

## Sepsis Canada Network Code of Conduct Policy

**Version Date: June 2, 2020**

The Canadian Sepsis Network (Sepsis Canada) is committed to providing a friendly, safe and welcoming environment for all, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, national or ethnic origin, or other characteristics. This Code of Conduct outlines our expectations for behavior and the consequences of unacceptable behavior. In the context of Network Activities including but not limited to collaborations on research projects, and meetings, we expect all network investigators, network partners, patient partners, collaborators and students, to help us to ensure a safe and positive experience for all who participate in Network Activities.

This policy aims to meet the following objectives:

- 1) All participants in Network Activities should have an equal opportunity to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as participants, without being prevented or hindered by discriminatory practices based on gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, national or ethnic origin, or other characteristics.
- 2) All participants should engage in respectful communication, free of harassment and intimidation. Discussion of opposing or different viewpoints is appropriate but is expected to be conducted in a respectful manner and tone.

*For the purpose of this Code of Conduct Policy, a participant* is defined as network investigators, network partners, patient partners, collaborators and students participating in a Network Activity.

“Network Activities” means the governing, administrative, coordinating and related activities conducted by the Parties for the day to day support and running of the Network as well as research projects supported by Sepsis Canada

*Harassment* is defined as engaging in verbal discourse (remarks/jokes) or conduct (threats, intimidation, physical contact) that is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome.

### **Code of Conduct**

1. Be considerate, respectful, collaborative and professional (see glossary).
2. Refrain from behaviours and speech that are intimidating, uncivil (glossary), demeaning, discriminatory, derogatory, abusive, or harassing.
3. Be mindful of your surroundings and of your fellow participants.

Participants in Network Activities will not engage in behavior(s) that undermine or oppose the goals and purposes of Sepsis Canada including, but not limited to:

- A. Using offensive language or behavior.
- B. Making denigrating comments on the basis of, but not limited to, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, national or ethnic origin, or other characteristics.
- C. Acting in ways that harass, threaten, assault, or intimidate other participants.
- D. Performing acts that damage or destroy property that belongs to others.
- E. Acting in a manner that threatens the safety of participants.
- F. Engaging in behaviours that interfere with the ability of other participants to engage in and enjoy formally scheduled meetings or conferences.

## Scope and Adjudication Process

The scope of this policy is broad and includes conduct during all Sepsis Canada Network Activities) and conduct by Sepsis Canada Network Investigators, and collaborators (e.g., individuals who are affiliated with the Sepsis Canada)

In meeting our objective of creating a safe environment for all participants, an environment where ideas can be debated and discussed, free of harassment and abuse, we will:

- (i) support an open environment where incidents/events (inappropriate behavior/verbal discourse) can be brought forward without fear of reprisal,
- (ii) investigate and discuss events with all involved parties in the spirit of due process,
- (iii) take appropriate action when all sides have been heard(e.g., educate, remediate, request participant to remove him/herself from the Network Activity, withhold/revoke membership, and/or positions held within the Sepsis Canada) depending on the circumstances (i.e., nature, frequency and severity of the incident/events).
- (iv) Ensure that individuals who are responsible for implementing this policy are free from conflicts of interest so they may fairly adjudicate and provide guidance to all parties involved

If at any time, a member feels that he or she has been treated unfairly in the decision-making process, he/she has the right to appeal the decision. For immediate removals from meetings, a formal appeal must be requested and addressed in writing to the Executive Committee. Reasons for appeals will include 1) new information that has been brought forward; 2) an undeclared conflict of interest by the adjudicator(s); and 3) a review of the sanction (if considered unduly harsh by the accused). The Executive Committee will rapidly review the rationale and decide on the timing and an appropriate process for the appeal.

### At Meetings

For each Sepsis Canada hosted/co-hosted meeting, the Executive Committee will appoint 2 'Duty Officers' from the Committee members, ideally composed of members that reflect our diversity, to be the points of contact.

The Sepsis Canada reserves the right to ask any participant to remove him/herself from the formally scheduled meeting or conference proceedings if (i) his/her language or behaviours towards others contravene the above Code or (ii) he/she continues to engage in these interactions after the unwelcome nature of their conduct has been communicated directly to him/her. The Sepsis Canada also reserves the right to ask any participant to remove him/herself from the formally scheduled meeting or conference proceedings if he/she appears intoxicated *and* if he/she engages in conduct that interferes with the ability of other attendees to participate in and enjoy the meeting or conference.

Depending on the circumstances (e.g., repeated incidents/events), the Duty Officers (ideally composed of members that reflect our diversity) will investigate and discuss events with all involved parties and take appropriate action in consultation with the Sepsis Canada Board of Directors (Executive/Directors) or Committee members.

### While Conducting Network Activities:

Outside of meetings, participants who feel that they have experienced unacceptable behavior or verbal discourse should alert the Executive committee to the incident. These individuals will investigate and discuss events with all involved parties and take appropriate action in consultation with the International Senior Advisory Board (ISAB) depending on the circumstances.

### **Deciding when to allow individuals to stay or return at meetings**

The two main factors that will guide decisions regarding whether participants who contravene the above Code can stay or return:

- Whether it is reasonable to think that the individual will continue to violate our code of conduct.
- Whether attendees will feel safe if the individual remains or returns.

These decisions will be discussed and formulated by at least 3 members of the Sepsis Canada Board of Directors, including the Executive, if present and uninformed in contravention of the code of conduct, and substituted by members of the ISAB if one or more of the above individuals is not present.

### **What to do if you witness or experience conduct that violates the code?**

Conduct in violation of this Code should be brought to the attention of the Sepsis Canada Executive Committee. Alternatively, if members wish to disclose events in a confidential manner they may approach a member of the Sepsis Canada ISAB with their concerns.

### **Awareness**

To ensure broad scale awareness of this policy, we will:

1. Post this policy on the Sepsis Canada website.
2. Reference this policy in conference/meeting materials (e.g., program, handbook) with links to the Sepsis Canada website.
3. Mention/highlight this policy (in brief) in the opening announcements of meetings/conferences that it participates in (referencing the full documents available on the Sepsis Canada website)
4. Include this policy as a schedule in the partner agreement.
5. Appoint 2 'Duty Officers' from the Sepsis Canada Committees ideally composed of members that reflect our diversity, to be the points of contact Sepsis Canada meetings.
6. The Executive Committee and ISAB will be the contact persons for potential incidents that occur outside of meetings and will provide follow-up with the involved individuals.

### **Glossary**

**Professionalism** is defined by CanMEDS as "being committed to the health and well-being of individual patients and society through ethical practice, high personal standards of behaviour, accountability to the profession and society, physician-led regulation, and maintenance of personal health".

**Incivility** can be defined as rude or unsociable speech or behavior; it encompasses a wide gamut of overt and covert actions. Although aggressive actions such as actual physical harm, throwing objects, threats, inappropriate language, and verbal intimidation are easily recognized as disruptive, less aggressive behavior such as facial expressions, social remarks and demeaning comments may also be considered disruptive. More subtle forms of incivility may include deliberate avoidance, failure to respond to phone calls or emails, non-participation and lackadaisical performance.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Swiggart WH, Dewey CM, Higgson GB, Finlayson AJR, and Spigkard Jr WA. A Plan for Identification, Treatment and Remediation of Disruptive Behaviors in Physicians. *Frontiers of health services management*. 25. 3-11.

From <https://blog.thesullivangroup.com/disruptive-behavior-in-healthcare>