



Laboratory Ethics



Learning Objectives

By the end of the module, you will be able to:

- **Explain the importance of professional ethics**
- **Take appropriate actions to maintain patient confidentiality**



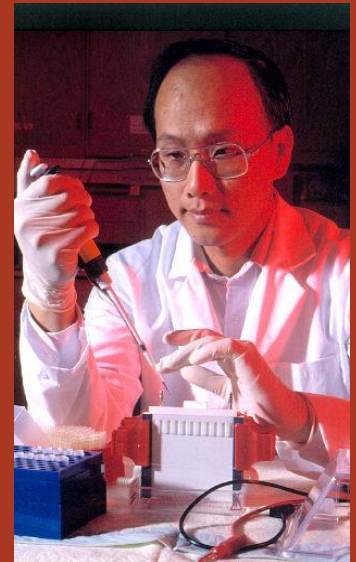
What Is Ethics?

“A set of principles of right conduct”



Who is Responsible for Ethics?

EVERYONE !!!!



Why is Ethics Important?

“Decisions about diagnosis, prognosis and treatment are frequently based on results and interpretations of laboratory tests. Irreversible harm may be caused by erroneous tests.”

International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and
Laboratory Medicine (IFCC)

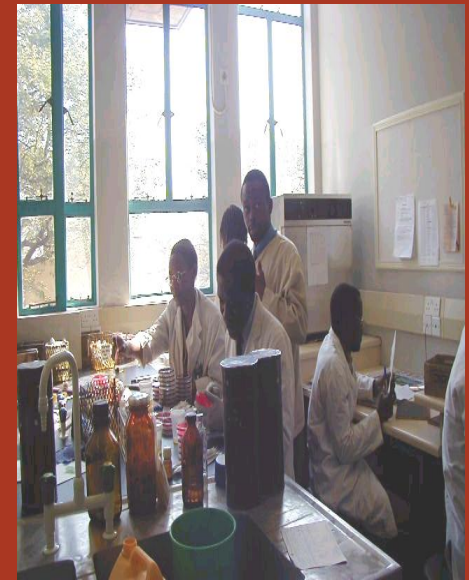
Laboratory Staff

YOU ARE:

- The most critical part of the quality system
- The laboratory's greatest asset
- An important partner in patient care

YOU ALSO:

- Bring your integrity and professionalism to the healthcare community



Ethical Conduct



- **DO NOT** get involved in activities that would diminish confidence in laboratory; competence, impartiality, judgment or operational integrity.

