

ACMP Annual Meeting, 2008

AAPM Code of Ethics *Work in Progress*

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AAPM Ethics Chair
TG 109 Chair

AAPM code of ethics?

The charge of TG-109 is to write a **comprehensive** Code of Ethics for **all** the members of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine, **consolidating** previous AAPM ethics policies into a unified document.

(similar likelihood to writing a unified field theory for physics)



- This Code of Ethics replaces AAPM policies:
- **Ethical Guidelines for Vacating a Position (PP 4-B)**
- **Ethical Guidelines for Reviewing the Work of Another Physicist (PP 5-C)**
- **Guidelines for Ethical Practice for Medical Physicists (PP 8-D)**
- **Ethics Complaint Procedure (PP 21-A)**

Code of Ethics for **all** the members

- The membership of the AAPM is diverse and growing more so.
- The existing AAPM ethics policies are applicable specifically to medical physicists, and do not encompass other member types, including **health physicists, regulators, vendors, physicians, scientists, engineers, or other health care professionals.**

Comprehensive Code of Ethics

- The existing AAPM ethics policies do not specifically address research, education, or business ethics.
- The Ethics Guidelines of this new Code of Ethics have four major sections: professional conduct, research ethics, education ethics, and business ethics.
- Preceding the Guidelines are the Principles which are core values

Comprehensive Code of Ethics

Is there *really* any hope of writing a *comprehensive* code of ethics?

I once worked with an engineer who had a sign in his office that said,

“Every time I make something foolproof, someone comes along and invents a bigger fool.”

D Jay Freedman

When confronting such a serious problem, it is easy to feel so daunted by your inability to do everything that you end doing nothing. In this, Voltaire warns, “*Le mieux est l’ennemi du bien*” – roughly, “The perfect (better) is the enemy of the good.”

From: The Ethicist by Randy Cohen, NY Times Magazine, 2/25/07



PHYSICS TODAY



Speaking out on ethics

AAPM Ethics Principles

- The Principles are core values intended to aid all members and affiliates to act in an ethically professional manner.
- The Principles are not a set of laws, but standards of ethical conduct.
- The Principles provide a framework for members to conduct themselves with respect to patients, colleagues, and the public.
- The Principles describe how we **should** behave.

Space Station



S122E011112

Credit: STS-122 Shuttle Crew, NASA

AAPM Ethics Principles

- I. Members shall strive to provide the best quality patient care with competent and professional service.
- II. Members shall safeguard patient and professional confidences and privacy.
- III. Members shall respect the rights of patients, colleagues, health professionals, and those in training.
- IV. Members must realize their limitations of knowledge, skill, or time, and seek consultations and assistance when indicated.

AAPM Ethics Principles

- V. Members shall respect the law and regulatory requirements for the safe and effective practice of their profession.
- VI. Members shall be honest in all professional interactions, and in their work.
- VII. The relationship among members of the Association and with other health professionals shall be open, collegial, and based on mutual respect.
- VIII. Members shall disclose conflicts of interest when financial or other personal considerations may compromise or appear to affect their professional judgment.

AAPM Ethics Principles

- IX. Members should strive to support the professional development of their colleagues and those in training.
- X. The work, including research, of a member shall be truthful, based upon accepted scientific principles, and shall cite prior work when applicable.
- XI. Members shall strive to improve their knowledge and skills, sharing these with their colleagues.
- XII. Members shall strive to protect the safety and welfare of patients.

