust
- An oath would then serve as a reference point for scientists and engineers, and remind individuals of their personal moral obligations. As everyone would be held to the same ethical standards, it would also help create an environment where people would be accountable for inappropriate behaviour.
- an oath "is a vehicle for reaffirming one's understanding of the importance of ethical behaviour and related work."
- "It says something that in the professions of medicine and nursing an oath of fidelity is important enough to recite at graduations.....Perhaps the symbolic act of adopting some kind of oath is a statement that we want to take the practice of our profession more seriously."



# Potential deficits of Hippocratic type Oaths

- Could lead to blocking academic and scientific advance through misinterpretation; example of genetic engineering.
- In terms of enforcing an oath, it is unsatisfactory to have no consequences for breaching the oath, yet it would be difficult to penalize a scientist for some violations.
- an oath would be too restrictive and would impede research, and wondered if an oath could have been interpreted to preclude research using stem cells.
- .., it would simply serve to make scientists “look good” without actually changing anyone’s behaviour.
- , the major problem with an oath is that the decision to abide by it offers no tangible reward comparable to the monetary or professional rewards other types of behaviour might offer.

# **A GENERAL Hippocratic Oath for Professional Doctorate Graduates (Prof Doc Pledge)**

- **AS A GRADUATE ADMITTED TO THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF .....**
- **I SOLEMNLY PLEDGE (OPTION: BEFORE ALL HERE TODAY AND DEITY OR DEITIES) THAT:**
- **I WILL RESPECT THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING, AUTONOMY AND DIGNITY OF OTHERS.**
- **I WILL NOT PERMIT CONSIDERATIONS OF AGE, DISEASE, DISABILITY, CREED, ETHNIC ORIGIN, GENDER, NATIONALITY, POLITICAL AFFILIATION, RACE, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, SOCIAL STANDING OR ANY OTHER FACTOR THAT MAY UNFAIRLY DISCRIMINATE OR DISADVANTAGE OTHERS, IN ALL MY ACTIONS AND DECISION MAKING**
- **I WILL RESPECT THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF INDIVIDUALS WHERE THERE IS NO RISK OF HARM TO OTHERS, WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF GOOD ETHICAL PRACTICE.**
- **I WILL PRACTISE MY PROFESSION WITH CONSCIENCE, COMPASSION AND DIGNITY AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOOD ETHICAL PRACTICE.**
- **I WILL GIVE TO MY TEACHERS, COLLEAGUES AND STUDENTS THE RESPECT AND GRATITUDE THAT IS THEIR DUE.**
- **I WILL SHARE MY KNOWLEDGE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF HUMANITY.**
- **I WILL ATTEND TO MY OWN HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND ABILITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE OF THE HIGHEST STANDARD.**
- **I WILL NOT DO ANYTHING EVIL OR MALICIOUS AND I WILL NOT KNOWINGLY ASSIST IN MALPRACTICE.**
- **I MAKE THESE PROMISES SOLEMNLY, FREELY AND UPON MY HONOUR.**



**Thank you, any  
questions?**

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