

FIGO Ethics And Professionalism Guideline 011: Conflicts Of Interest In Clinical Practice And Research

Background

Obstetrician-gynecologists confront conflicts of interest in clinical practice and research. Every obstetrician-gynecologist has the professional responsibility to manage these conflicts on the basis of the professional virtue of integrity.

Definitions

1. **Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest exists when an obstetrician-gynecologist or their family member's (spouse, children, trusts) self-interests are at odds with that individual's obligation to patients or research subjects. This occurs when self-interest has the potential to bias clinical judgment and practice. These biasing self-interests may be financial or non-financial.

2. **Professional Integrity**

Professional integrity requires the obstetrician-gynecologists to maintain professional standards and values from erosion from biasing self-interest. This is accomplished by evidence-based reasoning, to minimise bias in clinical judgment, and by transparency about conflicts of interest.

Recommendations:

The Committee recommends the following to professionally manage conflicts of interest.

1. The preferred management of conflicts of interest is to avoid them when they are unnecessary.
2. For unavoidable conflicts of interest:
 - Minimise the potential for bias by minimising the biasing effect of the conflict of interest.
 - Routinely disclose conflicts of interest to patients and explain how they have been minimised to protect professional integrity and therefore protect the patient.
 - Respect the patient's decision about whether to proceed with patient care or referral to a clinical trial.

References

Council of Medical Specialty Societies. Code for Interaction with companies. April 2015. Available at <https://cmss.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/CMSS-Code-for-Interactions-with-Companies-Approved-Revised-Version-4.13.15-with-Annotations.pdf>, accessed July 28, 2017.

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About FIGO

FIGO is a professional organisation that brings together obstetrical and gynecological associations from all over the world.

FIGO's vision is that women of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives. We lead on global programme activities, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

FIGO advocates on a global stage, especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and non-communicable diseases (SDG3). We also work to raise the status of women and enable their active participation to achieve their reproductive and sexual rights, including addressing FGM and gender based violence (SDG5).

We also provide education and training for our Member Societies and build capacities of those from low-resource countries through strengthening leadership, good practice and promotion of policy dialogues.

FIGO is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and a consultative status with the United Nations (UN).