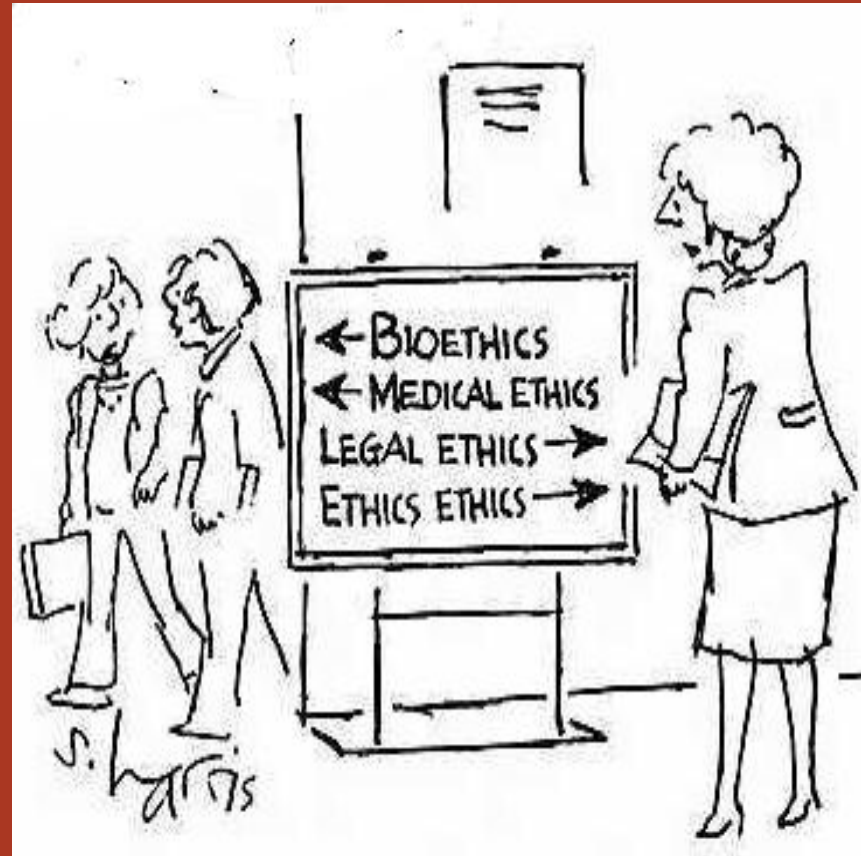
Ethical Conduct

- Management and personnel shall be free from financial , undue commercial or other pressures and influence that affect the quality of work
- Where potential conflicts in competing interests may exist, shall be openly and appropriately declared

Ethics is also applied in your behavior.

- ❑ Always conduct yourself in a professional manner.
- ❑ Examples of professionalism include:
 - ✓ Dressing appropriately. If lab coat or apron is soiled, change to a clean one
 - ✓ Turning cell phones off. It is disruptive and not considerate of clients to talk on the phone during the course of testing.
 - ✓ Not discussing results of interaction with clients with others.
- Maintaining patient confidentiality is a **MUST**.

Code of Ethics





Code of Ethics

- Maintain STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY of patient information and test results
- Safeguard the DIGNITY AND PRIVACY of patients
- BE ACCOUNTABLE for the quality and integrity of clinical laboratory services

(Reference :Code of Ethics Federation of Biomedical Laboratory Science (IFBLS))



Code of Ethics (ASCP)

- Treat patients and colleagues with respect, care and thoughtfulness.
- Perform duties in an accurate, precise, timely and responsible manner
- Safeguard patient information as confidential, within the limits of the law
- Prudently use laboratory resources



The right to privacy





What does Confidentiality mean?

- *Generally, if you have information about patient 'A' then another person 'B' cannot obtain that information without the consent of person 'A'*
- *'Most people consider health information to be highly personal and, therefore, need to be confident that their privacy will be protected whenever they use a health service ... Clear and open communication between the health service provider and health consumer is integral to good privacy'*

Maintaining Confidentiality

It is important to:

- Keep all client/patient information private
- Secure all records / logbooks
- Restrict access to testing areas

A white starburst shape with a black outline, containing the word "Warning" in black text.

Warning

People often violate ethics not because they mean to, but because they are careless. As a matter of fact, they sometimes act with good intentions.

Why respect confidentiality?



Why respect confidentiality?

- ❖ **Trust** is an important aspect between patients and healthcare professionals. Patients without fear of a breach of confidentiality should be able to communicate symptoms that often they may feel are embarrassing, stigmatising, or indeed trivial
- ❖ Without this trusting relationship patients may not divulge information which may make treating them impossible
- ❖ Patients may not seek medical attention at all
- ❖ Has important role in a professional patient relationship establishing a sense of security, freedom of action and self respect for patients

What information is confidential ?

- All information supplied by our patients and other information that we use in our daily work must remain confidential.

What information is confidential?

All identifiable patient information, whether written, computerised, visual or audio recorded or simply held in the memory of health professionals, is subject to the duty of confidentiality.

What information is confidential?

It covers:

- Any clinical information about an individual's diagnosis or treatment
- A picture, photograph, video, audiotape or other images of the patient
- Who the patient's doctor is and what clinics patients attend and when
- Anything else that may be used to identify patients directly or indirectly.

