

Code of Ethics and Professionalism

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Preamble

The Heart Rhythm Society (HRS or Society) is committed to transparency, accountability and to pursuing the highest standards of excellence in its activities.

HRS's mission is to improve the care of patients by promoting research, education and optimal health care policies and standards. HRS provides clinical guidance, recommendations, education and advocacy for research that drives excellence in the delivery of electrophysiology care. HRS members share a common passion for accomplishing our vision to end death and suffering due to heart rhythm disorders. HRS believes that our diverse backgrounds, experiences and interests are assets that will allow us to reach that goal. We are committed to providing

an inclusive environment in all our activities, where all members feel valued, respected, and welcome. We strive to have organizational leaders who represent all aspects of our differences and similarities and who promote the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion that are essential to our success.

The Code of Ethics and Professionalism provides standards of ethical and professional conduct to HRS members and staff. The Code of Ethics and Professionalism may be revised or amended to reflect the changing landscape.



Our Values and Principles

This Code is based on shared values and principles including:

- Honesty
 - Integrity
 - Respect
 - Inclusivity
 - Equity
 - Fairness
 - Diversity
 - Transparency/Disclosure
 - Professional excellence and ongoing unbiased learning
 - Community and societal responsibilities
 - Balance between the needs of patients, the commitment to evidence-based clinical care and the responsibilities to HRS and the global community
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Commitments of our Members

Commitment to Professionalism

Respect for Others

- Treat patients, colleagues and team members with respect and dignity
- Value basic human rights
- Do not discriminate on the basis of sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, national identity, or disability
- Do not engage in any form of discrimination, harassment or retaliation

Professional Integrity and Competence

- Practice career competently, safely and with integrity
- Pursue lifelong learning strategies to develop and advance professional knowledge, skills and competencies
- Demonstrate accountability for professional activities
- Accept the importance of independent, impartial and periodic peer review

Professional Excellence

- Advance the heart rhythm care field through clinical practice, research, education, quality improvement, innovation, advocacy, mentorship and leadership

- Participate in the establishment and maintenance of professional standards
- Contribute in HRS activities to promote volunteer and leadership development and achieve the highest standards of professionalism

Commitment to the Global Community

- Promote collaboration and partnership in the worldwide cardiovascular community and across all professional disciplines
- Support access to quality health care throughout the world
- Encourage participation in global activities

Self-Care and Peer Support

- Strive for personal health and wellness and a healthy balance in personal and professional life
- Support colleagues to achieve a healthy balance in their personal and professional lives

Commitment to the Patient

- Make the well-being of the patient the top priority
- Treat the patient with compassion, dignity and respect
- Offer patients the best possible care based on available, evidence-based treatment options
- Engage in shared decision making with the patient
- Do not exploit the patient for personal benefit
- Make ethical decisions concerning patient care such as respecting patient preference based on cultural and religious values, recognizing patients' rights for self-determination
- Recognize and explain potential benefits and risks associated with any medical intervention and with not performing that treatment
- Act to optimize positive outcomes and minimize harm
- Disclose any potential conflicts of interest in the patient/health care provider relationship
- Acknowledge importance of no undue, outside interference
- Maintain confidentiality consistent with all policies of institutions where patient care is delivered and all government regulations and laws
- Do not discriminate on the basis of sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, national identity or disability

Commitment to HRS

- Be conversant with, and work to promote the Society's mission, goals and objectives
- Agree to adhere to the HRS Volunteer Code of Conduct ([Appendix A](#))
- Use the HRS Volunteer Competency Framework: Professional Acumen, Collaboration, Vision and Direction, Delivering Results as a guide for developing strong leadership skills within the Society ([Appendix B](#))
- Maintain the confidentiality of all discussions that occur in the context of work with the Society
- Recognize that while HRS members participate in other professional societies' activities, while acting as a representative for HRS this Society's interests should have priority

Relationships

Relationships with other Organizations

The behavior and decisions of individual members of the Society reflect upon the Society, as do the decisions and policies of the Society reflect upon the individual members. Leadership (Executives, Board of Trustees, Committee Chairs, etc.) may at times speak for the Society as determined by the descriptions of each position and activity. Participation in other organizations enriches the value of the contribution of the individual members but can be complicated

by conflicting priorities. It is therefore mandatory that there is transparency of each HRS member concerning these additional relationships. These relationships can at times disqualify members from serving in leadership or as a Journal editor. With transparency and full disclosure these potential conflicts can be acknowledged and managed effectively. The dynamic nature of the Society's agenda and relationships requires frequent examination of potentially conflicting relationships.

