The European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology (EAACI)

Code of Ethics

Preamble
All physicians have an obligation to act in accordance with medical ethics with respect to their patients, their profession and the society. The core principle of ethics is to respect and benefit human beings, animals and plant and refrain from misdeeds.

Medical ethics is not a fixed code of practice. Changes in our general ethical considerations must be reflected in medical ethics which therefore is always changing. Any code of medical ethics must therefore observe and respect a wide range of doctrine including the General Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, the Ethical Guidelines of the World Medical Association, such as the Declaration of Geneva and the Declaration of Helsinki, the Chart of Basic Human Rights of the European Union, and Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with Regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine.

The European Academy of Allergology and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) is an academic association of individual members, National Societies of Allergology and Clinical Immunology and patient organizations. The purpose of EAACI is to benefit the care of patients with allergic disease by:

- promoting basic and clinical research
- collecting, assessing and disseminating scientific information
- functioning as a scientific reference body for other scientific, health and political organizations
- encouraging and providing training and continuous education
- promoting good patient care in this important area of medicine
- cooperating with other relevant organizations
The primary purpose of this Code of Ethics is to support EAACI's main goals, as listed above. In order to be effective, EAACI needs to be viewed by the scientific community, the various social bodies, patients and healthy members of the general public, industry, media and political decision makers as a scientific society of special competence, high respect and integrity. It is therefore essential that EAACI and its members act in an ethical manner.

The EAACI Code of Ethics is an independent but integrated part of the Constitution of the Academy. It applies to its members and officers and is enforceable solely by EAACI.

EAACI reserves the right to enforce this Code of Ethics and apply disciplinary procedures in cases of relevant violations, when it judges that such action serves the interests of EAACI and its members.

**General Principles of Medical Ethics**

1. The health of the individual is of paramount importance to the medical profession. The autonomy and dignity of the individual must always be preserved. Medicine is essentially a service to assist the individual in his/her attempt to maintain or restore health and to prevent disease.

   Every person decides for himself/herself on the necessity, the time and the extent of medical assistance. Within these limits, medicine is not merely a service but also an art how to help the individual in his/her attempt to maintain or restore health and prevent disease.

   The responsibility of the physician is not merely to follow and execute the patient’s decision but to educate and guide him/her, to prepare him/her for the best possible decision.
2. Physicians should be dedicated to providing competent medical service with altruism, compassion and respect for human dignity and rights. They shall uphold the standards of professionalism, be honest in all professional interactions, continue to study, apply and advance scientific knowledge, maintain a commitment to continuous medical education, make relevant information available to patients, colleagues, and the public and use the talents of other health professionals when indicated. Compliance with local and national professional realities may limit the practice of services.

Physicians shall, in the provision of appropriate patient care, except in emergencies, be free to choose whom to serve, with whom to associate and the environment in which to provide medical services according to national rules and with respect to international professional and ethical expectations.

Cooperation among physicians is a self-evident component of such good working conditions and may not be negatively influenced by economical considerations. Physicians shall respect the rights of patients, of colleagues and of other health professionals, and shall safeguard patient confidences in a manner consistent with pertinent professional obligations and applicable law.

3. Social commitment is a component of the medical profession.

The purposes of medicine are not limited to patient care: the making of an individual diagnosis, treatment and prevention of the respective illness. The WHO defines health as the "condition of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Because it is the goal of physicians to maintain or restore this form of health in as many people as possible, social commitment is an integral component of medical conduct. The physician’s personal social responsibility and the responsibility of society range from such goals as commitment to a fair health system in the home country to involvement in the improvement of working conditions, to questions of national, regional and global distribution of health resources and the commitment for a
healthy, safe and sustainable environment suitable for life. A physician shall respect the law and also recognize responsibility to seek changes in those requirements which are contrary to the best interests of the patient.

4. Besides therapy, fields of prevention/prophylaxis and palliative care should find increased attention as purposes of medicine.

Western medicine, through its historically evolved scientific understanding, used to be predominantly orientated towards therapy in the sense of "the defeat of illness." To deal with the problems and burden of disease progression and eventually dying, the whole personality of the physician and his/her empathy for the wishes and needs of those suffering and dying are required here. On the other hand, it must likewise be more and more the task of the society, its members as individuals, and the physicians in the society to become active before an illness appears. To this end, more knowledge in the field of prevention and prophylaxis must be gained and implemented.

5. Medicine is a dynamic discipline. For medical progress to occur, scientific diversity and transparency are necessary pre-requisites. Biomedical research is subject to generally accepted fundamental principles and must guarantee the safety of the patient according to international rules. Biomedical research, however, implies a certain level of self-commitment of patients and healthy people towards the advancement of medicine.

Since diseases and thus the demands on medicine change, medical research is essential. Diagnostic and therapeutic options must be changed or newly developed in such a way that scientific progress in medicine is the result, as opposed to unintentional chance development. Modern understanding of science must be open to any justifiable methods and research topics in the sense of pluralism. Research programs must be made socially lucid. The goals of research may not be worked out by medicine alone, but must rather be
developed with and attuned to other social groups, respectively with the potential patients.

