



CMA CODES OF ETHICS INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

One of us (Keith) has had a longstanding interest in medical professionalism and medical ethics and was involved as co-chair of the CanMEDS 2000 Professional Role Working Group. One of the objectives for the Professional Role was to “know and understand the professional, legal and ethical codes to which physicians are bound”. As a medical educator, I thought it might be of interest to know more about the history of our Code of Ethics in Canada and to learn how it had changed over the years. I was hoping that somewhere I would be able to easily find this information. However, this was not the case.

I had been discussing this idea with my spouse (Libby), who is a former nurse and a person with a longstanding interest in medical history. We then decided to see if we could get all this material together and put it in a form that others, who might have an interest in reviewing it in the future, would find more accessible.

After contacting the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) we were referred to Ms Kerry Guglielmin of the CMA Information Services. With her generous help we were able to obtain photocopies of each and every one (a total of 18) of the versions of the CMA Code of Ethics (from 1886 to 1990). The CMA Code of Ethics revision in 1996 became an on-line document, as is the current (2004) version of the Code..

As we believed others, including physicians, who are medical educators, or medical historians, might be interested in these documents, we decided to transcribe them into the electronic format and make them readily available for anyone interested in receiving them. So we began the project.

As part of the project, we published a review article in the Annals of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons (Vol 35, Number 2, June 2002) titled The Canadian Medical Association Code of Ethics 1868 to 1996: A Primer for Medical Educators

We are pleased that the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons believes that it would be important to provide access to all of the Codes of Ethics on their website as part of their Ethics Section, and we are indeed happy to be able to provide our transcriptions of all the Codes from 1886 to 1990, for posting.

We have made every attempt to provide error-free copies of the original documents but some errors may have been missed. Thus, if there are any mismatches between our electronic copies and any original documents that any of the readers of these transcriptions might have, we would be pleased to know about them to ensure that the errors are corrected.

Keith and Libby Brownell – September 2008