

# Beware the Corridor Conversation: A Lesson in Healthcare Ethics

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Two students engaged in clinical placement at a hospital would often confer with each other about the patients they had seen and certain cases to which they were privy. On one such occasion during a conversation in an elevator, they discussed the details of one of these patients.

- **Student A:** "Have you seen Mrs X's foot?"
- **Student B:** "Yes, isn't it gross?"
- **Student A:** "It's hard to imagine how anyone could have such horrendous cellulitis – they're going to have to chop it off."
- **Student B:** "I know – it's just so revolting... poor old bat – still – I guess the fact that she has dementia will probably help ... she probably won't remember a thing about it! Ha ha!"

Unfortunately there were two other people in the elevator with them that day too - Mrs X's elderly husband and daughter. They were outraged that such a casual, disrespectful conversation could occur in public and immediately reported the medical students to hospital management.

The family was also incensed that confidential and personal medical information was readily available to these students who seemed to lack the discretion and respect for patients and their privacy.

The students immediately disclosed this incident to MIPS and fortunately on this occasion the matter went no further other than a reprimand from the hospital and university reinforcing the need for privacy and confidentiality surrounding any patient's healthcare.

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