Columbus Laboratory Installed on Space Station



S122E008222

Credit: [STS-122 Crew](#), [Expedition 16 Crew](#), [ESA](#), [NASA](#)

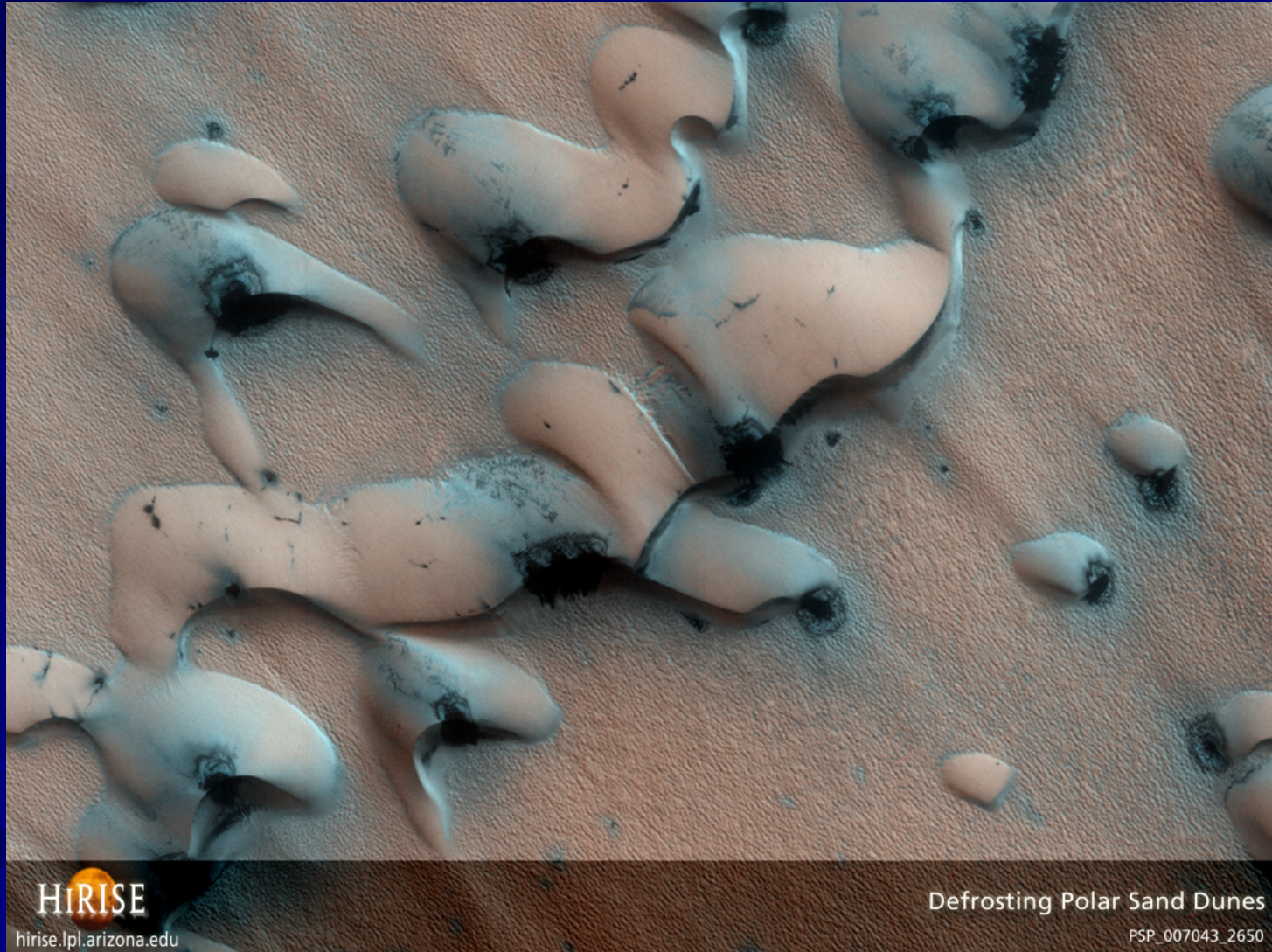
Ethics Guidelines

The Guidelines are intended to assist members to interpret and implement the Principles.

The Guidelines cannot be all-inclusive, so members should refer to the Principles for situations not specifically addressed in the Guidelines.

