



NEW ZEALAND MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT

Fundamental Principles

Being a Member of the New Zealand Orthopaedic Association requires adherence to the following Fundamental Principles.

Principle of primacy of patient welfare. Fellows must show a dedication to serving the interests of the patient. Compassion contributes to the trust that is central to the doctor-patient relationship. Market forces, societal pressures, and administrative exigencies must not compromise this principle.

Principle of patient autonomy. Fellows must have respect for patient autonomy. Fellows must be honest with their patients and empower them to make informed decisions about their treatment. Patients' decisions about their care must be paramount, as long as those decisions are in keeping with ethical practice and do not lead to demands for inappropriate care.

Principle of social justice. Fellows must promote justice in the health care system, including the fair distribution of health care resources. Fellows should work actively to eliminate discrimination in health care, whether based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, or any other social category.

Professional Responsibilities

Commitment to professional competence

Fellows must be committed to lifelong learning and be responsible for maintaining the medical knowledge and clinical and team skills necessary for the provision of quality care. They should support the profession as a whole in its endeavours to see that all of its members are competent.

Commitment to honesty with patients

Fellows must ensure that patients are completely and honestly informed before the patient has consented to treatment and after treatment has occurred. This expectation does not mean that patients should be involved in every minute decision about medical care; rather, they must be empowered to decide on the course of therapy. Fellows should also acknowledge that medical errors that injure patients do sometimes occur. Whenever patients are injured as a consequence of medical care, the patient should be informed promptly because failure to do so seriously compromises patient and societal trust. Reporting and analyzing medical mistakes provide the basis for appropriate prevention and improvement strategies and for appropriate compensation to injured parties.

Commitment to patient confidentiality

Fellows must respect patient confidentiality and ensure that appropriate confidentiality safeguards are applied to disclosure of patient information in accordance with the Codes of the Health and Disability Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner. This commitment extends to discussions with persons acting on a patient's behalf when obtaining of the patient's own consent is not feasible. Protecting patient confidentiality is more pressing now than ever before, given the widespread use of electronic information systems for compiling patient data and an increasing availability of genetic information. Fellows recognize, however, that their commitment to patient confidentiality must occasionally yield to overriding considerations in the public interest (for example, when patients endanger others).

Commitment to maintaining appropriate relations with patients

Fellows must never exploit patients for any sexual advantage, personal financial gain, or other private purpose. Given the inherent vulnerability and dependency of patients, this means certain relationships between Fellows and patients must be avoided.

Commitment to improving quality of care

Fellows must be dedicated to continuous improvement in the quality of health care. This commitment entails not only maintaining clinical competence but also working collaboratively with other professionals to reduce medical error, increase patient safety, minimize overuse of health care resources, and optimize the outcomes of care. Fellows must actively participate in the development of better measures of quality of care and the application of quality measures to assess routinely the performance of all individuals, institutions, and systems responsible for health care delivery.

Commitment to improving access to care

Fellows must individually and collectively strive to reduce barriers to equitable health care. Medical professionalism demands that the objective of all health care systems be the availability of a uniform and adequate standard of care. A commitment to equity entails the promotion of public health and preventative medicine, as well as public advocacy on the part of each Fellow, without concern for the self-interest of the Fellow or the profession.

Commitment to a just distribution of finite resources

While meeting the needs of individual patients, fellows are required to provide health care that is based on the wise and cost-effective management of limited clinical resources. The fellow's professional responsibility for appropriate allocation of resources requires scrupulous avoidance of superfluous tests and procedures.

Commitment to scientific knowledge

Fellows have a duty to uphold scientific standards, to promote research, and to create new knowledge and ensure its appropriate use.

Commitment to maintaining trust by managing conflicts of interest

Fellows have an obligation to recognize, disclose to the general public, and deal with conflicts of interest that arise in the course of their professional duties and activities. Relationships between industry and opinion leaders should be disclosed, especially when the latter determine the criteria for conducting and reporting clinical trials, writing editorials or therapeutic guidelines, or serving as editors of scientific journals, or advising government agencies on purchase of appliances and equipment.

Commitment to professional responsibilities

Fellows are expected to work collaboratively to maximize patient care. This involves being respectful of one another, and providing mutual support. They should also participate in the process of self-regulation including remediation. By giving their expert opinion, fellows should be prepared to assist outside regulatory authorities investigate those members who are under scrutiny for failure to meet professional standards. Fellows have a professional obligation to participate in defining and organizing the educational and standard-setting process for current and future members. This obligation includes engaging in internal assessment and accepting fair external scrutiny of all aspects of their professional performance.