

Self-Assessment Module
2017 ASTRO Annual Meeting

Ethics in Radiation Oncology

Drs. Donaldson, Tepper, Wall, and Zeitman

Question 1:

What is the role of ASTRO's committee on ethics?

- a) To report unethical behavior of individual members to The American Board of Radiology.
- b) To serve as the judicial body of the society by reporting unethical behavior of individual members to the AMA Council on Judicial Affairs.
- c) To oversee policies on conflict of interest and corporate relationships for its members.
- d) To strive to set standards and to provide guidance to its members**

Feedback:

ASTRO is not a policing or reporting body to the ABR, AMA, or anyone else. ASTRO has separate committee structures for conflict of interest and corporate relations, which fall outside that role of the Ethics Committee.

Locations:

Slides 8 and 9

Reference:

ASTRO website

--- End of Question 1 ---

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Question 2:

The basic principle behind clinical ethics is which of the following:

- a) All ethical issues of substance should go through the local ethics committee
- b) One should follow the precept of “first do no harm”
- c) It is the duty of the physician to treat and manage disease in the best interest of the patient**
- d) Council should define the appropriate action in questionable situations

Location:

Slide 5

Feedback:

Although there are various legal and social issues involved in the care of the patient, the overriding concern of the physician should always be to act in the best interest of the patient. This is an important guiding principle although this precept does not always clearly define a specific clinical approach. Help from ethics committees, legal counsel and others can help in making the determination of what clinical action should be taken.

---End of Question 2---

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Question 3:

Aggressive business practices between competing radiation oncologists are:

- a) Acceptable, because any other arrangement would be “collective market action” in violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act.
- b) Acceptable, because the practice of medicine is a business, like any other.
- c) **Problematic as they result in deterioration in public confidence in the profession and erode an intra-disciplinary collegiality in ways that can negatively impact patient care.**
- d) Too difficult to define in a way that would permit regulation.

Feedback:

Answer: “C” Per the ASTRO Code of Ethics; there is a long tradition that physicians should behave with mutual respect to each other and to help others improve the quality of the care that all radiation oncologists deliver.

---End of Question 3---

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Question 4:

In which field are scientists least confident in the reproducibility of their research?

- a) Chemists
- b) Physicists
- c) Medicine**
- d) Biology
- e) Earth and Environment

Feedback:

About half of all researchers in medicine, when questioned, feel that less than 50% of published research is reproducible. There is far higher confidence among those in the physical sciences.

Reference:

Begley CG, Ellis LM. Nature 2012 483: 531-33

---End of Question 4---

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Question 5:

Which of the following is true about published article retractions?

- a) They are more common in lower impact journals
- b) The retraction rate has been stable for over a decade
- c) Honest errors are behind most retractions
- d) Of articles retracted for misbehavior, fraud is the most common reason**
- e) Misbehavior has a strong, proven link to geography

Feedback:

In a review of all 2,047 biomedical and life-science research articles indexed by PubMed as retracted on May 3, 2012 Fang found that the majority were the consequence of misbehavior not honest error, with fraud the number one reason. There was little relationship to geography.

Reference:

Fang FC et al. PNAS 2012 109:17028-17033

---End of Question 5---