

Code of Ethics of the International Hearing Society

FOREWARD

Members of the International Hearing Society (IHS) are to abide by the Code of Ethics as stated herein. These principles of professional conduct are intended to provide the best service for the hearing impaired and to guide hearing health professionals in their relations with each other and the public in general.

PREAMBLE

This is a Code of Ethics for those engaged in the testing of human hearing and in the selection, counseling, fitting, dispensing, and servicing of hearing instruments. This Code sets standards of professional integrity and practice including relationships with patients, colleagues, and the general public.

Ethical principles are standards by which the profession and the individual IHS member determine the propriety of their conduct. Adherence to these standards is required for membership in IHS, and further serves to assure public confidence in the integrity of the services of IHS members in this profession. IHS verifies the competence of its members through a qualification program and mandatory continuing education. It is incumbent on all hearing health professionals to abide by all laws, rules, and regulations applicable to the dispensing of hearing instruments.

The basic principle is an accepted Code of Ethical Conduct for IHS members.

In order that we can best serve hearing impaired persons and contribute toward their participation in the world of sound and speech, we, the members of IHS, pledge ourselves to abide by this Code of Ethics:

- a. We shall state only the true facts in our public announcements and advertising of hearing instruments and related products and we shall not, in any way, mislead or misrepresent in regard to their performance, appearance, benefits, elements, and use.
- b. We shall provide thorough and ethical consulting services when we dispense instruments, including the appropriate testing and fitting suitable for the patient's particular type of hearing loss.
- c. We shall, at all times, provide the best possible service to the hearing impaired, offering counsel, understanding, and technical assistance contributing toward their deriving the maximum benefit from their hearing instruments.
- d. We shall constantly encourage and support research, cooperating with medical and other hearing health professionals and societies to employ the maximum accumulation of scientific knowledge and technical skills in the testing of human hearing for the selection, fitting, and maintenance of hearing instruments.

SECTION I: CONDUCT AND RELATIONSHIP WITH PATIENT

The IHS member engaged in the practice of testing human hearing and in the selection, counseling, fitting, dispensing, and servicing of hearing instruments, shall hold paramount the welfare of the patient.

a. Continuing Education

It is in the best interest of the patient that the IHS member engage and participate in continuing education during each year of active practice.

b. Referral

The IHS member shall utilize all resources available, including referral to other specialists as needed.

c. Services Rendered

The IHS member shall accept and seek full responsibility for the exercise of judgment within, but not limited to, the areas of his/her expertise. These services include the testing of human hearing, and the selection, fitting, dispensing, and servicing of hearing instruments and counseling patients. The IHS member shall not guarantee outstanding results from the use of hearing instruments, products, services, or counseling when such is not the case. He/she shall exercise caution not to mislead persons to expect results that cannot be predicted.

d. Confidential Aspects of Patient Relations

The IHS member shall hold in professional confidence all information and professional records concerning a patient and use such data only for the benefit of the patient or as the law demands.

e. Conduct in Regard to Colleagues and Hearing Healthcare Professions

The IHS member must keep the welfare of the patient uppermost at all times. He/she shall avoid disparaging, pejorative,

and/or inaccurate remarks or comments about professional colleagues or members of the hearing healthcare professions. He/she shall conduct himself/herself at all times in a manner which will enhance the status of the profession. He/she shall be supportive to individuals and organizations with whom he/she is associated to their mutual benefit. He/she shall not agree to practice under terms or conditions which tend to interfere with or impair the proper exercise of his/her professional judgment and skill, which tend to cause a deterioration of the quality of his/her service, or which require him/her to consent to unethical conduct.

f. Maintenance of Records

The IHS member shall initiate and maintain records of services provided to patients. All laws or rules and regulations pertaining to keeping of records must be carefully observed.

g. Fees and Compensation

The IHS member shall not participate with other health professionals or any other person in agreements to divide fees or to cause financial or other exploitation when rendering his/her professional services.

h. Delay in Providing Services

The IHS member shall not delay furnishing care to patients served professionally, without just cause.

i. Discontinuance of Services

The IHS member shall not discontinue services to patients without providing reasonable notice of withdrawal, providing all contractual agreements have been satisfied.

j. Safety and Sanitation

The IHS member shall at all times practice accepted standards of infection control and shall exercise reasonable precaution to maximize patient safety.

k. Mail Order/Internet Sales

The IHS member shall not sell hearing aids to a patient via mail order or Internet without establishing direct, face-to-face contact.

