

## Checklist to help appraisers in the assessment of the ethical behaviour and governance of individual hospitals and health facilities in Liberia

### ***Reminder of the 4 core principles that all facilities must sign up to:***

- 1) Your facility **MUST** always place the interests of your patients first, accept responsibility for the clinical decisions it makes, ensuring that each of your patients are treated with honesty, compassion, dignity and respect.
- 2) Your facility **MUST** treat all patients equally and not exclude or discriminate against any patient because of ethnic origin, race, sex, creed, age, socio-economic status, diagnosis, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation, or any other factor.
- 3) Your facility **MUST** provide clinically competent care and give the best treatment possible to every one of your patients
- 4) At all times, your facility **MUST** conduct itself in a professional manner; doing everything possible to avoid harm to patients and ensuring the public's trust in your work.

*In order to fulfil these 4 core principles, each individual hospital or health facility must adhere to the following:*

1. Apply the same high standards of healthcare, independent of a patient's or family's wealth or poverty.
2. Keep the knowledge and skills of health workers of all cadres effective and up to date.
3. Only undertake procedures/treatment packages and care that the facility is competent to perform and refer on patients with complex illnesses or injuries to appropriate facilities if safe to do so.
4. Ensures that health workers provide care as a team that best serves the needs of patients.
5. At the time patients and their families present at the health facility, the facility must do its best to advocate for equal access to health care and treatment for all patients regardless of their, or their family's, ability to pay.
6. Ensure that all procedures involving consent are in place and effective in the facility.  
*Note:* this consent is not merely a single event or form to be signed but rather an educational process that discloses all relevant information, is understood, gives choice, and does not involve any coercion, i.e. that the patient's consent is an informed decision that they make without any pressure. Consent can sometimes be broken in an emergency where treatment is urgently needed to save life or avoid significant deterioration in the patient's health.
7. Maintain confidentiality in their management of and involvement with patients. It is important that patients trust the health facility and the health workers working within it and that individual health workers do not reveal personal information without their explicit permission.  
*Note:* In only exceptional circumstances, confidentiality can be broken to protect the safety of

another person, to prevent a serious crime, to protect a child or other vulnerable person from abuse, and to protect an intimate partner from HIV or hepatitis.

8. Keep clear, accurate and readable records of the interactions each individual health worker has with patients, including medical recordings, treatment plans, and drug charts. Each hospital should have an effective medical records department.
9. Ensure essential equipment, drugs, medical and surgical supplies are always available. Systems must be in place to ensure that when essential equipment, drugs, medical and surgical supplies are running low they are always replenished.  
*Note:* The lack of, or inadequate provision of, medical supplies and drugs in health facilities are a major ethical issue. Most inadequacies are due to poor stocktaking. Resulting delays in starting treatment can cause death, permanent disability and unnecessary suffering. Lack of essential drugs also leads to the growth of unregulated private pharmacies, some of which charge extortionate fees and others provide counterfeit drugs with disastrous consequences for patients.
10. If your facility is a hospital ensure that your pharmacist(s) keep essential drugs constantly available. Your pharmacist(s) should also work with clinics in your catchment area to ensure that essential drugs are always available and that stocks do not diminish to unsafe levels. The pharmacist should also work with the country's regulatory system and with community leaders to ensure that counterfeit drugs are not available and that those providing them in the community are subject to criminal proceedings.
11. Each hospital facility must ensure through the employment of a biomedical engineer that any medical device or piece of equipment that is not operating correctly or not operating at all is rapidly repaired or replaced.
12. If your facility is a hospital ensure that your biomedical engineer is available to maintain and repair equipment in the clinics in your catchment area.
13. All equipment must be protected from theft; but not locked away so that it is not available when needed.
14. The facility must be safe, secure and clean. In addition to security officers, there should be fire prevention and management strategies implemented through a responsible person. Careful management should also ensure pest control and care of the hospital grounds.
15. Ensure that all health workers wash their hands before attending to a patient and in between patients
16. Ensure that all health workers know how to administer emergency care and provide resuscitation for the patients that each healthcare worker is caring for. The facility should provide time and resources to ensure that all health workers attend training courses relevant to these life saving activities.
17. Ensure that systems, drugs and supplies are in place to safely control pain (including, when available, the support of anaesthetists or nurse anaesthetists). Powerful analgesia such as morphine must be available 24 hours a day and the facility must ensure that all relevant health workers undergoing training in the safe management and use of analgesics.