Medical research with humans is permissible only after individual informed consent without any pressure has been given. Research with patients unable to give consent must be advantageous to the patients themselves or to persons with diseases of the same kind. Falsification and deceit in scientific publications is scientifically and morally reprehensible, and must be prevented by appropriate means.

Specific Rules of the EAACI Code of Ethics

1. **Conduct of EAACI members and officers**
   
   All EAACI members, including junior members and also its officers, shall at all times act in an ethical manner in relation to their patients, colleagues and EAACI. By becoming a member of EAACI, members automatically agree to comply with stated rules and all provisions of its Constitution and Bylaws.

2. **EAACI members are required to inform the Ethics Committee of any censure, reprimand, involuntary termination/suspension of licence to practise medicine or suspension/revocation of practice privileges.** If required by the Ethics Committee, details of such action by another organisation will be provided by the member to the Ethics Committee and may be used as a basis for disciplinary action.

3. **Relationships with Media and Public Statements**
   
   No Member shall, when dealing with the media or otherwise in making a public statement use the imprimatur of EAACI in a manner which would reasonably give rise to the impression that the Member is the official spokesperson of EAACI or that EAACI has endorsed any product, service, person or idea without the prior written consent of the EAACI Executive Committee.
4. **Commercial Relationships**

A Member's actions for or on behalf of EAACI shall not be biased by an economic interest generated by industry.

5. **Disclosure of Conflict of Interests**

EAACI requires its Board Members, appointed officials and invited speakers to disclose any relevant interest, either direct or indirect, with any outside commercial organization, which may have:

- significant economic transactions with EAACI, its members or their patients
- objectives inconsistent with the goals of EAACI

Relevant interests include, but are not confined to:

- Shareholdings
- Grants and contracts for research
- Participation in clinical trials
- Sponsorship and support for attending educational and professional meetings
- Participation in speaker bureaux and ad hoc meetings supported by companies

6. **Gifts to Members from Industry**

Members should not accept inappropriate gifts from industry. Individual gifts are permissible as long as the gifts are educational in nature or related to the physician’s work. Any gifts accepted by members should primarily entail a benefit to patients and should not be of substantial value. Cash payments should never be accepted. Textbooks, modest meals and other gifts are appropriate if they serve a genuine educational function. The gift of drug samples is permissible as long as these are not resold and are used to treat patients within the scope of national regulations.
7. Medical Education organized or sponsored by industry

Subsidies for the costs of continuing medical education conferences or professional meetings are permissible provided they contribute to the improvement of patient care. An appropriate disclosure of financial support or conflict of interest should be made.

Subsidies from industry for educational activities can be accepted for the costs of travel, lodging and registration fees, but not for personal expenses. Neither should payment be accepted to compensate for the Member’s time.

It is appropriate for faculty at conferences or meetings to accept honoraria and reimbursement for reasonable travel, lodging, registration and meal expenses. Such honoraria should be appropriate to the scope and scale of the meeting and appropriate disclosure made. It is also appropriate for consultants providing services to companies and organisations to receive reasonable compensation for their time and activity, and to accept reimbursement for reasonable travel, lodging and meal expenses.

Selection processes for allocating scholarship or other special funds to permit medical students, residents and fellows to attend educational conferences must be transparent and unbiased. Those involved in such selection processes should be willing to publish details of the criteria used for selection upon request.

Administrative Procedures

A. Ethics Committee

1. Ethics Committee

The Ethics Committee shall consist of nine members: the Chair, the Secretary, a representative of the Patients’ Organization EFA and six additional members.
Apart from the representative of EFA, all Ethics Committee members must be current members of EAACI in good standing.

The term of office shall be two years, co-terminous with the Executive Committee. No person may serve for more than three consecutive terms on the Ethics Committee. Individuals who have rotated off the Ethics Committee are eligible for re-election at a subsequent date.

Nominations for vacancies among additional members of the Ethics Committee will be solicited from National Societies. A slate of members and officers for the next two year period will be prepared by the existing Ethics Committee and submitted to the Executive Committee for approval.

The Ethics Committee’s composition should be balanced by gender, practice, education, research and other endeavours within the fields of allergology and clinical immunology.

Membership of the Ethics Committee may be terminated by the Executive Committee for good cause.

Ethics Committee members’ costs in fulfilling their duties will be covered by EAACI. Whenever possible, advance notice of such costs should be communicated to the Treasurer.

It is the Executive Committee’s responsibility to review, endorse and publicise the Ethic Committee’s position statements and decisions.

The Ethics Committee shall be responsible for:

1. Maintaining a watching brief on developments in the field of medical ethics with particular reference to developments that may affect the field of allergology and clinical immunology.
2. Reviewing and assessing this code of ethics periodically and recommending any amendments that may be required to the Executive Committee.

