Ethics on Demand – Verbal Abuse

**Article:** [$9,500 awarded to Montreal-area hospital worker abused by patient](https://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/9500-awarded-to-montreal-area-hospital-worker-abused-by-patient)

**What was the situation?**

An auxiliary nurse was conversing with a patient when the topic went down a negative path. The patient told the nurse to go away, to go back to where he came from and made insulting remarks based on ethnic origin. A hospital administrator overheard the incident and proceeded to intervene on behalf of the nurse. The patient refused to apologize for his actions and insisted that an individual of non-Arab decent provide his care. The hospital administrator refused this patient’s demands. During a hearing before the tribunal, the patient tried to justify his conduct by saying he was under the effects of morphine.

**What went wrong? (By Patient)**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Verbal abuse | Lack of cultural sensitivity | Lack of organizational policies and procedures |

**Using the Code of Ethics**

The [CSMLS Code of Ethics](https://www.csmls.org/About-Us/Our-Members/Code-of-Ethics.aspx) serves to define and expand the inherent ethical concepts contained in the [CSMLS Code of Professional Conduct](https://www.csmls.org/About-Us/Our-Members/Code-of-Conduct.aspx), document expectations of ethical behaviour for all medical laboratory professionals and provide a framework during professional and personal self-evaluation. Consider how adhering to these codes could have prevented the situation. What codes are applicable for the health are professional?

*Code of Ethics*

* 4.4 Ensure organizational consent processes are followed, including:
  + Patients have the right to be informed
  + Patients have the right to refuse or withdraw from procedures
* 5.1 Provide service with dignity and respect to all, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, age, health status, or mental or physical disability.
* 5.3 Encourage the trust and confidence of the public through high standards of professional competence, conduct and deportment.

*Code of Professional Conduct*

* Medical laboratory professionals work with other health care professionals, to provide effective patient care.
* Medical laboratory professionals are dedicated to serving the healthcare needs of the public. The welfare of the patient and respect for the dignity of the individual shall be paramount at all times.

**Relevant Articles**

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[Health Dept employees accuse manager of abuse, racism](https://qconline.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/health-dept-employees-accuse-manager-of-abuse-racism/article_0717fdcc-1d52-52f1-9df6-2073cf52e960.html)

[Facing Escalating Workplace Violence, Hospital Employees Have Had Enough](https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/04/08/709470502/facing-escalating-workplace-violence-hospitals-employees-have-had-enough)

['A knife was pulled on me for refusing a prescription'](https://www.thejournal.ie/gps-violent-patients-3714265-Nov2017/)