ETHICS: CODES AND DILEMMAS

Ethics in medical physics and the role of the AAPM

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AAPM MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the AAPM is advancing medicine through excellence in the science, education and professional practice of medical physics
Rule 3.7.2: The Committee on Ethics

Purpose
The Committee on Ethics shall advise the Professional Council and, through it, the Board of Directors, on matters relating to the ethical practice of medical physics.

Activities
2. Investigate complaints involving alleged unethical practices of medical physics by or relating to AAPM members.
3. Prepare and maintain procedures for resolving ethical problems.
4. Educate the medical physics community on the ethical principles of professional practice.

Rule 4.0.2: Ethical Behavior

All applicants for membership and affiliation must attest that they will abide by the AAPM Code of Ethics.

Rule 4.0.3: Termination of membership or affiliation for ethical misconduct

Sanctions specified within the AAPM Code of Ethics (up to and including expulsion from the AAPM) may be imposed for ethical misconduct. Members or affiliates expelled for ethical misconduct may eventually reapply for membership or affiliation as specified in the Code of Ethics.

REVOLUTION OF THE AAPM CODE OF ETHICS (PP-24)

- RECONSTITUTION OF TG109
- QUESTIONNAIRE TO GENERAL MEMBERSHIP
- REDRAFTING
- ETHICS COMMITTEE REVIEW
- PROFESSIONAL COUNCIL & EXCOM REVIEW
- GENERAL MEMBERSHIP REVIEW
- [JOURNAL OF MEDICAL PHYSICS REVIEW – CURRENT STAGE
- APPROVAL BY BOARD OF DIRECTORS – expected at RSNA 2018
- EXPECTED EFFECTIVE DATE – JANUARY 2019
New set of principles:

- Members must hold as paramount the best interests of the patient, under all circumstances.
- Members must strive to provide the best quality patient care and ensure the safety, privacy and confidentiality of patients and research participants.
- Members must act with integrity in all aspects of their work.
- Members must strive to be impartial in all professional interactions, and must disclose and formally manage any real, potential or plausible conflicts of interest.
- Members must strive to continuously maintain and improve their knowledge and skills while encouraging the professional development of their colleagues and all clinical radiation professionals.
- Members must operate within the limits of their knowledge, abilities and available resources in the practice of radiation oncology.
- Members must support the ideals of justice and fairness in the provision of healthcare and allocation of resources.
- Members must be professionally responsible and account for their practice, attitudes and actions, including inactions and omissions.
New set of principles:

- Members must hold as paramount the best interests of the patient, under all circumstances.
- Members must ensure that quality patient care is assured and maintain the safety, privacy and confidentiality of patients and research participants.
- Members must act with integrity in all aspects of their work.
- Members must strive to provide the best quality patient care and ensure the safety, privacy and confidentiality of patients and research participants.
- Members must act with integrity in all aspects of their work.
- Members must interact in an open collegial and respectful manner amongst themselves and in relation to other professionals, including those in training, to uphold their confidence and prestige.
- Members must adhere to the legal and regulatory requirements that apply to the practice of their profession.
- Members must support the ideals of justice and fairness in the provision of healthcare and allocation of limited resources.
- Members are professionally responsible and accountable for their practice, attitudes and actions, including inactions and omissions.

GUIDELINE: INTEGRITY

- Responsibility to Peers and the Profession

Members have a responsibility to:
- support the profession and contribute to the knowledge and capability of the medical physics profession as a whole;
- improve public understanding of the role, function, and responsibilities of a medical physicist;
- establish the best possible practice environment;
- conduct all their work with diligence, integrity; and
- remain cognizant of the precedents they set.

GUIDELINE: IMPARTIALITY & LACK OF BIAS

- Responsibility to Public

Members must strive to improve the public welfare through:
- disseminating scientific knowledge in a fair and unbiased manner;
- supporting fair and just allocation of healthcare resources; and
- maintaining standards of privacy and confidentiality in all environments, including online communication.

- Discrimination

When acting in roles that carry management authority, Members must treat fairly and with respect all those with whom they have professional relationships, evaluating others based on professional merit alone. To prevent favoritism and discrimination it is essential to set appropriate criteria when assessing individuals for professional opportunities. Members must acknowledge and minimize bias to eliminate discrimination and promote fairness.
GUIDELINE: IMPARTIALITY & LACK OF BIAS

- **Editorship and Peer Review**
  
  Members acting as editors or reviewers:
  - should be aware of potential bias or conflict of interest and strive to deliver an impartial assessment of the work based on merit alone;
  - must declare and manage any conflicts of interest that could compromise their objectivity;
  - should ensure that the peer review process is objective, fair, and confidential;
  - are responsible for maintaining the dialogue, and any communication among participants, at a professional and respectful level throughout the review process and
  - must not use the unpublished results to benefit their own work or advancement.

- **Sponsorship of Investigator Research**

  Members must keep discussions for funding of research separate from discussions for purchase of services or equipment so that there is no real or perceived bias in obtaining research funds or making purchase decisions. Sponsorship of research must be acknowledged and disclosed in presentations and publications.

GUIDELINE: JUSTICE & FAIRNESS

- **Responsibility to Public**

  Members must strive to improve the public welfare through:
  - disseminating scientific knowledge in a fair and unbiased manner;
  - supporting fair and just allocation of healthcare resources; and
  - maintaining standards of privacy and confidentiality in all environments, including online communication.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

- **Breach of AAPM CoE**
  
  Anyone who observes a breach of the CoE by an AAPM member(s) shall submit a complaint against that member(s) to the Chair of the AAPM Ethics Committee (or Chair of Prof Council in the case of conflict of interest).

- **Acceptance of Complaint**
  
  The complaint is accepted when:
  - the complainant and the respondent are members of the AAPM and both the Chair(s) and the respondent agree;
  - the complaint concerns a matter of significant ethical concern;
  - the complaint is submitted within the Statute of Limitations; and
  - the complainant is authorized to file the complaint.

- **Review of Complaint**
  
  The complaint is reviewed by the Ethics Committee, which may:
  - request a response to the complaint;
  - request a hearing if either party requests it.

- **Outcomes**
  
  The outcomes are:
  - written warning;
  - exclusion from future consideration for Fellow status;
  - exclusion from holding any office in the AAPM;
  - exclusion from holding any corporate affiliation. 
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