3. Responding to specific issues raised under the Code of Ethics. The Ethics Committee is obliged to consider each case referred to it and either investigate it or reject it. If appropriate, the Ethics Committee will issue a recommendation to the Executive Committee who are responsible for deciding on any appropriate action.

4. Developing and implementing educational programmes on medical ethics for EAACI members. These may include programmes at the annual scientific meeting, articles in official EAACI publications and other related activity. Activities requiring significant financial expenditure shall be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval as part of the annual budget setting process.

2. **The Chair of the Committee**

Upon nomination by the Ethics Committee members, the Executive Committee shall approve the appointment of one member of the Ethics Committee as the Committee's Chair (the "Chair"). The Chair is the principal administrative officer responsible for calling meetings of the Ethics Committee and for implementing this Code of Ethics. The Chair shall be provided, upon the approval of the Executive Committee, with the resources necessary for the fulfilment of their duties. The Chair is an adjunct member of the Executive Committee.

3. **The Secretary of the Committee**

The Ethics Committee shall appoint one of its members to serve as the committee’s Secretary. The Secretary shall act in the place of the Chair when the Chair is unable to serve.
4. **Meetings of the Committee**

Meetings of the Ethics Committee shall be called upon by the Chair at least 14 days' written or electronic notice to Committee members. Such notice shall include a copy of the agenda for the meeting. A majority of all the appointed Committee members shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting business at the Committee meeting. Voting decisions shall be by majority of those present at a meeting (or by a majority of those submitting votes in a mail vote). Mail voting without a meeting is permitted where all Committee members submit mail votes or abstentions. Committee members shall not be permitted to vote by proxy. Any member of the Committee having any financial or other personal interest in any matter before the Committee shall decline to participate in a determination of any such matter.

5. **Indemnification and Insurance**

The EAACI shall indemnify and hold harmless and defend completely all Ethics Committee members against liability arising from Committee-related activities.

B. **Investigation procedures**

1. **Submission**

A submission involving this Code of Ethics may consist of:

- a request for issue by the Executive Committee of a position statement interpreting any provision of this Code of Ethics; or

- a request for a finding by the Executive Committee that a member has failed to observe any provision of the Rules of Ethics under this Code of Ethics.

2. **Investigation**

For each submission, involving this Code of Ethics, valid and actionable, the Ethics Committee shall conduct an investigation into its specific facts or circumstances to whatever extent is necessary in order to clarify, expand or corroborate the information provided by the
submitter. A Member (individual or a National Society) or constitutional institutions of EAACI being the subject of a challenge shall be informed in writing at the beginning of the Committee's investigation as to:

(a) the nature of the challenge
(b) the obligation to cooperate fully in the Committee's investigation of the challenge, and
(c) the opportunity to request a hearing on the challenge before the Ethics Committee.

3. Advisory opinion

Upon completion of an investigation the Ethics Committee may develop an advisory opinion by simple majority which shall be communicated to the Executive Committee for action.

The Executive Committee may issue a position statement

• upon the recommendation of the Ethics Committee following an investigation; or
• upon the recommendation of the Ethics Committee arising from its own initiative.

A representative of the Ethics Committee shall present to Executive Committee, for its review, the recommendations of the Ethics Committee and its record of the investigation. Once issued by the Executive Committee, the position statement shall be promulgated by non-public communication, for Members only.

4. Sanctions

Any of the following sanctions may be imposed by the Executive Committee upon a Member or Society who the Executive Committee has determined has failed to observe the Rules of Ethics, although the sanction applied must reasonably relate to the nature and severity of the non-observance, focusing upon reformation of the conduct of the Member and deterrence of similar conduct by others:
a) reprimand the Member, or institution or Society of EAACI with publication of the determination but without public identification;  
b) suspension of the Member or member Society, dissolution of the institution for a designated period, with publication (at the discretion of the Executive Committee) of the identity; or  
c) dismissal of the Member or Society from the EAACI, with publication of the termination of membership and of the identity.

5. **Appeal**

Within thirty days of receipt of notice of a determination by the Executive Committee that a Member has failed to observe the Rules of Ethics in this Code and of imposition of a sanction, the affected Member may submit to the Executive Committee in writing a request for an appeal. In such event, the Executive Committee shall establish an appellate body consisting of at least three, but not more than five Past Presidents of the EAACI who did not participate in the Ethics Committee's investigation or in the Executive Committee's determination.

The appellate body shall conduct and complete the appeal within ninety days after receipt of the request for an appeal. The purpose of the appeal shall be to provide an objective review of the original challenge, the investigation and recommendation of the Ethics Committee, and the determination of the Executive Committee.

The decision of the appellate body shall either affirm or overrule the determination of the Executive Committee on non-observance of the Rules of Ethics by a Member. The decision of the appellate body, including a statement of the reasons for the decision, shall be reported to the General Assembly. The decision shall be binding upon every member and institution of the EAACI.

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