

Code of Ethics of the American Academy of Ophthalmology

Pertinent Principles and Rules of the Code of Ethics related to
the Learning Curve

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.

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

5. Fees for Ophthalmological Services. Fees for ophthalmological services must not exploit patients or others who pay for the services.

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.

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.

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.

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