Confidentiality of Results

- ❑ Confidentiality of Laboratory results must be maintained at all times
- ❑ Should a person call requesting results and there is a question about the person's identity, the requestor is asked for his/her name and phone number where they can be called back.

How to maintain confidentiality ?

At work:

- ✓ Handle medical records as confidential documents.
- ✓ Do not leave patient information and laboratory results unattended on printers, desks etc
- ✓ Protect information on Computer screens by screen saver / time out functionalities

How to maintain confidentiality ?

- ✓ Check that fax numbers are correct before sending confidential information and laboratory results.
- ✓ Do not disclose your co-workers private information with staff or patients unless permission has been sought

How to maintain confidentiality

- Patient information should never be discussed with friends or relatives in a social setting.



How to maintain confidentiality

At home:

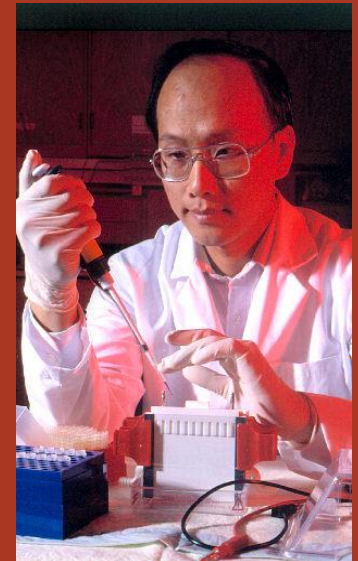
- Do not discuss with family or friends patients details and if asked inform them that you are not permitted to disclose any information. This includes patient names.
- Do not discuss patient information with the media

Who has a right to know your healthcare information?

- If you are >18
 - Are fully competent (or are competent to understand your medical information in order to make a decision)
 - And are alive
-
- Only you and the people you authorise to share your private information with have a right to view your information (**relatives of a competent adult do not**).

Ethics related to the quality and integrity of clinical laboratory services

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ISO 15189:2014

5.6 Ensuring quality of examination results

- The laboratory shall ensure the quality of examinations by performing them under defined conditions.
- Appropriate pre and post-examination processes shall be implemented
- The laboratory shall not fabricate any results

How Do We Apply Ethics laboratory Testing?

- Using only kits approved for use in country
- Ensuring quality outputs
- ✓ Following SOPs as written.
- ✓ If a test procedure calls for 20 minutes incubation or wait time, DON'T take shortcuts.
- ✓ Wait the full time before recording and reporting test results

▪

(http://www.who.int/diagnostics_laboratory/documents/guidance/pm_module16.pdf)

How Do We Apply Ethics laboratory Testing?

- ❑ Keeping supplies and kits in safekeeping
- ❑ Handle human tissue (organs, tissues, cells, and cellular components) used in research with consent and human dignity
- ❑ If you have questions, ASK.
- ❑ **DO NOT falsify results.**



Duty to the Patient

- ❑ Clinical laboratory professionals are accountable for the **quality** and **integrity** of the laboratory services they provide.
- ❑ This obligation includes maintaining **individual competence** in judgement and performance and striving to safeguard the patient from incompetent or illegal practice by others.

Duty to the Patient

- Clinical laboratory professionals maintain **high standards of practice**.
- They exercise sound judgment in establishing, performing and evaluating laboratory testing.
- Clinical laboratory professionals maintain **strict confidentiality of patient information** and test results.
- They safeguard the dignity and **privacy of patients** and provide accurate information to other health care professionals about the services they provide.

Key Messages

- Ethical issues are important.
- We must constantly remind ourselves of the code of conducts and ensure **we do the right thing**.
- Ethical issues are often hard to deal with because they create dilemmas.
- People often violate ethics not because they mean to, but because they are careless. As a matter of fact, they sometimes act with good intentions.

Baldwin
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“Went in for a simple blood test and
got cloned by mistake.”