

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF ECHOCARDIOGRAPHY CODE OF ETHICS

Preamble

The medical profession has long subscribed to a body of ethical statements developed primarily for the benefit of the patient. Likewise, the American Society of Echocardiography (“ASE”) recognizes that its members have certain ethical obligations to their patients, profession, each other, the community and the world at large. As a member of the medical profession and ASE, an ASE member must recognize and respect these obligations.

The ASE Code of Ethics strives to set standards and provide guidance for ASE members acting within the organization, in their clinical practice, and in their provision of health care generally.

The ASE Code of Ethics sets forth the governing principles, values, and beliefs shared by members of the American Society of Echocardiography, as well as the ethical behavior and standards of conduct expected in conformance with these principles and beliefs.

1. Relationship with Patients

1.1 In all dealings with patients, a member shall act fairly, in good faith, honestly, and with compassion and respect for a patient’s dignity and rights.

1.2 A member shall not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, national origin, sexual orientation or other basis that would constitute illegal discrimination.

1.3 A member shall not practice echocardiography and vascular ultrasound beyond the scope of his or her training, experience and license.

1.4 Patient welfare must be paramount in the practice of echocardiography and vascular ultrasound. Under no circumstances shall a member place his or her self-interest above patient welfare.

1.5 Any conflict of interest must be resolved in the best interests of the patient.

1.6 A member shall use his or her best efforts to protect patients from harm by recommending and providing care that maximizes the anticipated benefits of care and minimizes the possible risks of harm from such care.

1.7 A member must strive to make pertinent medical information available to the patient to enable the patient to make informed choices about their health care.

1.8 A member shall respect the confidential health care professional-patient relationship and safeguard it consistent with the law.

1.9 A member experiencing substance abuse or physical or emotional/psychological impairment should seek the appropriate assistance and limit practice to ensure the impairment does not adversely affect the health or welfare of a patient or patients.

1.10 A member has an obligation to responsibly steward the use of healthcare resources under his or her supervision without compromising patient care and welfare.

2. Relationship with Other Professionals

2.1 A member shall uphold the standards of professionalism, shall be honest in all professional interactions, and shall report to the appropriate legal, regulatory or peer-based entity healthcare professionals whose competence or professional conduct affects or could adversely affect the health or welfare of a patient or patients.

2.2 A member shall act fairly, in good faith, honestly, and with respect in all his or her dealings with staff and other healthcare professionals.

2.3 A member shall cooperate in the legal, regulatory or peer-review process in connection with alleged incompetence or unprofessional conduct or that of another member and accept the profession's final disciplinary action.

2.4 A member engaged in research or other scientific activities shall adhere to rigorous scientific standards and avoid committing scientific misconduct (e.g. fabrication, distortion or theft of data, plagiarism, failure to credit other investigators).

3. Relationship with ASE

3.1 A member serving on behalf of ASE or in any other professional capacity shall endeavor to base his or her opinions on objective data and avoid personal bias.

3.2 A member shall honor his or her fiduciary, legal, and professional obligations in serving the ASE.

3.3 A member shall work to ensure the attainment of the ASE's mission and objectives.

4. Relationship to the Community and to Government

4.1 A member shall comply with state and federal laws and regulations governing the practice of medicine.

4.2 A member involved in the conduct of research and investigation, including work involving human or animal subjects, shall behave ethically, at all times keeping the interest of the subject paramount.

4.3 A member is obligated to report patient abuse, neglect or harassment to the appropriate authorities.

4.4 A member shall have a professional and social obligation to be involved in the community as well as to support policies and change in the best interests of patients and matters affecting healthcare generally.

5. Continuing Medical Education Responsibilities

5.1 A member has an ongoing obligation to be actively involved in continuing medical education activities to ensure the continued development of his or her skills, training and expertise.

5.2 A member shall maintain his or her professional qualifications through continuous study consistent with evidence-based scientific practice.

6. Conflicts of Interest

6.1 A member shall strive to identify and resolve potential perceived and actual conflicts of interests in his or her professional practice and service to ASE. If a conflict cannot be adequately resolved consistent with the foregoing then the member should withdraw from the relationship that generates the conflict of interest, or from the ASE service.

Procedure for Allegations of Unethical Behavior and/or Unacknowledged Conflict of Interest

Adherence to ASE's Code of Ethics is a condition of ASE membership. A member may be reprimanded, censured, dismissed from ASE Boards/Committees/Task forces and/or removed from ASE membership for violating the Code of Ethics in proceedings governed by the ASE Procedures.

An allegation of unethical behavior and/or unacknowledged conflict of interest shall be sent, in writing, to the chair of the Bylaws and Ethics Committee, with a copy to the ASE President. The Bylaws and Ethics Committee shall review the complaint to determine if there is sufficient reason to proceed. If the committee, by majority vote, recommends proceeding, the ASE President shall appoint a separate ad hoc committee to review the matter, including interviewing the complainant and alleged offender, and make a recommendation to the President. Such recommendations could include dismissal of the complaint, a reprimand/or censure of the offender, dismissal of the offender from ASE Boards/Committees/Task Forces, and/or removal from ASE membership. After receiving any recommendation from the Ad Hoc Committee, the ASE President must consult with the Executive Committee. If the Executive Committee concurs with a recommendation which calls for reprimand or censure, dismissal from ASE Boards/Committees/Task Forces, and/or removal from ASE membership, the recommendation must be presented to the Board of Directors. A 2/3 vote of all members of the Board of Directors is required for removal from membership, as well as for reprimand, censure or removal from ASE Boards, Committees or Task Forces. Email or mail ballots may be used by Board of Directors not present. Any member so reprimanded, censured, removed from ASE Boards, Committees or Task Forces or removed from membership may appeal the decision of the Board of Directors to the General Business meeting of the Board, providing that notice of intent to appeal is provided to the Executive Director at least 10 days in advance of the business meeting. The decision of the Executive Committee remains confidential until appeal. Attendees at the General Business Meeting, by a 2/3 vote of those present, may ask the Board of Directors to reconsider their recommendation. The Board of Directors must do so at their next scheduled meeting; a 2/3 vote

is again required to reverse the original decision for removal from membership, as well as for reprimand, censure or removal from ASE Boards, Committees or Task Forces.

If an ASE member is censured by or dismissed from other professional organizations, and/or has his/her professional license withdrawn, the Bylaws and Ethics Committee shall review the information available and make a recommendation to the ASE President concerning the member's ASE status. The ASE President will then proceed, as above, by appointing a separate ad hoc committee to review the matter, etc.

General Reference

Popp RJ, Smith SC et al. ACCF/AHA Consensus Conference Report on Professionalism and Ethics. Circulation 2004; 110: 2506-2549.