Relationships with the Community

Society members are also members of the larger community, including local, regional, national and global communities. As such, we must comply with the laws and regulations that govern our profession within each jurisdiction.

There are a number of aspects that significantly influence our social responsibility which extend well beyond our legal mandates. Members are strongly encouraged to contribute to efforts, including the following:

- Deliver quality medical services through establishment and maintenance of professional standards
- Recognize social determinants and other factors that influence the health of the community and the individual
- Interpret and present scientific knowledge to the community objectively and without personal bias
- Collaborate with others to improve health care services and delivery for the community and individual well being
- Contribute to improving public health, patient health and well-being and the prevention and management of heart rhythm disorders

Policies

Disclosure of Relationships

HRS requires all individuals engaged in HRS-related activities to disclose and manage personal, professional, financial and nonfinancial relationships while engaged in Society activities.

Individuals engaged in HRS-related activities are defined as members of the Society's Board of Trustees, committees, subcommittees, writing groups, working groups, task forces, councils, Heart Rhythm Society journals' Editors-in-Chief, Deputy Editors, Associate Editors, Section Editors, Statistical Editors, Social Media Editors, Editorial Board members and participants in HRS-led educational activities.

These disclosures apply as well to an individual's spouse/partner. While not all relationships are prohibited or harmful, full disclosure of such relationships is required, and mechanisms are in place to identify and resolve potential or perceived conflicts of interest. All relationships must be disclosed and updated at least annually. Additional updates may be required at the time of consideration for participation in an HRS related activity.

The types and description of relationships requiring disclosure are summarized in [Table 1](#). Individuals engaged in HRS-related activities must disclose all of their financial relationships with any Cardiac Rhythm Management companies (CRM). A CRM is a company with at least a portion of its business in the heart rhythm-related field. This includes traditional CRM companies, such as pacemaker manufacturers or pharmaceutical companies, but also diversified companies that have, or are developing, a presence in the CRM field, such as software and computer companies.

Along with disclosing the existence of financial relationships, appointees¹ must also disclose the monetary value of each relationship. When an exact monetary value cannot be determined, for example in the case of the value of stock options or ownership of start-up companies, appointees are expected to provide a good faith estimate of the likely value of each such financial relationship. Appointees shall also disclose whether and to what extent they are involved in the leadership of another organization, including other medical professional societies.

¹ For the purposes of this document, the term "appointee" refers to any individual who serves the Society, whether appointed or elected. This includes officers and board members, chairs and vice chairs, committee members, task force and working group members, writing group members, Editors-in-Chief, editors, editorial board members, invited speakers at official HRS scientific and educational meetings, and others in an invited role.

Management of Conflict of Interest

The Ethics Committee is responsible for: a) obtaining and auditing disclosures, and, on an annual basis, reviewing those submitted by the Board of Trustees, committee chairs and other appointees as deemed necessary; b) providing and communicating a process for reporting potential violations; c) evaluating complaints; d) assisting to determine appropriate measures to resolve or mitigate any actual or perceived conflicts of interest; e) levying and enforcing sanctions; and f) providing a mechanism for the appeal of decisions.

The Ethics Committee will review all disclosures of an appointee if a financial relationship with a single company is more than \$50,000 and/or if the total disclosure amount is greater than \$100,000, excluding institutional research and fellowship training support. Any concerns that arise from such a review will be communicated to the appointee.

