

CODE OF ETHICS

The American Board of Medical Microbiology and the National Registry of Microbiologists of the American Academy of Microbiology

Because of the demanding nature of the practice of public health and medical laboratory microbiology, because the results of medical laboratory procedures are frequently employed by those without the means to evaluate either laboratory performance or personal competence of the clinical laboratory scientist, and because, in some respects, the practice of public health and medical laboratory microbiology is a public service, the need for a code to define ethical practice on the part of the microbiologist has been widely expressed. In response to this general expression of need, this code has been developed. It is endorsed by the National Registry of Microbiologists and by the American Board of Medical Microbiology. It was approved by the Board of Governors of the American Academy of Microbiology at a regularly scheduled meeting on December 7, 1970, and amended by a mail vote June 18, 1973.

ARTICLE I

General Standards, Definitions

Section 1. Public Health and Medical Laboratory Microbiology and its subdivisions of Bacteriology, Mycology, Virology, Immunology and Parasitology concern the application of microbiological theory and practice, including the isolation, identification and characterization of microbial agents of disease and the evaluation of measurable reactions of the patient which indicate infection or resistance.

Section 2. The Public Health and Medical Laboratory Microbiologist is one equipped by education and experience to engage in the practice of microbiology as defined above.

Section 3. Practitioners of the profession of Public Health and Medical Laboratory Microbiology hold their contribution to the welfare of the public as their ultimate concern and responsibility. The microbiologist shall, to the best of his ability, use his scientific skills and knowledge for the benefit of man.

Section 4. The microbiologist accepts as professional obligations the acquisition of the best available education and experience in the science and its advancement through his personal contribution. He shall strive constantly to enlarge, extend and improve his knowledge of the science to his own advantage and that of his colleagues.

Section 5. The Public Health and Medical Laboratory Microbiologist shall maintain the highest professional standards in his dealings with the medical and related professions.

Section 6. The microbiologist shall offer no rebates or commissions to any person for the solicitation or referral of patients for professional services.

ARTICLE II

Publications, Patents and Advertising

Section 1. The microbiologist shall freely discuss with his colleagues and with scientists in related fields, advances in the science of microbiology. To withhold information for personal gain shall be considered unethical. This Section shall not apply to information classified by a government agency for reasons of national security.

Section 2. The microbiologist is encouraged to publish, after critical evaluation, new knowledge pertaining to the science of microbiology obtained through research or other observations.

Section 3. It shall be considered unethical for any microbiologist to advertise, announce or solicit requests for his services except through *bona fide* scientific or professional channels normally used by physicians, microbiologists, and other health specialists.

Section 4. Microbiologists shall require manufacturers and suppliers to provide all significant information on reagents, laboratory diagnostic agents, and biological products, proposed for use by him, or in applications under his supervision or direction. He shall not knowingly use, endorse, or promote such products about which significant information has been concealed.

ARTICLE III

Obligations as a Microbiologist

Section 1. Except for research purposes, the microbiologist shall use only those procedures and reagents that have been evaluated and found adequate for their intended purposes by several microbiologists whose competence can be recognized by the American Board of Medical Microbiology or the American Academy of Microbiology, or that have been endorsed as adequate by recognized governmental or professional organizations.

Section 2. The microbiologist shall, in the pursuit of his profession, observe the highest scientific standards at all times and shall conduct himself as a scientist.

Section 3. The microbiologist shall carefully supervise the technicians working in his laboratory. He shall train these workers to the best of his ability, encourage them to attain the highest technical competence and teach them by word and example to adhere to the ethical standards herein outlined.

Section 4. The microbiologist shall contribute to research and to the advancement of his specialty, and shall encourage those working in his laboratory to do likewise. He shall accept as collaborators, whenever possible, the junior members of his staff and shall encourage these members to

contribute to the science of microbiology. To the best of his ability he shall cooperate with other scientists and physicians in their efforts to advance microbiology and medical science.

ARTICLE IV

Duties to the Physician and Patient

Section 1. Microbiologists, with the exception of those qualified as physicians, shall, in keeping with the welfare of the patient, engage only in activities that constitute the laboratory or epidemiologic diagnosis of disease. They shall refrain from such activities that constitute clinical diagnosis of disease as made by licensed medical practitioners.

Section 2. The microbiologist shall provide results of laboratory examinations to physicians, health agencies, other laboratories, or others authorized by federal or state laws to receive such reports, but shall not transmit directly to the patient the results or the interpretation of results of tests conducted by him.

Section 3. The microbiologist shall, when appropriate, outline to the physician the significance of microbiological findings and he shall suggest further determinations that would aid the physician in treatment of the patient or would contribute to the prevention of disease.

ARTICLE V

Revision of the Code

Section 1. The outline here presented can serve only as a general guide and shall be periodically reviewed and revised by the Ethics Committee of the American Academy of Microbiology.

ARTICLE VI

Application and Enforcement of the Code

Section 1. The Ethics of the Public Health and Medical Laboratory Microbiologist shall at all times be at least comparable to the standards to which medical, engineering, scientific and other comparable professions subscribe.

Section 2. It shall be the obligation of the microbiologist to report to the Ethics Committee of the American Academy of Microbiology any infractions of these principles of professional conduct and behavior by individuals subject to this Code which may come to his attention.

Section 3. The Ethics Committee of the American Academy of Microbiology shall consider all reported infractions. When a person has been charged with a violation, he shall be so informed in writing. The notice of the charge shall state the charged offense with particularity sufficient to enable the accused to prepare a defense. The accused shall have the opportunity to appear and present his defense with the assistance of counsel or to submit written statements of his defense, if he so elects. A written record of the proceedings, but not of the deliberations of the Committee, shall be prepared and made available to the accused. On the basis of all evidence presented and recorded, the Ethics Committee shall determine whether or not the charges have been substantiated.

Section 4. Should the Ethics Committee determine that a microbiologist subject to this Code of Ethics has violated its principles or any of its specific provisions, it shall recommend to the Board of Governors of the American Academy of Microbiology such disciplinary or corrective action as is deemed appropriate under the circumstances. The permissible range of disciplinary action shall vary from a simple reprimand to expulsion from membership in the American Academy of Microbiology, removal of certification by the American Board of Medical Microbiology or registration by the National Registry of Microbiologists. Expulsion from membership or removal of certification or registration shall be limited to instances where an individual subject to this Code of Ethics is found to have willfully, repeatedly, or flagrantly violated its provisions.

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