

ACHI Professional Code of Conduct

Purpose

This Professional Code of Conduct sets out the standards of behaviour that are required of health informatics professionals who have been endorsed by ACHI as Fellows, Members, Associate Members or Student Members.

It deals with all aspects of professional activity including ACHI members' duties to patients, the public, employers and colleagues. Any ACHI member who fails to comply with these standards may be removed as an ACHI member.

Fundamental Duties

The fundamental duties of a health informatics professional are to:

- a) work to high professional standards;
- b) respect the rights and interests of others;
- c) protect and act in the interests of patients and the public;
- d) promote the standards and standing of the profession.

Detailed Code of Conduct

Working to high professional standards

All health informatics professionals shall exercise their professional skills and judgement to the best of their ability and discharge their duties with integrity by:

1. Giving professional advice that is objective, evidence based where possible, reliable and promotes patient safety.
2. Maintaining a high standard of professional and technical expertise appropriate to their role and discipline.
3. Continuously seeking to develop their HI knowledge and competence.
4. Accepting personal responsibility for all work done or advice given by themselves or by others under their supervision or direction.
5. Ensuring that they, and any persons under their supervision, have the necessary knowledge and competence to undertake their duties, and conversely that no person knowingly works beyond their current competence except as part of a properly supervised training and development programme.

Respecting the rights and interests of others

All health informatics professionals shall work to high ethical standards, respecting the legitimate rights and interests of their employers, other health professionals, the Australian public and other relevant authorities by:

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6. Promoting respect for the individual and their rights, and ensuring equal opportunities in all aspects of professional activity, including staff management and recruitment, education development and training, and relationships with clients and colleagues.
7. Carrying out their duties with diligence and integrity for the benefit of key stakeholders, refusing any personal inducement in the exercise of their professional judgement, and avoiding any real or apparent conflict of interest.
8. Ensuring that they and their organisation are aware of, and comply with, any relevant legislation or regulations or technical standards, particularly those associated with the protecting security, confidentiality, accuracy and integrity of health information.
9. Keeping confidential any privileged information, obtained in the course of their professional duties, regarding the activities of individuals or organisations – except where there is an overriding ethical or legal duty to disclose it.
10. Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that any undesirable consequence which they believe may result from failure to accept their advice is communicated clearly in writing to any individual overruling or neglecting such advice.

Protecting and acting in the interests of patients and the public

All health informatics professionals shall, to the best of their ability, protect and promote the interests of patients and the public at large by:

11. Ensuring that information systems and equipment for which they are responsible are procured, installed, maintained and operated professionally, efficiently and safely, and provide good value for the money invested in them.
12. Ensuring the security, confidentiality, accuracy and integrity of information, and protecting the safety of patients and the public, both directly through their personal actions and indirectly through the design and operation of any information systems for which they are responsible.
13. Reporting to the proper authorities any improper or misleading use of information, whether accidental or deliberate, or misconduct by any person in connection with the procurement, operation or use of information systems and equipment.
14. Promoting the appropriate use of information to enhance patient and public involvement and to support patient empowerment, dignity and choice.
15. Taking all reasonable steps to avoid waste of natural resources, damage to the environment and wasteful damage or destruction of the products of human skill and industry.

Promoting the standards and standing of the profession

All ACHI Fellows, Members, Associate and Student members shall, to the best of their ability, promote the standards and standing of the profession by:

16. Promoting professionalism in health informatics through all aspects of their work, acting as advocates for high standards in the management of health information in their workplace, and by setting an example of high standards to staff and colleagues.
17. Sharing their knowledge and experience with their peers, participating in professional activities and organisations appropriate to their role and discipline and encouraging others to do so.

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18. Avoiding personal behaviour, public statements or actions likely to bring the profession as a whole, or individual members of the profession, into disrepute, and notifying the Council promptly of any circumstances that might do so.

Further reading

For a more detailed discussion of the underlying ethical principles and their application to Health Informatics see *A Handbook of Ethics for Health Informatics Professionals*, E-H Kluge, British Computer Society, 2003: ISBN 1-902505-52-2. July 2003, a document endorsed by the International Medical Informatics Association – refer <http://www.imia.org/ethics.lasso> and it is downloadable from <http://www.health-informatics.org/hic/ethicsbk/index.htm>