

ACP's Ethics Manual examines emerging issues in medical ethics

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The American College of Physicians (ACP) has released the sixth edition of its Ethics Manual, published as a supplement to the current issue of *Annals of Internal Medicine*, ACP's flagship journal, and available online at www.annals.org. The manual is intended to facilitate the process of making ethical decisions in clinical practice, teaching, and medical research, and to describe and explain underlying ethics principles, as well as the physician's role in society and with colleagues.

New topics in the updated manual address the patient-physician relationship during health catastrophes, providing culturally sensitive care, use of human biologic materials in research, social media and online professionalism, industry sponsored research, and the challenges of taking care of so-called very important persons, such as those with a degree of fame or prestige.

ACP's Ethics Manual also revisits and expands on issues of previous editions, such as end-of-life care, complementary and alternative medicine, physician-assisted suicide, physician-industry relations, genetic testing, and research ethics.

"ACP's Ethics Manual covers many of the ethical tensions in medicine and attempts to shed light on how existing principles extend to emerging concerns," said Virginia L. Hood, MBBS, MPH, FACP, president of ACP, and the former chair of ACP's Ethics, Professionalism, and Human Rights Committee. "We believe that ACP's Ethics Manual provides the best approach to the challenges addressed in it."

ACP's Ethics Manual is developed primarily for doctors of internal medicine but has been widely used by other physicians and is often cited in medical and ethical literature. The first ACP Ethics Manual was published in 1984. This sixth edition is an update of the 2005 fifth edition and was developed by ACP's Ethics, Professionalism, and Human Rights Committee and was approved by ACP's Board of Regents in July 2011.

"Medicine continues to pose challenging ethical dilemmas for patients and their physicians," said Lois Snyder, JD, director of ACP's Center for Ethics and Professionalism and lead author of the manual. "We hope ACP's Ethics Manual will provide guidance to clinicians, educators, researchers, and policymakers that will enhance trust in individuals, and the profession, by patients and the public."

In an accompanying editorial, Ezekiel Emanuel, MD, PhD, a medical ethicist at the University of Pennsylvania, praises ACP's Ethics Manual for having many clear and specific recommendations.

Dr. Emanuel writes: ACP's Ethics Manual "is an important guide for physicians. It goes well beyond the usual banalities to take brave stands on current issues. Yet this document is a worthy heir to the tradition of medical oaths and codes that stretches back millennia."

Provided by American College of Physicians

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