

**IRHC**

**Code of Conduct**

# Contents

Code of Conduct

Additional guidance

# Code of Conduct

## Guidance on:

- Ethical issues
- Professional conduct
- upholding our reputation

IRHC is the largest body for remote healthcare practitioners. We aim to secure and justify trust and confidence in the work of our members by ensuring high levels of Clinical competence and professional conduct.

All members are required to comply with the Code of Conduct.

The status of the Additional guidance is that a member will be expected to show good reason for departing from it if a complaint is received about them.

The document is freely available at [www.irhc.org.uk](http://www.irhc.org.uk)

## Code points

1. Members of the IRHC, wherever employed, owe a primary loyalty to the workforce, the community they serve and the environment they affect. Their practice should be performed according to the highest standards and ethical principles, maintaining respect for human dignity. Members shall seek to ensure professional independence in the execution of their functions.
2. Members must abide by the legal requirements relating to their practice or operation.
3. Members called on to give an opinion in their professional capacity shall be honest and, to the best of their ability, objective and reliable.

## Guidance on Code points

1. The term 'professional independence' relates to your function within the organisation you advise on remote healthcare practice. You may have either an advisory or an executive role. You may also have other responsibilities not related to remote healthcare. As a professional, you should be able to exercise your clinical function according to your independent professional judgment.
2. Be aware of the appropriate legal requirements for the territory in which you practice or operate.
3. An objective and reliable opinion is one based on the best currently available knowledge and data or, if there are no such data, reference to appropriate remote healthcare principles.

## Code points

4. Members shall take all reasonable steps to obtain, maintain and develop their professional competence by attention to new developments in remote healthcare and shall encourage others working under their supervision to do so. They must comply with the Institution's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scheme, if required to do so.
5. Members shall not undertake responsibilities in relation to remote healthcare which they do not believe themselves competent to discharge. Members shall acknowledge any limitations in their own competence, and shall not undertake any activities for which they are not appropriately prepared or, where applicable, qualified.

## Guidance on Code points

4. Competence is a combination of knowledge, skills, experience and recognition of the limits of your capabilities. Knowledge can be gained or developed by studying for qualifications, but a qualification by itself is not evidence of competence. It must be enhanced by skills and knowledge that you develop through experience. IRHC in future will assess competence during Initial Professional Development for Associate and Full Membership, and IRHC members can provide evidence to demonstrate experience in a clinical remote healthcare role. However, this assessment only reflects your competence at one specific moment. You should maintain and improve your competence by doing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities throughout your professional career. You will be able to document your CPD through our system.

If you believe you're being asked for advice that's outside your expertise, you must make this clear and suggest other sources of advice.

## Code points

6. Members shall accept professional responsibility for all their work and shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that persons working under their authority or supervision are competent to carry out the tasks assigned to them; are treated with fairness and equal opportunity; and accept responsibility for work done under the authority delegated by them.
7. Members having good reason to believe that their professional advice is not followed shall take reasonable steps to ensure that persons overruling or neglecting their advice are formally made aware of potential adverse consequences which may result.
8. Members shall have regard to the reputation and good standing of the IRHC, other members, and professional practice and standards, and shall not either directly or indirectly bring them into disrepute. A member may be required to provide the IRHC with such information as is reasonably required by it in order to regulate the professional conduct and discipline of its members.
9. Members shall not recklessly or maliciously injure, or attempt to injure, whether directly or indirectly, the professional reputation, prospects or business of another.
10. Members shall not behave in a way which may be considered inappropriate to other members or staff of the Institution.

## Guidance on Code points

8. 'Disrepute' amounts to the loss of a previously good reputation. It may occur if your conduct – through action or inaction – lowers the professional reputation of IRHC and our members.
10. Inappropriate behavior includes the use of foul language or acting in an intimidating or threatening way.

## Code points

11. Members shall not improperly use their membership or position within the organisation of the IRHC for commercial or personal gain or use or attempt to use qualifications, titles and/or designations to which they are not entitled.
12. Members shall seek to avoid their professional judgment being influenced by any conflict of interest and shall inform their employer, client, or the IRHC of any conflict between the member's personal interest and service to the relevant party.
13. Members shall not improperly disclose any information which may reasonably be considered to be prejudicial to the business of any present or past employer, client or the IRHC
14. Members shall ensure that information they hold necessary to safeguard the health of those persons for whom they have a legal and moral responsibility is made available as required.
15. Members shall ensure, in holding or handling any information relating to living individuals, that they comply with the data protection principles and notification requirements set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 or equivalent legislation for the country or jurisdiction in which they undertake their duties.