The Board of Trustees delegates many responsibilities to the committees and these groups serve an important role to implement the organization's strategic plan and operational goals. Although it is the responsibility of all participants to manage potential and existing conflicts during a discussion, the Committee Chair and Vice Chair are expected to promote transparency and manage potential and existing conflicts. The Chair and Vice Chair also are responsible for ensuring productive and inclusive participation and preventing an individual from unduly influencing the outcome of the discussion. While the Ethics

Committee has responsibilities for ensuring the overall compliance with the Society's Code of Ethics, Chairs and Vice Chairs have a role in the oversight of these procedures, and, as necessary, will forward to the Ethics Committee issues for resolution. To promote transparency, appointee disclosures will be posted on the HRS website annually. In addition, the Chair Statement will be read at the beginning of all HRS meetings or conference calls. The current disclosures of all participants will be distributed to the attendees in advance. Participants will also be asked to update any new disclosures at the beginning of the meeting.

Restrictions on HRS Leaders and Other Influential Appointees

There are additional restrictions on some HRS leaders and individuals appointed to high-visibility and influential positions. ([Table 2](#)). The Ethics Committee will review annually all disclosures of these individuals as well as individuals under consideration for an appointment to a leadership or influential position including: HRS President and President-Elect, Editors-in-Chief and Deputy Editors of Heart Rhythm Society journals, Social Media Editors, the Board of Trustees, Chairs and Vice Chairs of committees, subcommittees, task forces and working groups and the Chair and one Vice-Chair of all HRS-led Documents.

Disclosures of Editors-in-Chief, Deputy Editors, Associate Editors, Section Editors, Social Media Editors, Statistical Editors, and members of the Editorial Boards of Heart Rhythm Society journals also will be posted on the respective Journal Web sites.

Resolution of Conflicts

Within 30 days of receipt of an alleged violation, the Ethics Committee shall review all potential conflicts of interests. The Ethics Committee shall determine whether there is an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest and which actions, policies, or processes can be implemented to resolve, mitigate, or manage the conflict. These determinations must be documented. The Ethics Committee has the authority to set and enforce all decisions. An appeals process is provided via a three-person independent appeals panel, appointed by the Ethics Committee. A written request for an appeal must be within 30 days of the date of the notification of the Ethics Committee's determination. The appeals panel's decision on sanctions is final.

If a conflict cannot be adequately resolved, mitigated, or managed, then the Ethics Committee or the Board of Trustees (upon recommendation from the Ethics Committee) may require the person to limit or curtail certain activities with HRS, and/or ask the individual to eliminate or remedy the conflict if they want to continue participation in HRS activities.

Complaints

Any member of the Society, including appointees, session participants, faculty and

staff, may report a potential violation of the Society's disclosure and conflict of interest policies to the Ethics Committee. However, in all allegations of bias, real or perceived, appointees are encouraged to first raise their concerns at the committee level.

The Heart Rhythm Society or an individual will not retaliate against a whistleblower. Any whistleblower who believes he/she is being retaliated against must contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee immediately. HRS will use its good faith and reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of the whistleblower. However, identity may have to be voluntarily disclosed in order to proceed with a proper and thorough investigation and to provide accused individuals with due process in any ensuing hearing or legal process. In the context of a retaliation claim, whistleblower identity would most likely have to be disclosed in order to prosecute that claim.

Violations

Violations are reported to the Ethics Committee for review and sanctions if appropriate. Violations also may be reported to an individual's academic institution or employer. The Society maintains a process for disqualifying individuals who have a conflict that cannot be adequately resolved by other measures.

Accredited Continuing Education (ACE) Disclosure and Conflict of Interest Resolution Policy

HRS is committed to the provision of Accredited Continuing Education (ACE) that is balanced, objective, and evidence based. HRS adheres to the Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education of the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) which require that those individuals in a position to control the content of an educational activity (including, but not limited to, planners, faculty, authors, committee members, content reviewers, editors, and staff) disclose all financial relationships with an ACCME-defined ineligible company (ineligible to sponsor ACCGME activities) within the 24 months prior to the disclosure. HRS maintains an Accreditation & Assessment Committee

that oversees both the ACE Policy and the Conflict of Interest (COI) Resolution policy to safeguard the credibility and reputation of the Society's ACE activities. A link to the definition of ACCME-defined ineligible companies is included in [Table 1](#).

Any individual who fails to disclose financial relationships will be disqualified from participating in HRS ACE certified activities. Owners and employees of ACCME-defined ineligible companies may have no role in the planning or implementation of ACE activities without a special written exception from the HRS Chief Learning Officer that will be granted only in specific circumstances that meet ACCME requirements.

