

Virtual Mentor

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THE CODE SAYS

The AMA *Code of Medical Ethics*' Opinion on Disclosure of Patients' Genetic Test Results

Opinion 2.131 - Disclosure of Familial Risk in Genetic Testing

(1) Physicians have a professional duty to protect the confidentiality of their patients' information, including genetic information.

(2) Pre- and post-test counseling must include implications of genetic information for patients' biological relatives. At the time patients are considering undergoing genetic testing, physicians should discuss with them whether to invite family members to participate in the testing process. Physicians also should identify circumstances under which they would expect patients to notify biological relatives of the availability of information related to risk of disease. In this regard, physicians should make themselves available to assist patients in communicating with relatives to discuss opportunities for counseling and testing, as appropriate.

(3) Physicians who order genetic tests should have adequate knowledge to interpret information for patients. In the absence of adequate expertise in pre-test and post-test counseling, a physician should refer the patient to an appropriate specialist.

(4) Physicians should encourage genetic education throughout a medical career.

Based on the report "Disclosure of Familial Risk in Genetic Testing," adopted June 2003.

Related in VM

[Genetic Diseases and the Duty to Disclose](#), August 2012

[Duty to Warn At-Risk Family Members of Genetic Disease](#), September 2009

[Familial Genetic Risk](#), June 2005

[Genetic Testing: Clinical and Personal Utility](#), August 2012

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