



Code of Ethics of the American Academy of Ophthalmology

Pertinent Principles and Rules of the Code of Ethics related to
Unnecessary Procedures

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.

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

8. Professional Integrity in Research. It is the responsibility of the ophthalmologist to maintain integrity in clinical and basic research. Professional relations with industry regarding research should advance the best interests of patients and the profession.

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.

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.

3. Research and Innovation. Research is conducted to provide information on which to base diagnostic, prognostic or therapeutic decisions and/or to improve understanding of pathogenesis in circumstances in which insufficient information exists. Research and innovation must be approved by appropriate review mechanisms (Institutional Review Board; IRB) and must comply with all requirements of the approved study protocol to protect patients from being subjected to or potentially affected by inappropriate or fraudulent research. 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. Appropriate informed consent for research and innovative procedures must recognize their special nature and ramifications. The ophthalmologist must demonstrate an understanding of the purpose and goals of the research and recognize and disclose financial and non-financial conflicts of interest. Commensurate with the level of his/her involvement, the investigator must accept personal accountability for patient safety and compliance with all legal and IRB-imposed requirements.

11. Commercial Relationships. An ophthalmologist's clinical judgment and practice must not be affected by economic interest in, commitment to, or benefit from professionally-related commercial enterprises.

12. Communications to Colleagues. Communications to colleagues must be accurate and truthful.

15. Conflict of Interest. A conflict of interest exists when professional judgment concerning the well-being of the patient has a reasonable chance of being influenced by other interests of the provider. Disclosure of a conflict of interest is required in communications to patients, the public, and colleagues.

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

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