



Code of Ethics

# Code of Ethics

## General Statement of Purpose

This document is intended to serve as a guide for members of the Society for Vascular Surgery® (SVS) in their medical, social and professional relationships in the practice of vascular surgery. This code is a statement of ideals, commitments and responsibilities of SVS members to their patients, other health professionals, society and themselves. It will be considered as one of the criteria used to evaluate qualifications for membership by applicants and to evaluate a member's maintenance of good professional standing in the SVS.

## Ethics as Related to the Provision of Vascular Care

An SVS member shall serve as the patient's advocate to ensure that the most appropriate care is provided to the patient.

An SVS member shall not participate in any activity that is not in the best interest of the patient.

An SVS member shall practice within the limitations of his or her privileges, which reflect his or her competencies and expertise.

An SVS member shall not publicize or represent himself or herself in any untruthful, misleading, or deceptive manner to patients, colleagues, other health care professionals or the public.

An SVS member shall be actively involved in continuing medical education in order to remain current on new medical information related to vascular interventions.

Should an SVS member become dependent on alcohol or drugs or otherwise become impaired, he or she should accept treatment and recommendations of the treating physician(s) and the recommendations of his or her hospital committee, local medical society committee and/or ACS guidelines for evaluating and assisting impaired physicians.

## Ethics of Relationships Between Health Care Professionals

An SVS member shall strive to achieve and maintain professional and courteous relationships with his or her colleagues and other health care professionals.

If an SVS member has reason to believe that another SVS member is incompetent, he/she shall bring this situation to that person's attention and advise the appropriate professional committee of his or her hospital or regional medical society.

An SVS member shall not practice medicine while impaired by alcohol, drugs or physical or mental disability. The vascular surgeon who experiences substance abuse problems or who is physically or emotionally impaired should seek appropriate assistance to address these problems and limit his or her practice until the impairment no longer affects the quality of patient care.

An SVS member shall respect the rights of colleagues and of other health professionals.

An SVS member shall only receive compensation for services provided within the rules as defined in the relevant laws.

The division of income among members of a formally organized group is appropriate and can be based on the value of the services performed by each member and/or other contributions to the group, as agreed to in advance by the group members.

An SVS member who transfers care of a patient to another health care provider, either by his or her own recommendation or at the request of the patient or patient's family, shall cooperate fully with the health care provider who receives the transferred patient.

An SVS member shall be actively involved in the educational process of other physicians and health care providers as circumstances permit. A SVS member shall help his or her medical colleagues maintain a high level of performance and integrity in the practice of medicine.

## Ethics Related to the Patient and Patient's Family

An SVS member and the patient and/or patient's family when appropriate, shall be involved in dialogue so the joint medical decision-making process will be in keeping with the patient's philosophy and wishes and their Advanced Directive for health care.

Explanation of the nature and risk of an operation to the patient or to the patient's representative is essential.

An SVS member shall maintain the privacy and confidentiality of patient information. Patient health information, protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA") and other laws, shall be respected except in those circumstances where the law requires disclosure.

Sexual misconduct on the part of an SVS member is an abuse of professional power and a violation of patient trust and is unethical.

An SVS member shall collaborate with other health care professions and advocate for the terminally ill patient to allow dignity and provide relief of pain and suffering. The lawful wishes of the competent patient shall be respected.

## Ethics as Related to the Legal Profession

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An SVS member shall respect the confidentiality of the doctor-patient relationship as defined by HIPPA regulation.

As an expert witness, an SVS member, shall thoroughly prepare by reviewing the relevant facts so that he or she can, to the best of his or her ability, provide the court with accurate and documented opinions on the matters at hand.

An SVS member shall follow the SVS' "Guidelines for Testimony by Vascular Surgeons Serving as Expert Witnesses in Litigation."

## Responsibilities of the SVS Member to Government

An SVS member shall always abide by the law of the land, but support changes in those laws that are in the best interests of the patient and medical practice.

An SVS member shall cooperate with and deal honestly with governmental agencies involving those areas of health care in which he or she is a participant, but will preserve patient confidentiality.

## Ethics Related to the Physician and Insurance, Compensation and Reimbursement Agencies

An SVS member shall be honest in financial dealings with patients, insurance companies and health care financing agencies, and shall provide accurate, complete and timely information to these entities.

An SVS member shall respond in a timely fashion and completely to requests for medical reports from private and governmental agencies involved in reimbursement and compensation for medically related services with the consent of the patient or the patient's agent, or as otherwise provided by the law.

Financial and administrative constraints imposed by managed care may create disincentives to treatment that has been recommended by the vascular surgeon as being in the patient's best interest. Any pertinent constraints or incentives should be disclosed to the patient.

## Ethics Related to Relationships with Industry

An SVS member should not accept direct payment from industry (defined as individuals or organizations with a commercial interest in the field of vascular surgery or related health care issues) for the costs of travel, lodging or other personal expenses to attend scientific or educational conferences or meetings. Faculty at such conferences or educational meetings can accept reasonable honoraria and reimbursement of reasonable expenses. Unrestricted educational grants to a training institution or society can be disbursed to cover expenses of individuals but the medical technology company must not select the recipients or select the speakers. Residents and fellows in training can accept travel grants if the grants are awarded to a third party who should select the recipients based on established criteria.

An SVS member should not accept cash or any gifts of substantial value, directly from industry. Any gift must be modest, and benefit patient care or serve a genuine educational function and have a fair market value of less than \$100.

An SVS member can accept donations for charitable purposes such as supporting independent medical research for the advancement of medical science, patient education, public education or the sponsorship of educational courses.

An SVS member can accept remuneration for consulting services providing that the payment is based on fair market value compensation and is entered into only where a legitimate need and purpose is identified in advance and selection of the consultant should be based solely on the consultant's qualifications and expertise.

An SVS member should not enter into any relationship with industry that might influence his or her primary responsibility for care of the individual patient.

When there is the potential for conflict of interest, an SVS member must disclose to colleagues and patients any financial relationships that he or she has with industry.

Read more in Conflict of Interest .

## Ethics as Related to Patients and Research

An SVS member involved in human research shall respect the rights of the participants, obtain approval from an appropriate institutional human review committee and fully inform the participants before proceeding with any treatment or research.

An SVS member may perform innovative procedures in connection with rigorous validation trials to insure that new operative procedures are safe and effective only if:

- Each prospective study is evaluated and approved by an appropriate federal and/or local institutional oversight committee
- Patients are fully informed of the nature of the study, risks of the new procedure, and alternative treatment options

## Ethics Related to Community and World Affairs

SVS members, in addition to providing care to the individual patient, have a responsibility to be involved in community and humanitarian activities, especially those matters affecting health.