## Guidance on Code points

12. Conflict of interest refers to occasions where using professional judgment may lead to problems in securing future or continuing employment or contracts. A simple example of this type of conflict would be if you recognized a dangerous procedure but didn't recommend a shutdown in case it ultimately led to the closure of the company and your redundancy. Similarly, as a consultant you may be aware that your recommendations aren't being implemented, but you continue to advise the organisation so that you don't lose the income from the contract. A third example is a situation in which you're invited to be the adviser to both parties in a contract.
14. It's your duty to disclose in an appropriate way any information you have which will influence decisions relating to people's health. You must respect the implications of information technology and data protection requirements.

## Code points

16. Members shall maintain financial propriety in all their professional dealings with employers and clients and shall ensure that they are covered by professional indemnity insurance where appropriate.
  
17. Members shall not unfairly discriminate in the course of their professional business on the grounds of race, colour, religion or belief, disability, sex, marital status, age, sexual orientation, nationality and ethnic or national origins.
  
18. Members must act within the law and are required to notify the IRHC if they are convicted of any criminal offence. A relevant conviction may lead to disciplinary proceedings against that member.
  
19. Members must comply with IRHC membership rules.

## Guidance on Code points

16. You shouldn't accept or encourage any inducements which may be seen as prejudicial to professional independence or being in breach of your contractual or moral obligations. If you work as an independent consultant, you may need to buy professional indemnity insurance. If you're in full-time employment, you'll generally be covered by your organization's policy. If you're unsure whether you're covered, you should find out.
  
18. Relevant convictions include those:
  - a for which a penalty may be imposed, or
  - b which constitute an offence of dishonesty, or
  - c which call into question your integrity in some other way – for example child abuse, sexual or criminal assault, paedophilia or supply of illegal drugs (this is not an exhaustive list).

# Additional guidance

As well as the Code, members with particular responsibilities should be guided by the following:

## Consultants

If you're a consultant, you must maintain a confidential relationship with your clients that upholds and enhances the public perception of the profession. In particular, you should:

- agree with your client a clear brief, preferably written, for Consultancy work
- agree working and charging arrangements
- agree the scope and manner of reporting, including any copyright or patent issues that arise from your work, where appropriate
- not work for more than one client simultaneously on the same case without the express consent of all clients
- not solicit improperly for work by making exaggerated claims or by attacking the reputation of other consultants
- in the case of expert witness services, confine your evidence to matters on which you can speak with authority from personal knowledge and experience
- protect the 'intellectual rights' and confidentiality of your client, and not disclose information to any third party without the full and explicit written authorisation of the client concerned.

If you're acting in private practice or independently of salaried employment, you have the right to stop providing your services in the face of a dilemma involving professional standards or conscience.

## Employers

As an employer, you must:

- recognise the right of your professional subordinates to exercise their independence
- resolve conflicts through clear, fair procedures
- support the professional development of your employees
- demonstrate impartiality and provide equal opportunities for all employees.

## Researchers

If you're engaged in research, you may have specific ethical concerns in the conduct of your work. You should:

- recognise the nature and limits of your research competence and not propose or undertake any work you're not equipped to carry out
- recognise and tell sponsors about any relevant personal prejudices which may influence your work
- make sure that any ethical implications identified in your work are recorded in your written plan for the proposed research
- where your work affects employees or others, ensure safeguards exist against physical, mental, emotional and social harm to subjects
- be responsible for obtaining freely given and informed consent from individuals who are the subject of any proposed research
- be aware that personal health information is confidential, and that it requires permission and consent before it can be used in research. This doesn't apply to anonymised data. You must be aware that the promise of confidentiality and restrictions on data use must be made clear to anyone contracting research and to the subjects of the work.

## Providers of education and training

If you're working in education or training, you should deliver only courses which you're competent to teach. When designing and delivering courses, you should make sure that:

- the teaching team has suitable qualifications and experience to cover the technical content of the syllabus
- there's adequate scope for programme planning and review
- you deliver courses in a physical environment that's suitable for learning, with whatever equipment is needed
- you provide sources of information as required by the level of the course
- where an issue may be contentious, you maintain a balanced approach. You shouldn't let personal prejudices interfere.

09

## Legal requirements

Legal issues are addressed under certain Code points.

You must operate under the legal requirements of the country or jurisdiction you're working in. However, your overall obligations go beyond these, whether you're working full or part time. As a competent person, you're required to practice your profession according to established principles for fulfilling legal, technical, social and moral responsibilities to your employer, employees, surrounding communities and, indeed, society as a whole. The important point is that you keep clearly in mind the legal context within which you work.

IRHC is the leading institute for remote healthcare.

We set standards, and support, develop and connect our members with resources, guidance, events and training. We're the voice of the profession, and campaign on issues that affect our membership

IRHC was founded in 2008 and is a company registered by guarantee in Scotland .

IRHC

Aberdeen Medico- Chirurgical Society,  
Medical School, Foresterhill, Aberdeen,  
Scotland

AB25 2ZD

Tel no +44 191 6452005