This session will cover a variety of topics related to legal issues concerning the medical physics community. It will include an overview of the basic workings and terminology of the American civil law system and the flow of a cause of action through the civil courts. The session will then focus on specific legal issues for practicing medical physicists.

The first half of the session will introduce and define several basic legal terms. Detail will be given to what may be expected during the deposition process and how to respond, as well as to the purpose and nature of a subpoena and the obligations it imposes on those receiving one. The standards used by the civil court system in determining compensatory and punitive awards will also be discussed.

The discussion will then shift to more specific legal information for practicing medical physicists. Topics will include issues related to malpractice insurance. Specifically the relationship between a medical physicist covered by the umbrella of a hospital’s malpractice insurance and the attorney hired by the hospital to represent that physicist will be detailed. This session should better prepare a medical physicist in the decision of whether to retain counsel of his own or utilize the attorney representing his employer.

Finally, the discussion will cover the use of malpractice insurance among consulting medical physicists, and more specifically, the nature of the consultant to the contracting facility contrasted to the medical physicist directly employed by a radiation therapy facility.