

Code of Ethics of the American Academy of Ophthalmology

Pertinent Principles and Rules of the Code of Ethics related to
Competence and Impairment

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.

3. Competence of the Ophthalmologist.

An ophthalmologist must maintain competence. Competence can never be totally comprehensive, and therefore must be supplemented by other colleagues when indicated. Competence involves technical ability, cognitive knowledge, and ethical concerns for the patient. Competence includes having adequate and proper knowledge to make a professionally appropriate and acceptable decision regarding the patient's management.

6. Corrective Action.

If a member has a reasonable basis for believing that another person has deviated from professionally-accepted standards in a manner that adversely affects patient care or from the Rules of Ethics, the member should attempt to prevent the continuation of this conduct. This is best done by communicating directly with the other person. When that action is ineffective or is not feasible, the member has a responsibility to refer the matter to the appropriate authorities and to cooperate with those authorities in their professional and legal efforts to prevent the continuation of the conduct.

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. When obtaining informed consent, pertinent medical facts and recommendations consistent with good medical practice must be presented in understandable terms to the patient or to the person responsible for the patient. Such information should include alternative modes of treatment, the objectives, risks, and possible complications of such a treatment, and the consequences of no treatment. The operating ophthalmologist must personally confirm with the patient or patient surrogate their (his or her) comprehension of this information.

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

9. Medical and Surgical Procedures. An ophthalmologist must not misrepresent the service that is performed or the charges made for that service. An ophthalmologist must not inappropriately alter the medical record.

10. Procedures and Materials. Ophthalmologists should order only those laboratory procedures, optical devices or pharmacological agents that are in the best interest of the patient. Ordering unnecessary procedures or materials or withholding necessary procedures or materials is unethical.

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