

# Principles of Medical Ethics and Professionalism in Orthopaedic Surgery

The following *Principles of Medical Ethics and Professionalism in Orthopaedic Surgery* have been adopted by the Board of Directors of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. They are not laws, but rather standards of conduct that define the essentials of honorable behavior for the orthopaedic surgeon.

- I. **Physician-Patient Relationship.** The orthopaedic profession exists for the primary purpose of caring for the patient. The physician-patient relationship is the central focus of all ethical concerns. The orthopaedic surgeon should be dedicated to providing competent medical service with compassion and respect.
- II. **Integrity.** The orthopaedic surgeon should maintain a reputation for truth and honesty with patients and colleagues, and should strive to expose through the appropriate review process those physicians who are deficient in character or competence or who engage in fraud or deception.
- III. **Legalities and Honor.** The orthopaedic surgeon must obey the law, uphold the dignity and honor of the profession, and accept the profession's self-imposed discipline. The orthopaedic surgeon also has a responsibility to seek changes in legal requirements that are contrary to the best interest of the patient.
- IV. **Conflicts of Interest.** The practice of medicine inherently presents potential conflicts of interest. Wherever a conflict of interest arises, it must be resolved in the best interest of the patient. The orthopaedic surgeon should exercise all reasonable alternatives to ensure that the most appropriate care is provided to the patient. If a conflict of interest cannot be resolved, the orthopaedic surgeon should notify the patient of his or her intention to withdraw from the care of the patient.
- V. **Confidentiality.** The orthopaedic surgeon should respect the rights of patients, of colleagues, and of other health professionals and must safeguard patient confidences within the constraints of the law.
- VI. **Medical Knowledge.** The orthopaedic surgeon continually must strive to maintain and improve medical knowledge and to make relevant information available to patients, colleagues, and the public.

- VII. Cooperation.** Good relationships among physicians, nurses, and health care professionals are essential for good patient care. The orthopaedic surgeon should promote the development of an expert health care team that will work together harmoniously to provide optimal patient care.
- VIII. Remuneration.** Remuneration for orthopaedic services should be commensurate with the services rendered. Orthopaedic surgeons should deliver high quality, cost-effective care without discrimination.
- IX. Publicity.** The orthopaedic surgeon should not publicize himself or herself through any medium or form of public communication in an untruthful, misleading, or deceptive manner.
- X. Societal Responsibility.** The orthopaedic surgeon has a responsibility not only to the individual patient, to colleagues and orthopaedic surgeons-in-training, but also to society as a whole. Activities that have the purpose of improving the health and well-being of the patient and/or the community in a cost-effective way deserve the interest, support, and participation of the orthopaedic surgeon.

Adopted October 1991. Revised December 1995, May 2002.