

Dear Sir/madam,

Submission re: Public consultation on *Good medical practice*

I submit that the following words from section 2.1 of the draft revised code be deleted:

“The boundary between a doctor’s personal and public profile can be blurred. As a doctor, you need to acknowledge and consider the effect of your comments and actions outside work, including online, on your professional standing and on the reputation of the profession. If making public comment, you should acknowledge the profession’s generally accepted views and indicate when your personal opinion differs. Behaviour which could undermine community trust in the profession is at odds with good medical practice and may be considered unprofessional.”

My issue with this is firstly the ambiguity of the phrase “the profession’s generally accepted views”. As a medical professional I’m uncertain as to where these views may be found or indeed if they exist in a formal sense. I would therefore have difficulty knowing when my personal views differ from my profession’s. As a result I may well find myself in breach of the Medical Board of Australia’s code of conduct without knowledge or intention.

Secondly, who is it that determines “the profession’s generally accepted views”? By what process were these views arrived at?

Thirdly, it is my belief that personal opinion is precisely what it states to be - personal. My personal views may differ from “the professions generally accepted views” but my adherence to all other aspects of the code of conduct should ensure that the care of my patient remains uncompromised. I believe a doctor’s personal opinion and professional conduct are two entirely distinct entities.

Finally at a more profound level, the Medical Board’s suggestion to “acknowledge the profession’s generally accepted views” in the public sphere every time it differs from my own, appears to be an intrusion on the basic human right to freedom of speech.

I believe the Medical Board of Australia is overstepping it’s bounds with this section of the revised code of conduct and submit that it be removed.

Sincerely,

Dr A Tan