Scientific and Clinical Documents

Members of HRS's scientific statements and clinical documents writing committees/groups have a special obligation for full disclosure due to the impact on organizational integrity of actual or perceived conflicts of interest. All

disclosures must be updated and reviewed by the Scientific and Clinical Documents Committee prior to appointment to a writing group. Specific management of these activities is outlined in [Appendix C](#).

Research and Other Academic Activities

The Society promotes the responsible conduct of research and encourages compliance with ethical standards and government regulations governing research. HRS members engaged in research activities are expected to protect the integrity of their scientific data and meet accepted ethical standards for conducting research and publishing scientific data. The Society's

policy applies to all members, including but not limited to physicians, scientists, other investigators, students, and postdoctoral fellows, whether performing research funded by HRS or by other organizations. Specific management of responsibilities and management of research activities is outlined in [Appendix D](#).

Expert Witness

Consulting As An Expert Witness In Legal Proceedings

The Society recognizes two general categories in which a member may be involved as an expert witness, including providing opinions as well as testimony at deposition or trial, depending on the nature of the litigation and who is employing the Member as a consultant. In both cases, the Member is acting individually and is not acting

as a representative of the Society. These two categories are expert witness consulting on behalf of a commercial entity or as expert witness consulting in medicolegal litigation. The former relationship must be disclosed. The latter relationship is considered to be part of the practice of medicine and does not need to be disclosed. The details of this policy are outlined in [Appendix E](#).

Management of Professional Misconduct

Automatic Suspension of Membership will occur on:

- Conviction of a felony
- Suspension or termination of license for clinical practice (e.g., medicine, nursing, pharmacy) or academic appointment due to violations of professional conduct

Any complaints concerning violations of the HRS Code of Ethics and Professionalism are to be submitted in writing with appropriate documentation to the Chair of the Ethics Committee. Within 30 days of receipt of an alleged violation, the Ethics Committee shall

review the complaint. The Ethics Committee shall determine whether there is violation of the Code of Ethics and Professionalism and whether sanctions are required. The Ethics Committee has the authority to set and enforce all decisions. An appeals process is provided via a three-person independent appeals panel, appointed by the Ethics Committee. A written request for an appeal must be made within 30 days of the date on the notification of the Ethics Committee's determination. The appeals panel's decision on sanctions is final.

Tables

Table 1: Relationship Category Descriptions and Relevant ACCME Definitions

All relationships with industry, non-industry, and other professional societies relevant to cardiac rhythm management from the preceding 24 months must be disclosed.

Definition: A cardiac rhythm management company (CRM) is a company with at least a portion of its business in the heart rhythm-related field. This includes traditional CRM companies, such as pacemaker manufacturers or pharmaceutical companies, but also diversified companies that have, or are developing, a presence in the CRM field, such as software and computer companies.

Category	Description
Honoraria/Speaking/Consulting Fees	Honoraria, gifts or in-kind compensation for consulting, lecturing, speaking engagements, advisory board, or membership, certain types of legal testimony or consultation (see Appendix E), or other purposes.
Speakers Bureau: when a company controls content	When a company has the right to dictate or control the content of the presentation or talk, or the company creates the presentation material or has final approval of the content and edits, and/or you are expected to act as a company's agent or spokesperson for the purpose of disseminating company or product information.
Stocks or Stock Options - Public	Includes any stock or stock options for a publicly traded CRM related commercial interest. (excluding mutual funds)
Stocks or Stock Options – Non-Public (including start-up companies)	Includes any stock or stock options for a non-publicly traded CRM related commercial interest including a start-up company. (excluding mutual funds)

Table 1: Relationship Category Descriptions (continued)