- **Professional Conduct**
 - Academic freedom
 - Honesty
 - Maintenance of knowledge and skills
 - Competence
 - Responsibility to public
 - Responsibility to patient
 - Responsibility to institution
 - Patient confidentiality
 - Conflict of interest
 - Discrimination
 - Harassment
 - Sexual Harassment
 - Exploitative relationships
 - Responsible response to impaired or incompetent colleagues
 - Reporting incidents
 - Relationship with regulators
 - Whistleblower protection
 - **Reviewing the work of another medical physicist**

Sand Dunes on Mars



HiRISE
hirise.lpl.arizona.edu

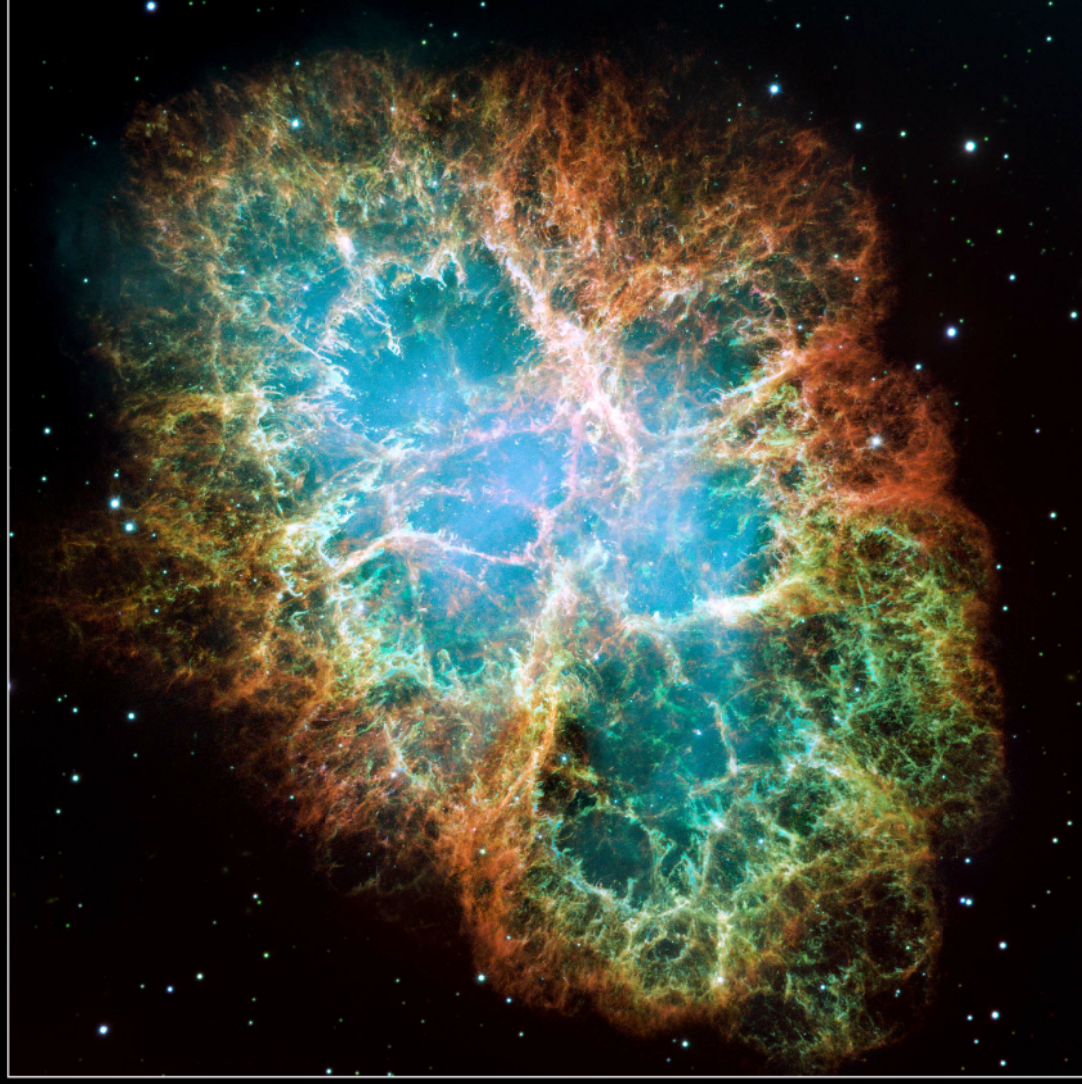
Defrosting Polar Sand Dunes

PSP_007043_2650

Credit: [HiRISE](#), [MRO](#), [LPL \(U. Arizona\)](#), [NASA](#)