18. Hospitals must have policies regarding the withholding or withdrawing of treatment for incurable diseases or injuries that include open and timely communication between members of the healthcare team, the patient and the family. Resolution of disagreement should be by discussion, consultation and consensus. This does not mean that healthcare workers should abandon dying patients, but rather they should provide compassionate “end-of-life” care, including relief of pain and suffering. A shift from life-sustaining treatment to palliation represents a change in aims and objectives, and does not constitute a withdrawal of care. Hospitals must never allow the withdrawal of treatments that alleviate pain.
19. Ensure that all relevant health workers in the facility understand and are trained in palliative care. The necessary drugs and medical and surgical supplies needed must be available 24 hours a day.
20. If your facility is a hospital ensure that palliative care is available for patients being managed at home either directly from the hospital or through the clinics in your catchment area.
21. As an integral part of their resuscitation policy, all hospitals should ensure effective recording of “Do Not Administer Resuscitation” (DNAR) decisions in a form that is recognised by all those involved in the care of the patient. There must be effective communication and explanation of DNAR decisions, with due respect for confidentiality, with the patient with the patient’s family and/or other carers. The hospital must ensure effective communication of DNAR decisions between all healthcare workers and organisations (such as community clinics) involved with the patient.
22. Ensure systems for the recognition of abuse, protection from further abuse and psychosocial support for victims are in place. Lead health workers (nurse and doctor) in each facility must be appointed and know the country’s legal framework, establish a written policy on recognition and management, ensure that places of safety/refuge are established, and have special facilities for managing rape. A hospital facility should provide education for its own staff, outreach to all clinics in the catchment area, and develop a community sensitisation and education system to prevent abuse and identify vulnerable families.
23. Your facility, if a hospital, must work with government organisations to monitor the safe actions of staff working within institutions caring for children (e.g. orphanages) in the catchment area of your facility. Each institution must be regularly assessed by unscheduled and unannounced visits, mandated by the MOHSW and LMDC. *Institutions cut children off from their families and take away the family’s critical role in promoting children’s care and well being. In poor and rich countries there is increased risk of physical and sexual abuse, lack of nurturing, love and individual attention and systemic neglect. A “family based” care system (fostering) is the most suitable for children, and is less expensive than institution-based care. All efforts should be made to move care for children from institutions to families.*
24. Ensure by working with community leaders that all in-patients receive sufficient, nutritious and safe food and drink.
25. Your facility (if a hospital) must ensure that the ambulance system within the community and providing patients to the hospital in an emergency is effective by training (ideally paramedics) to work in each ambulance and providing essential emergency equipment within each ambulance (e.g. oxygen, emergency drugs and fluids).

26. Your facility (if a hospital) must be responsible for ensuring that all ambulance drivers working out of the hospital drive safely and do not take unnecessary risks to both those in the ambulance and to the wider public.
27. Your facility (if a hospital) should ensure that all health workers caring directly for patients undergo training for recognising and managing mental illness [Including severe depressive illness, psychoses (including postnatal depressive illness), dementia, drug and alcohol dependence), including the use of safe drugs and safe restraint (only to be used if absolutely necessary)]. Your facility should also support an outreach service for mental healthcare in the community forming the catchment area of the hospital, including training and community sensitisation.
28. Your facility, especially if a hospital, must have systems in place and policies that help to retain staff by ensuring they are paid according to their educational achievements, paid on time and with increments as they become more experienced, and with an adequate pension system. The hospital should provide incentives such as prizes and other social welfare activities. Systems to prevent and manage bullying, prevent “burn out”, provide of social and family amenities such as good accommodation and support for the education of children of staff should be in place.
29. Ensure that your facilities are not unduly or unethically influenced by commercial enterprises (e.g. companies that manufacture drugs, baby milk, diagnostic tools or equipment). Gifts designed to influence clinical practice within the facility are not acceptable.
30. Ensure that systems are in place to address concerns raised by a health worker or a patient or their family involving the behaviour of a health worker working in the facility that might place patients at risk of harm.
31. Ensure that reports are made to the appropriate authority in Liberia when any patients with a dangerous disease are identified.
32. If your facility provides healthcare for adolescent and adult female patients, it should ensure that relevant health workers are trained in family planning techniques and that supplies of necessary appliances or drugs are available.
33. Hospitals or healthcare facilities must report unjustified interference in the care of their patients, especially if fundamental human rights are being denied. This should include contact with a national medical or nursing associations, the MOHSW and LMDC.
34. Your hospital must have a Medical Ethics Committee that reviews difficult clinical matters (if necessary in an emergency). This committee should be comprised of senior health workers, community leaders and other appropriately chosen lay people.
35. A major hospital in Liberia must ensure an appropriately constituted Institutional Review Board is established to assess all proposed medical research. Systems must ensure that every project is reviewed for scientific and social merit, safety, and beneficence for recruited persons and can, if successful, ensure results can afford to be applied in Liberia. It must not exploit vulnerable people and must not take staff away from front-line medical work.