Category	Description
Majority Shareholders	Majority shareholders of a CRM related commercial interest and non-commercial interest.
Royalty/Commission Income	Payments received from others for the grant of license or other rights to them to use or exploit intellectual property rights, including copyrights, trademarks and patents and materials and assets derived from them. Also included are payments received from others for the sale of specified products and services.
Officer, Trustee, Director, or Any Other Fiduciary Role	Officer, Trustee, Director, or Any Other Fiduciary Role of a relevant for-profit or non-profit organization, whether remuneration is received for service.
Non-financial Relationship	Participation in an activity at a relevant for-profit or non-profit organization (e.g. committee, council, Board of Trustees, Board of Directors).
Ownership/Partnership/Principal (Commercial Interests)	Status or position of Ownership/Partnership/Principal in a commercial interest.
Ownership/Partnership/Principal (Non-Commercial Interests)	Status or position of Ownership/Partnership/Principal in a non-commercial interest.
Institutional Research Grants (PIs and Named Investigators Only)	For principle investigator and named investigators only, grants received from industry, foundations or government sources granted to the institution.
Fellows in Training Salary	Fellowship salary support granted to the individual's institution.
Salary from Employment (Commercial Interests)	Salary from employment with a CRM related commercial interest.
Intellectual Property Rights	The rights to own and profit from intellectual creations, such as inventions, innovations and authored materials of any type and in any form or media, including, without limitation, creations registered as patents, patent applications, copyrights, trademarks, service marks, trade names and trade dress or unregistered creations such as trade secrets and other know-how, whether tangible or intangible, and whether or not such rights are currently commercialized via a license agreement or other means.

Table 1: Relationship Category Descriptions (continued)

Category	Description
Travel/Entertainment	Disclosure of travel, entertainment, food, beverage, and education expenses.
Other Financial Relationships	Other relevant relationships related to heart rhythm care not described above must be disclosed.
For Board Members Only	Family relationship shall mean all lineal relationships (i.e. parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren, etc.) and brothers and sisters, in all cases determined as a matter of blood, adoption or marriage.
For Board Members Only	Business relationships with another member of the Board.

A commercial interest is any entity producing, marketing, re-selling, or distributing health care goods or services consumed by, or used on, patients. The ACCME definition of ineligible companies (ineligible to sponsor ACCME activities) is available on the [ACCME website](#).

Table 2: Disclosure Requirements by Role

Definition: For purposes of Table 2 “industry” shall mean any commercial enterprise involved in any aspect of CRM or other heart rhythm related field.

Appointees: Participation as officers and board members, chairs and vice-chairs, committee members, task force members, writing group members, Editors-in-Chief, editors, editorial board members, invited speakers at official HRS scientific and educational meetings, and others in an invited role.

All Appointees	All relationships are to be disclosed and should be updated at least annually. Additional updates may be required at the time of consideration for participation in an HRS activity. The types and definitions of these relationships are outlined in Table 1 .
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High-Level and Influential Appointee Positions

President and President-Elect	<p>The Society’s President and President-Elect shall be prohibited from receiving income from commercial entities which have the potential for conflict of interest, during the year(s) in which they hold the position.</p> <p>Continued participation in industry sponsored clinical trials, steering committees and data safety monitoring boards without remuneration are allowed, as well as continued participation as an expert witness on behalf of device or pharmaceutical companies if these relationships were established prior to assuming the Presidential Track or role as an Editor-in-Chief and Deputy Editor.</p> <p>Consulting relationships, with or without remuneration from companies with financial interest in heart rhythm management, are not permitted. In addition, the individual must not own stock, or stock options or have ownership, royalty income, partnership, licensing or principal interests in a heart rhythm related enterprise (including a start-up company), excluding mutual funds that may hold such stock in its portfolio.</p> <p><u>Permitted Industry-Funded Travel:</u> Industry funds to support travel, food and beverage are permitted only for meetings pertaining to multi-center clinical trials or other pre-existing research commitments where attendance is deemed critical by the Ethics Committee.</p> <p>Industry-funded travel expenses are strongly discouraged, and requests must be submitted to the Ethics Committee which will determine if it is allowable for industry to pay for food, beverage, and travel costs to the meeting.</p>
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Table 2: Disclosure Requirements by Role

