



An Ethical Code For Ophthalmologists: Ethical Principles and Professional Standards

This comprises a set of moral principles and standards to guide the behavior of ophthalmologists within their professional domain. It reflects the ideals to which they should aspire as members of a specialist branch of the medical profession, and as socially responsible members of their (1) respective professional societies.

Each of the six groups of standards includes a general *principle* from which the related *standards* evolve. The standards taken together are intended to represent comprehensive guidelines to which practitioners might refer when confronted with professional or ethical dilemmas, and act as a benchmark by which to judge ophthalmologists' behavior in professional matters. Standards may be added to through time in response to eventualities, but principles remain immutable over time.

1. Patient Care Standards

1.1 General Principle

The ophthalmologist ought to ensure that the patients are treated with dignity, honesty and integrity, and act in the best interests of the patient at all times.

1.2 Standards

The ophthalmologist ought to:

- put respect for the patient's life above all other considerations
- provide prompt help to persons whose life or health is endangered by disease or accident
- treat all patients without prejudice based on race, religion, gender.
- administer to patients in material need without thought to recompense.
- treat the patient with consideration and respect
- ensure the privacy of the patient, and maintain confidentiality in all aspects of the patient's treatment
- obtain the informed consent of the patient for all interventions
- provide the patient with truthful accurate information about their state of health.



1.2.1 Advertisement in Ophthalmology

Doctors can announce their service to their actual and potential patients as well as their own colleagues. Advertisement:

- can aim announcement for information purposes, should not aim marketing
- should not include self laudatory
- should not include critics of other techniques, machines nor and colleagues.

2. Professional Practice Standards

2.1 General Principle

The ophthalmologist ought to ensure that ophthalmic care is of the highest quality possible.

2.2 Standards

The ophthalmologist ought to:

- perform only those procedures in which he/she is competent by reason of specific training or experience, or is assisted by one who is
- maintain competence in technical ability, cognitive knowledge, and professionalism, keeping abreast of developments in ophthalmic practice
- refrain from misrepresentation of credentials, training, experience or ability
- find the best quality care for the patient's condition, including appropriate referrals as required by the condition
- maintain accurate records of relevant information about the patient and their state of health
- be appropriately dressed to meet the requirements for hygiene and courtesy
- respect laws and ethical guidelines on the use of donated human tissue
- respect local variations in medical practice and customs, provided these do not contravene the ethical standards
- refrain from or withdraw from engaging in any form of clinical practice that might be compromised by the physician's mental, emotional or physical impairment
- take corrective action when aware that an impaired ophthalmologist has not ceased inappropriate behavior, including notifying the appropriate authorities.

3. Professional Community Standards

3.1 General Principle

The ophthalmologist ought to be a responsible member of their professional community by maintaining standards, avoiding conduct that would bring the community and its members into disrepute.

3.2 Standards

The ophthalmologist ought to:

- treat colleagues with respect
- maintain respectful professional dialogue, conducted in a manner that advances the best interests of the patient, including the sharing of relevant information
- provide help to colleagues in cases where professional standards of care are below available possibilities
- respect the interests of the referring physician when asked for consultation or second opinion
- refrain from acting as an expert witness in legal cases unless one can do so truthfully.

4. Research Standards

4.1 General Principle

Ophthalmologists should be conscious of and observe the ethical, legal and scientific criteria for medical research.

4.2 Standards

The ophthalmologist ought to:

- observe appropriate review mechanisms for clinical research
- inform research subjects of the nature of the investigation, and obtain special informed consent
- refrain from representing another's work as their own
- report research accurately and avoid conflict of interest.



5. Social Standards

5.1 General Principle

The ophthalmologist ought to ensure that communications to the public reflect their social responsibilities, and reflect the highest level of probity.

5.2 Standards

The ophthalmologist ought to:

- communicate accurately with the public
- refrain from misrepresentation of credentials, training, experience or ability
- refrain from providing false, deceptive, or misleading information
- refrain from misleading through omission of material information
- refrain from appealing to an individual's anxiety in an unfair way for self-benefit.

6. Commercial Standards

6.1 General Principle

The ophthalmologist ought to ensure that fees for ophthalmologic services do not exploit patients or others who pay for the services, that economic and non-economic conflicts of interest do not interfere with the delivery of the highest quality care, and that the advertising of services reflects information and not commercial criteria.

6.2 Standards

The physician should:

- recommend only those tests, devices, drugs or procedures that advance the best interest of the patient
- not withhold necessary care to a patient's detriment and for the physicians financial advantage
- refrain from prescribing unnecessary tests, devices, drugs or procedures
- disclose fees without misrepresentation, including future costs to be incurred as part of treatment
- refrain from misrepresenting services, or the charges made for services
- provide clear and sufficient information about the availability and type of services



offered, without competing on a commercial basis.

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