- **Research Ethics**

- Acquisition, management, sharing and ownership of research data
- Conflict of interest
- Human participants
- Research misconduct
- Animal welfare
- Mentor/student responsibilities
- Collaborative science
- Authorship
- Editorship and peer review
- Author or reviewer conflict of interest
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Overlapping publications



Crab Nebula • M1
Hubble Space Telescope • WFPC2

NASA, ESA, and J. Hester (Arizona State University)

STScI-PRC05-37

- **Education Ethics**

- **Teacher**

- Student program completion
- Safe environment
- Respect for students
- Non-discrimination
- Equal opportunity
- Student confidentiality
- Consensual student relationship
- Sexual harassment
- Acknowledgement of student or others' work
- Fair evaluation
- Intellectual and academic freedom



Star Formation in the Rho Ophiuchi Cloud Spitzer Space Telescope • IRAC • MIPS
NASA / JPL-Caltech / L. Allen (Harvard-Smithsonian CfA) & D. Padgett (SSC-Caltech) ssc2008-03a

- **Education Ethics**

- **Student**

- Review and inspect records
 - Whistleblower protection
 - Work must pertain to education program
 - Program requirements
 - Adherence to institutional policies and procedures
 - Academic honesty and integrity
 - Acknowledge work of others
 - Freedom of expression
 - Patient and institutional confidentiality
 - Respect for students, teachers, staff, patients
 - Respect institutional property

Light Echoes from V838 Mon



Credit: [NASA](#) and the [Hubble Heritage Team](#) ([AURA](#)/[STScI](#))

- **Business Ethics**
 - Seeking or changing jobs
 - Employment investigation
 - **Vacating a position**
 - Relationships with recruiters
 - Vendors
 - Relationships with medical physicists
 - Sponsorship or research
 - Conflict of interest
 - Gifts or kickbacks
 - Sales, marketing, advertising
 - Confidentiality

Complaint Procedure



Complaint Procedure

Preface

Any allegation of ethical misconduct by a member reported to the Ethics Committee will be carefully considered in a fair, impartial manner. It is the strong preference of the AAPM Ethics Committee to encourage good ethical behavior, not to punish poor behavior. The Ethics Committee is a resource available to members to assist them in resolving questionable ethical situations when possible, without resorting to filing an official complaint.

From AAPM Newsletter

- When ET receives such a contact, we always remind ourselves that **our primary purpose is to encourage good ethical behavior** of our members. We will attempt to resolve or mediate in a confidential manner questionable ethical situations between members. Historically, most ethical contacts are resolved confidentially. As a last resort, ET will consider some form of disciplinary action against a member.

AAPM Ethics Committee

- The ethics committee intends to devote their time and energy raising the awareness of ethical issues through educational avenues in order to encourage good ethical behavior rather than trying to respond to poor behavior with some form of punishment.

AAPM Code of Ethics Draft

Now available to AAPM members for review and comment. Go to the AAPM home page.

