Code of Ethics
of the
American Academy of Ophthalmology

Pertinent Principles and Rules of the Code of Ethics related to
Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Preamble
The Code of Ethics of the American Academy of Ophthalmology applies to the American Academy of
Ophthalmology and to its Fellows and Members in any class of membership, and is enforceable by the
American Academy of Ophthalmology.

A. Principles Of Ethics
The Principles of Ethics form the first part of this Code of Ethics. They are aspirational and inspirational
model standards of exemplary professional conduct for all Fellows or Members of the Academy in any
class of membership. They serve as goals for which Academy Fellows and Members should constantly
strive. The Principles of Ethics are not enforceable.

1. Ethics in Ophthalmology. Ethics address conduct and relate to what behavior is appropriate or
inappropriate, as reasonably determined by the entity setting the ethical standards. An issue of ethics
in ophthalmology is resolved by the determination that the best interests of patients are served.

2. Providing Ophthalmological Services. Ophthalmological services must be provided with
compassion, respect for human dignity, honesty and integrity.

4. Communication with the Patient. Open communication with the patient is essential. Patient
confidences must be safeguarded within the constraints of the law.

7. An Ophthalmologist’s Responsibility. It is the responsibility of an ophthalmologist to act in the
best interest of the patient.

B. Rules of Ethics
The Rules of Ethics form the second part of this Code of Ethics. They are mandatory and descriptive
standards of minimally-acceptable professional conduct for all Fellows or Members of the Academy in
any class of membership. The Rules of Ethics are enforceable.

1. Competence. An ophthalmologist is a physician who is educated and trained to provide medical
and surgical care of the eyes and related structures. An ophthalmologist should perform only those
procedures in which the ophthalmologist is competent by virtue of specific training or experience or is
assisted by one who is. An ophthalmologist must not misrepresent credentials, training, experience,
ability or results.

2. Informed Consent. The performance of medical or surgical procedures shall be preceded by
appropriate informed consent.

3. Research and Innovation. Research and innovation shall be approved by appropriate review
mechanisms to protect patients from being subjected to or potentially affected by inappropriate, ill-
considered, or fraudulent basic science or patient-oriented research. Basic science and clinical
research are conducted to develop adequate information on which to base prognostic or therapeutic
decisions or to determine etiology or pathogenesis, in circumstances in which insufficient information
exists. Appropriate informed consent for research and innovative procedures must recognize their
special nature and ramifications. In emerging areas of ophthalmic treatment where recognized
guidelines do not exist, the ophthalmologist should exercise careful judgment and take appropriate
precautions to safeguard patient welfare.

4. **Other Opinions.** The patient's request for additional opinion(s) shall be respected. Consultation(s) shall be obtained if required by the condition.

17. **Confidentiality.** An ophthalmologist shall respect the confidential physician-patient relationship and safeguard confidential information consistent with the law.

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