



British and Irish Hypertension Society
Committed to preventing cardiovascular disease

The Members Code of Conduct

Preamble

The British & Irish Hypertension Society (BIHS) wishes to encourage debate and challenge among its membership. It is recognised that members seeking office or on Working Parties (WP) are essentially volunteers who altruistically devote their time and effort to work for the benefit of the Society. It is also a privilege to serve the Society and its members in this way, and members receive professional benefits by doing so. These benefits however carry with them responsibilities and obligations to act in accordance with the highest standards, whether as trustees of the BIHS Charity (Executive Committee members) or as WP members and the Society seeks to follow best practice in its governance. This Code acknowledges that those holding key roles for the BIHS will be identified with those roles when acting in public settings, and therefore sets out the principles of conduct that those holding positions of responsibility in the Society are expected to follow.

Members and Fellows of the BIHS are also seen as representatives of the Society in a broader sense and their actions can uphold the reputation of the Society or bring it into disrepute. In order that both the public and members of the Society may have confidence in the effectiveness and impartiality of those working on behalf of the Society and in recognition of the benefits derived from this work, members should follow the principles set out in this Code which are based on the Nolan principles of standards in public life.

Principles

1. All Members and Fellows have an obligation to uphold the aims, objectives and values of the Society, to act in its best interests and to enhance its reputation as a respected professional and academic body. Members should not act in any manner likely to damage the reputation of the Society or bring the Society into disrepute. This includes any forum open to the general membership, the press or the public.
2. Members and Fellows should be open about any decisions and actions they take in relation to the Society and in line with legal requirements, data protection or information governance, restrict information only on the grounds of patient confidentiality, public interest or the professional or commercial interests of the Society.
3. Members and Fellows should promote the object and vision of the Society and take a lead by example in putting these principles into action. They should act appropriately at all times to maintain the dignity, reputation and welfare of the Society.
4. Members and Fellows should carry out their roles and duties impartially in any public or private forum where they could be seen to represent the Society. Their actions should be based on evidence and any claims should be verifiable against factual information.
5. Members and Fellows should follow the principles of mutual respect in all their dealings and be prepared to accept that others may have equally strong views in

good faith that differ from their own. Members and Fellows should treat fellow members, Society staff and the public with respect, and not behave in a manner which might reasonably be interpreted as discriminatory, bullying or harassment.

Application of the principles

6. Although members may legitimately disagree with the Society leadership, direction, policy and decision-making, any comments made about such policies/decisions should be made in a way which makes it clear that they are the member's personal views and not be made in such a manner as to bring the reputation of the Society into disrepute. Decisions taken by Groups of which the member is a part must be fully respected and the principle of "collective responsibility" for such decisions observed.
7. All Members and Fellows must deal responsibly and prudently with financial matters affecting the Society.
8. Members and Fellows must ensure that they do not imply they act on behalf of, or represent themselves as speaking for, the Society (whether in an official or unofficial capacity) unless they have been specifically mandated to do so by virtue of their role, or at specific request from the Executive Committee. They must try to avoid being placed in a position where they might be misrepresented as speaking for the Society.
9. Members and Fellows representing the Society at any meeting or in any role should reflect relevant Society policy or make it clear when their views are personal ones. Where they have been directed to express the Society's views in relation to any matter, they should ensure that they carry out that role accurately and in an appropriate manner. They should be receptive to views expressed by other Society members and fellows and be prepared to reflect those views in debate. They should feed back to the Executive Committee information of relevance to the Society obtained at such meetings through their Society role. In the event of criticism of the Society by external representatives, Society representatives should respond openly and courteously and feed back any comments to the Executive Committee.

Sanctions for breaches of the Code

10. Annex 1 applies to the investigation of any alleged breach of this Code.
11. The panel referred to in Annex 1 is a body which the Executive Committee has established to investigate the conduct of members.
12. The following sanctions (which may also be combined) are available to address breaches to the code of conduct:
 - A requirement that the offending member or fellow apologises in writing and/or in public;
 - A requirement that the offending member or fellow gives a personal undertaking to the Society to amend his or her behaviour, breach of which would amount to a breach of this Code;
 - A requirement that the offending member or fellow withdraws any material in the public domain or issues a correction in any manner directed by the panel;
 - Suspension from Society membership or from any position in the Society or on any external body held by virtue of membership of the Society or appointment by the Society for a specified period or until any specified conditions have been met;
 - Revocation of Fellowship;
 - Removal from Society membership.

ANNEX 1

Procedure for Investigation of Complaints Under the Code of Conduct

Principles

1. The procedure set out in this Annex is intended to be a means of investigating complaints which:
 - Accords with established principles of natural justice in that it provides fairness, proper knowledge of the grounds of complaint against the member ('the respondent') and an absence of actual or perceived bias by those involved in dealing with the complaint.
 - Is transparent, in the sense that the procedures can be made generally known while respecting the need for confidentiality about specific complaints and the steps taken to deal with them.
 - Provides flexibility to reflect the fact that complaints will vary in nature and seriousness.
 - Provides a speedy resolution of complaints
 - Protects the interests and reputation of the Society.
2. Complaints should be made in the first instance to the Executive Committee who will aim to resolve the issue by informal mediation if at all possible.
3. If the complaint is made against an executive committee member, a sub committee will be convened to mediate.
4. If the Committee considers that more details of the complaint are necessary in order for the complaint to be dealt with, the Committee may carry out further enquiries and the claimant may be asked to give further details. Further enquiries will be pursued diligently to enable a prompt resolution of the complaint.
5. A complaint may be withdrawn at any time. However the withdrawal of a complaint shall not prevent the Executive Committee from investigating and dealing with any matters raised.
6. If the Committee is unable to resolve the matter informally, a panel may be convened to formally review the details of the complaint.

Role of the panel

The role of the panel is –

- To ascertain the facts
- To consider whether, on the basis of the facts so found, the member has breached the Code of Conduct
- To consider the appropriate course of action in the light of all the circumstances of the case including the nature of complaint, the impact on the Society, the impact on the claimant and others involved, the circumstances of the respondent and the consequences of its decision for the claimant
- To determine what sanction, if any, to apply.

The panel will reach its decisions by majority vote.

Appeal

13. Where the panel has found against the respondent, he or she may within 14 days of receiving the report give written notice to the Secretary of his or her wish to appeal against the whole or part of the panel's decision(s). Appeals may be on any grounds but shall be limited to the grounds specified by the respondent when giving notice of the appeal.