SECTION II: RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PROFESSION AND COLLEAGUES

The IHS member has the duty to observe all laws, rules, and regulations applicable to the dispensing of hearing instruments; to uphold the dignity and honor of the profession; and to accept its ethical principles. He/she shall not engage in any activity that will bring discredit to the profession and shall expose, without fear or favor, illegal or unethical conduct in the profession.

a. In the event it appears that an IHS member is in violation of this Code, fellow IHS members are encouraged to report circumstances to IHS.

b. The IHS member shall not pursue any course of action that may be harmful or detrimental to the Society, its members, or the public we serve.

c. The IHS member holding an official or elective position in IHS or an affiliate chapter shall not use such a position for self-aggrandizement.

d. The IHS member who has served on an exam-writing committee or who has knowledge of the contents of the exam shall not be involved with or hold a pre-test class or review course to prepare exam candidates(s) for the exam for a period of not less than five (5) years following their involvement with the exam committee.

SECTION III: ADVERTISING

The IHS member who chooses to advertise his/her services shall use only material considered ethical and complying with laws, rules, and regulations governing advertising. The IHS member shall endorse the following statements of principle that assure protection of the hearing impaired and the public in general.

a. Truth

Advertising shall tell the truth and shall reveal significant facts, the concealment of which would mislead the public, and shall not dispense any product, or part hereof, representing that it is new, unused, or rebuilt, when such is not the fact.

b. Responsibility

Advertisers shall be willing and able to provide substantiation of claims made.

c. Taste and Decency

Advertising shall be free of statements, illustrations, or implications which are offensive to good taste or public decency.

d. Disparagement

Advertising shall offer merchandise or service on its merits, and shall refrain from attacking competitors or disparaging their products, services, or methods of doing business.

e. Bait Advertisement

Advertising shall offer only merchandise or services that are readily available for purchase during the advertised period at the advertised price; e.g., it is unethical for any IHS member to advertise a particular model or kind of instrument to obtain prospects for the sale of a different model or kind of instrument than that advertised, or to imply a relationship with a manufacturer and trade names that does not exist.

f. Guarantees and Warranties

Advertising of guarantees and warranties shall be explicit. Advertising of any guarantee or warranty shall clearly and conspicuously disclose its nature and extent, the manner in which the guarantor or warrantor will perform and the identity of the guarantor or warrantor. It is unethical to use or cause to be used any guarantee or warranty which is false, misleading, deceptive, or unfair, whether in respect to the quality, construction serviceability, performance, or method of manufacture of any industry product, or in respect to the terms and conditions of refund of purchase price thereof, or in any other respect.

g. Mail Order/Internet Sales

It shall be unethical to offer for sale any class I medical device (hearing aid) when a direct face-to-face contact has not been established, i.e., by Internet or mail order.

SECTION IV: STANDARDS

Maintenance of high standards by all IHS members is in the best interest of persons served professionally, the IHS member, and the profession.

a. It shall be unethical for the IHS member to willfully and knowingly violate any law, rule, or regulation applicable to the dispensing of hearing instruments.

b. It shall be unethical to use such terms or any abbreviation of such terms as doctor, physician, otologist, board certified in hearing instrument sciences, audioprosthologist, clinical audiologist, medical audiologist, research audiologist, industrial audiologist, or any other title/abbreviation when such is not the fact. When holding a doctorate or other degree from a profession other than hearing sciences, delineation of such credential shall be required. (Special Note: The title Hearing Instrument Specialist is trademarked to the International Hearing Society and authorization for its use outside the membership must come from the IHS Executive Director.)

c. It shall be unethical to use any symbol or depiction which connotes the medical profession.

d. It shall be unethical to use any terms that may reasonably be said to confuse the public that a private business practice has some relationship to a governmental or nonprofit medical, educational, or research institution.

SECTION V: DISCRIMINATION

The IHS member shall not discriminate in the delivery of professional service on the basis of race, national origin, religion, sex, age, or marital status.

SECTION VI: ASSOCIATION

The IHS member is encouraged to associate with groups and organizations having as their objectives the betterment of the profession.

CONCLUSION

All members of IHS pledge themselves to observe and support this Code of Ethics. By violating any part, a member of IHS is subject to removal from membership in IHS. This Code is interpreted by the Ethics Committee and enforced by the

Grievance Committee of IHS. Upon violation of this Code, the Grievance Committee may discipline members after investigation and hearing.

This Code of Ethics was adopted in 10/83 - Revised 10/96, 10/98, 05/03, 04/07, 03/09