High-Level and Influential Appointee Positions

Board of Trustees, Chairs and Vice Chairs and the Ethics Committee	These individuals must have disclosure totals less than \$100,000, excluding institutional research and fellowship support and/or less than \$50,000 for a relationship with a single company.
Board of Trustees	<p>Prospective Board members must agree in writing to divest of financial interests totaling more than \$100,000 in heart rhythm related enterprises, excluding institutional research and fellowship support, and/or \$50,000 in a single company, before their term as a Board member begins.</p> <p>Board members are ineligible to serve as Editors-in-Chief of another non HRS heart-rhythm-related journal that is peer reviewed and/or indexed in PubMed.</p>
Health Policy and Regulatory Affairs Committee Chair	<p>Must have no financial relationships with industry, excluding institutional research and fellowship support.</p> <p>The policies regarding income and consulting relationships as applied to the President and President-Elect of the Society as described above, shall apply equally to this role.</p>
Accreditation & Assessment Committee Chair, Accreditation & Assessment Committee Vice Chair	<p>Must have no financial relationships with industry, excluding institutional research and fellowship support.</p> <p>The policies regarding income and consulting relationships as applied to the President and President-Elect of the Society as described above, shall apply equally to this role.</p>

Table 2: Disclosure Requirements by Role (continued)

HRS Clinical Documents

Writing Group Chair/Vice Chair	<p>Must have no financial relationships with industry, excluding research and fellowship support.</p> <p>For HRS-led documents, the Chair and Vice-Chair (and their immediate family members) should not own stock, or stock options or have ownership, royalty income, partnership, licensing or principal interests in a heart rhythm related enterprise (including a start-up company) as deemed by SCDC in consultation with the Ethics Committee, excluding mutual funds that may hold such stock in its portfolio, nor have the potential to profit financially from the recommendations of the document.</p> <p>At the discretion of the SCDC, as guided by the HRS Ethics Committee, certain disclosed relationships of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs on HRS-led documents, such as and participation in government-sponsored or university-managed Data Safety Monitoring Boards, as well as certain institutional/organizational and government/nonprofit relationships, may be considered not relevant to the document.</p>
Writing Group Member	<p>Total disclosures of heart rhythm related financial interests must not exceed \$100,000, and a relationship with a single company must not exceed \$50,000. This does not include institutional research and fellowship support.</p> <p>Writing Group members shall not own, stock, or stock options or have ownership, royalty income, partnership, or principal interests in a heart rhythm related enterprise (including a start-up company), excluding mutual funds that may hold such stock in its portfolio, nor have the potential to profit financially from the recommendations of the document.</p> <p>Authors are permitted to have such financial interests if these interests are not relevant to the document. Any member who has divested prior to the initial meeting of relevant, stocks, or stock options ownership, royalty income, partnership, licensing or principle interests in a heart rhythm related enterprise (including a start-up company) is eligible to participate.</p>
External Peer-Reviewer	<p>There are no restrictions on participation for peer reviewers; however, all reviewers must disclose all relationships with industry, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies.</p>

Table 2: Disclosure Requirements by Role (continued)

Heart Rhythm Society Journals

Editors-in-Chief and Deputy Editors of Heart Rhythm Society Journals	<p>The Editors-in-Chief and Deputy Editors of Heart Rhythm Society journals shall be bound by the Society's Disclosure and Conflict of Interest policies and must disclose all relationships with heart rhythm related companies. In addition, these Editors shall not receive remuneration from competing publications or products. He or she may serve on the editorial board (but not as a section, statistical, and/or associate editor) for other publications and shall not serve on advisory boards for competing organizations.</p> <p>The policies regarding income and consulting relationships as applied to the President and President-Elect of the Society as described above, shall apply equally to these Editors.</p>
Social Media Editors	<p>Social Media Editors must have heart rhythm related financial interests disclosure totals less than \$100,000, excluding research and fellowship support and/or less than \$50,000 for a relationship with a single company.</p> <p>Social Media Editors are ineligible to serve as Social Media Editors of another heart-rhythm-related journal that is peer reviewed and/or indexed in PubMed.</p>
Associate Editors	<p>Associate Editors are ineligible to serve as Associate Editors of another heart-rhythm-related journal that is peer reviewed and/or indexed in PubMed.</p>
Section Editors, Statistical Editors, Editorial Board Members	<p>Relationships are to be disclosed and should be updated at least annually. Additional updates may be required at the time of consideration for participation in an HRS activity.</p>