What's New

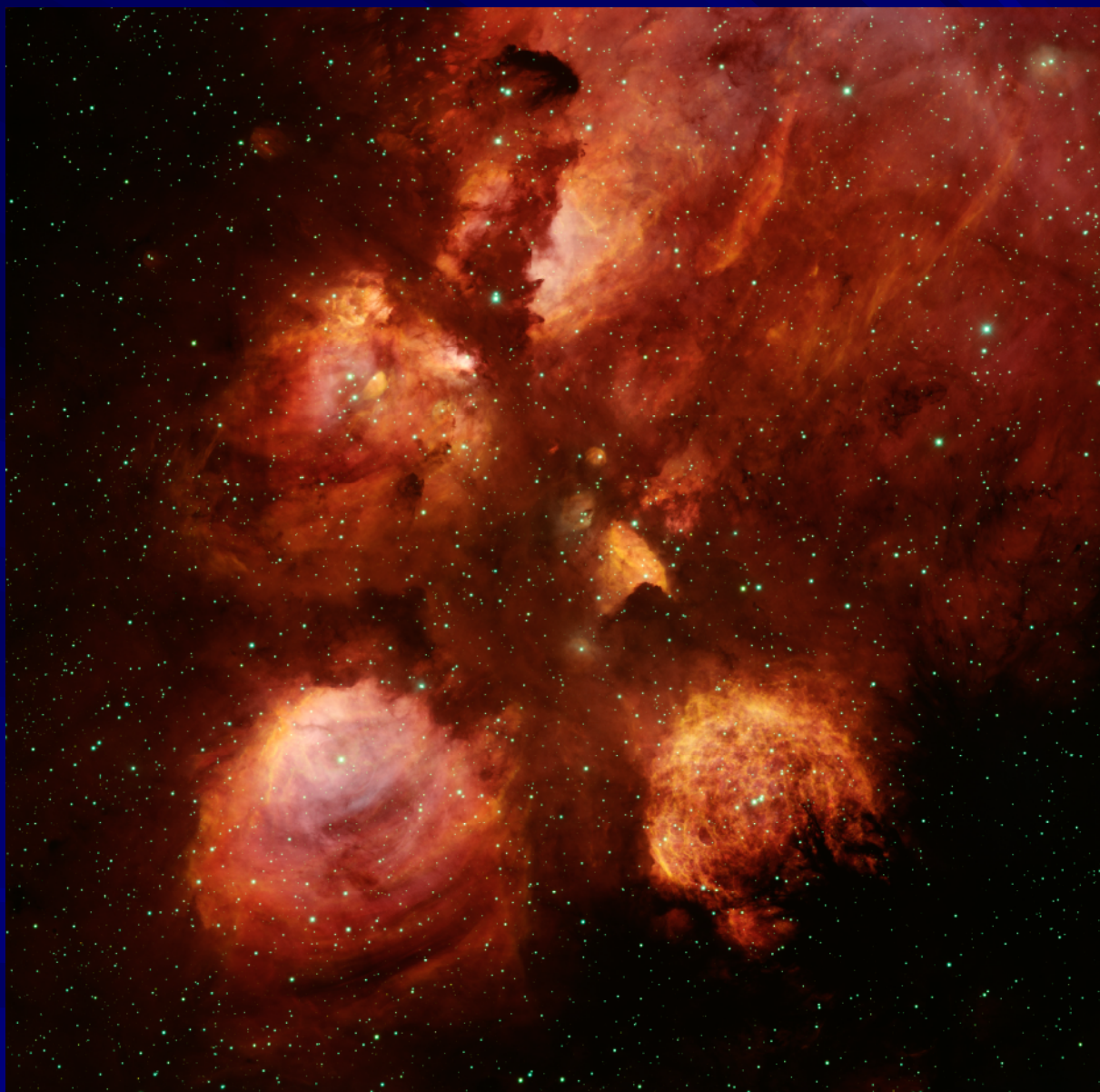
Draft AAPM Code of Ethics released for comment [committees | posted: 4/30/2008 | sunset: 5/30/2008]

A Final Note

Courtesy of Mark Twain

Always do right —

This will gratify some and astonish the rest.



Thank you!

**NGC 6334: The
Cat's Paw
Nebula**

Credit & Copyright: [T. A. Rector](#) ([U. Alaska](#)), [T. Abbott](#), [NOAO](#), [AURA](#), [NSF](#)