Code of Conduct

I. Introduction and General Overview

The American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (“AAPM&R”) is an Illinois not-for-profit corporation exempt from federal income tax pursuant to Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). AAPM&R is organized and operated to promote the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health through an understanding and utilization of the functions and procedures of physical medicine (“Exempt Purpose”).

This Code of Conduct (“Code”) was developed by AAPM&R to serve as a guideline for professional conduct, and to promote the highest quality of physiatric care. The Code is also intended to inform the public, the healthcare community, and all those engaging in physiatric care of AAPM&R’s ethical rules. Public confidence in the integrity, competency, and ability of those providing physiatric care is fundamental to AAPM&R’s Exempt Purpose.

Physiatrists have significant responsibilities regarding the welfare, well-being, and betterment of their patients. AAPM&R members shall at all times conduct themselves in a manner that enhances the overall image of physicians providing physiatric care. The practice of medicine, and medical licensure, is governed by state law, and, therefore, varies from state to state. AAPM&R members shall be knowledgeable of and comply with the current laws and regulations of the country, state, region, and municipality in which they practice, relating to their medical profession and to their field of expertise. In the event of any inconsistency between any law or regulation and the Code, AAPM&R members shall adhere to the highest standards represented by the applicable law, regulation, or the Code.

II. Adherence to the Code

AAPM&R members shall comply with the Code and AAPM&R bylaws, regulations, policies, and other governing documents (collectively “Governing Documents”). Lack of knowledge of the Governing Documents shall neither excuse a member’s noncompliance nor be considered in any AAPM&R action regarding a member's alleged violation of the Code.

III. Ethical Rules

a. A physiatrist shall be dedicated to providing the best available patient care that resources and circumstances can provide.

b. A physiatrist shall function within the competence and capability of the physiatrist’s training and provide care consistent with standards of care applicable to physiatry. Physiatrists should participate in regular continuing education.

c. A physiatrist shall only provide patient care the physiatrist is competent and legally permitted to provide based on the physiatrist’s education, training, experience, and licensure. When the patient’s needs exceed the scope of the physiatrist’s education and training, the physiatrist should consult with or refer the patient to (as appropriate) a practitioner(s) competent to address the patient’s needs.

d. A physiatrist shall maintain patient medical records as required by: (i) applicable law; (ii) the applicable standard of care; and (iii) as necessary for the patient’s health, safety, and wellbeing (collectively “Health”). Except as required or permitted by law or as authorized by the patient, the physiatrist shall keep patient information private and confidential including, but not limited to, the patient’s medical records.

e. A physiatrist shall obtain an informed consent from a patient, as required by applicable law, before providing medical care. All relevant information regarding the contemplated medical care must be provided to, and discussed with, the patient in understandable terms.
f. A physiatrist shall only provide patient care when physically and mentally able to do so with reasonable judgment, skill, and safety. A physiatrist shall not provide patient care while impaired by alcohol, drugs, or other substances. A physiatrist shall seek appropriate assistance to address any addiction, mental health, physical illness, or disability issues that impair the physiatrist’s ability to provide patient care skillfully and safely. The physiatrist has a responsibility to maintain the physiatrist’s own professional and personal wellbeing.

g. A physiatrist should maintain a reputation for truth and honesty. A physiatrist shall provide patient care with compassion and respect the dignity and rights of the patient. The physiatrist is in a position of trust and must not betray that trust. Without limiting the foregoing, the physiatrist must treat patients with respect and not abuse them psychologically, physically, sexually, or financially. A physiatrist shall not engage in conduct that calls into question the physiatrist’s professionalism, honesty, or integrity, or which could reflect poorly on the practice of physiatric care.

h. A physiatrist’s financial or other personal interest is subordinate to the patient’s Health. Conflicts between a physiatrist’s personal interest and a patient’s Health should be avoided, and resolved consistent with the patient’s Health. A physiatrist shall not pay or accept any form of a patient referral fee or engage in any fee splitting. The physiatrist shall disclose to a patient any direct or indirect financial interest the physiatrist has in any medical care, prescriptions, or referrals recommended by the physiatrist, which are not obvious to a reasonable person.

i. Neither a physiatrist nor a patient is under an obligation to enter into a physiatrist/patient relationship. A physiatrist/patient relationship may be terminated by the patient. A physiatrist may also terminate the physiatrist/patient relationship, but only if doing so will not jeopardize the patient’s Health. A physiatrist shall not neglect or abandon a patient.

j. A physiatrist shall comply with: (i) all applicable laws; (ii) AAPM&R’s Governing Documents; (iii) the ethical codes of the medical societies, associations, and boards to which the physiatrist belongs; and (iv) the medical staff bylaws, policies, and procedures of any facility or institution at which the physiatrist provides medical care. The foregoing compliance requirement applies to all amendments and addenda to said laws, policies, procedures, and AAPM&R current and future Governing Documents.

k. A physiatrist shall not make false or misleading statements in advertising or otherwise regarding the physiatrist’s education, training, experience, certifications, affiliations, competence, licensure, or services. A physiatrist’s advertisements shall comply with applicable law. The foregoing requirements apply to all the physiatrist’s advertisements and statements, whether made directly by the physiatrist or by any person and/or entity publishing or making them on the physiatrist’s behalf.

l. A physiatrist is expected to work cooperatively and professionally with other healthcare professionals involved in a patient’s medical care, which interactions shall be guided by the patient’s Health.

m. A physiatrist shall not defame or make unfounded allegations against another healthcare professional. The actions of a physiatrist legitimately concerned about another healthcare professional’s competence shall be guided by: (i) the need to protect the Health of patients and the public; (ii) applicable law; (iii) the bylaws, policies, and procedures based on which the healthcare professional provides medical care; and (iv) the ethical obligations of the physiatrist.

n. The physiatrist shall encourage, cooperate with and assist scholarly endeavors by others within the field through discussion, debate and criticism as is appropriate.
IV. Ethical Rules Applicable to the Rehabilitation Team

a. Rehabilitation Medicine is considered a team-oriented practice and, in connection therewith, a physiatrist shall work with and respect other team members.

b. A physiatrist will encourage other team members to work fully within the scope of their license or expertise for the betterment of their patients.

c. A physiatrist will respect and honor the rights and privileges of all team members.

V. Code Violations

Violation of this Code of Conduct shall be addressed in accordance with, and governed by, AAPM&R’s Code of Conduct Disciplinary Procedures.

End of Code

Approved by the Board of Governors July 28, 2020.