

Abstract ID: 9942 Title: Ethics for Medical Physicists

Medical physicists frequently encounter situations that call for ethical decision in their research, education, clinical practice and professional activities. Research medical physicists deal with ethical challenges such as conflicts of interest, experimental studies involving animals and human participants, peer review of papers and grant applications of colleagues, and co-authorship of scientific publications and presentations. Physicists in clinical practice often are required to exercise professional judgment that may be at odds with the clinical and technology colleagues, and take responsibility for the accuracy of radiation delivery in radiation oncology and optimization of imaging procedures in diagnostic and nuclear radiology. Many physicists are mentored by graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, and a professional privilege that includes major ethical obligations on their part and protect the young physicists in their care. At the profession level, medical physicists are expected to establish and sustain relationships with their colleagues that are a model for forthrightness and integrity.

The AAPM's Code of Ethics establishes a foundation for ethical decisions and relationships by and among medical physicists. One fruitful way to interpret the Code of Ethics is by learning through discussion of cases and studies. Several case studies will be presented as time permits, focusing on ethical topics such as financial conflicts of interest, informed consent in human research studies employing normal volunteers, plagiarism of scientific publications, advertising of clinical technologies as a marketing strategy, high-dose protocols in imaging, responsible mentoring of students towards graduation, and interviewing for a medical physics position.

Every medical physicist faces ethical decisions, in respective of the focus of his or her practice. Making the right decisions requires a solid grasp of ethical principles and experience in applying the principles in practice. This session is intended to provide some of the needed experience.

Adraft version of a Code of Ethics for AAPM members has been written by Task Group 109. This Code of Ethics will replace current discrete AAPM ethics policies into a single document and expand their scope. Current AAPM ethics policies primarily address medical physics members. The new code of ethics will also encompass other member types such as health physicists, regulators, vendors, physicians, scientists, engineers, those in training, and other healthcare professionals. The new code will address significant ethical issues for members: professional conduct, research ethics, education ethics, and business ethics. The format of the Code is a concise summary of core ethical values of AAPM members – Principles, followed by more extensive Guidelines that are intended to assist members in interpreting and implementing the Principles. This Code of Ethics replaces the following AAPM policies: Ethical Guidelines for Vacating a Position (PP4 -B); Ethical Guidelines for Reviewing the Work of Another Physicist (PP5 -C); Guidelines for Ethical Practice for Medical Physicists (PP8 -D); and Ethics Complaint Procedure (PP21 -A).