

Virtual Mentor

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THE CODE SAYS

AMA Code of Medical Ethics' Opinions on Assisted Reproductive Technology

Opinion 2.055 - Ethical Conduct in Assisted Reproductive Technology

The following guidelines are intended to emphasize the value of existing standards to ensure ethical practices in assisted reproductive technology (ART):

- (1) The medical profession's development of technical and ethical guidelines for ART should continue. Education of the profession and patients should be pursued through widely disseminated information. Such material should include information on clinic-specific success rates.
- (2) Fertility laboratories not currently participating in a credible professional accreditation program are encouraged to do so. Professional self-regulation is also encouraged through signed pledges to meet established ethical standards and to comply with laboratory accreditation efforts. Physicians who become aware of unethical practices must report such conduct to the appropriate body. Physicians also should be willing to provide expert testimony when needed. Specialty societies should discuss the development of mechanisms for disciplinary action, such as revocation of membership, for members who fail to comply with ethical standards.
- (3) Patients should be fully informed about all aspects of ART applicable to their particular clinical profile. A well-researched, validated informed consent instrument would be useful for the benefit of patients and professionals. Payment based on clinical outcome is unacceptable.
- (4) Physicians and clinicians practicing ART should use accurate descriptors of available services, success rates, and fee structure and payment obligations in promotional materials.

If legislation on regulation of ART laboratories, advertising practices, or related issues is adopted, it should include adequate financial resources to ensure the intended action can be implemented. Improved legislative protection may be needed to protect physicians and their professional organizations when they provide testimony on unethical conduct of colleagues.

Issued December 1998 based on the report "Issues of Ethical Conduct in Assisted Reproductive Technology," adopted June 1996.

Opinion 2.14 - In Vitro Fertilization

The technique of in vitro fertilization and embryo transplantation enables certain couples previously incapable of conception to bear a child. It is also useful in the field of research directed toward an understanding of how genetic defects arise and are transmitted and how they might be prevented or treated. Because of serious ethical and moral concerns, however, any fertilized egg that has the potential for human life and that will be implanted in the uterus of a woman should not be subjected to laboratory research.

All fertilized ova not utilized for implantation and that are maintained for research purposes shall be handled with the strictest adherence to the Principles of Medical Ethics, to the guidelines for research and medical practice expressed in the Council's opinion on fetal research, and to the highest standards of medical practice.

Issued [June 1983](#).

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