

# Foreword: Ethics in laboratory medicine

Guest editor: Nilda E. Fink<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On behalf of the IFCC Task Force on Ethics (TF-E)

<sup>2</sup> PROES Program, Biochemical Foundation of Argentina

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## ARTICLE INFO

**Corresponding author:**

Nilda E. Fink  
Chair, IFCC Task Force on Ethics (TF-E)  
Director, Programa PROES  
Fundación Bioquímica Argentina  
Viamonte 1167  
Buenos Aires C 1053  
Argentina  
E-mail: [nilda.fink@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:nilda.fink@yahoo.com.ar)

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## FOREWORD

The field of ethics involves concepts and rules of right and wrong behavior. Bioethics is defined as a branch of applied ethics that studies the philosophical, social, and legal issues arising in medicine and life sciences. Presently it is mandatory for different areas of Medicine to comply with ethical standards, and the field of Laboratory Medicine is no exception. Notwithstanding, there is variability in ethics education within health professions (1).

Although there are recent publications on the topic of ethics (2), Members of the IFCC Task Force on Ethics (TF-E) further contribute to the goal of ethics education in the field of Laboratory Medicine in collaboration with the eJIFCC in the form of this dedicated thematic issue. This special issue of the eJIFCC presents a series of manuscripts that summarize relevant aspects on Ethics. Seven manuscripts are included, four of them are updating on classical ethical topics, two refer to more recent challenges in Ethics and finally, but equally important, an opinion paper.

In the first of these four articles, Davey presents an analysis of Codes of ethics for laboratory medicine including aspects such as its definition, structure and procedures. As highlighted in the title, it is a narrative

review based on existing national codes that complement his previous work available on the IFCC website (3).

Currently, diagnosis and management of patients is very much dependent on laboratory diagnostics, as such utility of data obtained from patients mandate ethical guideline-dependent actions. Ethical standards and practices vary and are resource dependent. Datta discusses ethical challenges for Laboratory Medicine in resource limited settings.

Beshir has compiled an article for better comprehension of Research Ethics Committees (RECs) in Laboratory Medicine. International ethical guidelines and declarations ensure the autonomy, dignity and well-being of research subjects, as well as integrity and credibility of research results. Here, the author defines the RECs in laboratory medicine and described their roles based on the examination of the requirements of ethical research.

Conflicts of interest (COIs) exist frequently in medicine and science. Physicians in patient care, health professionals in pharmaceutical and biomedical industry, in management positions, in teaching or in research, must apply rigid ethical principles. It is likely that COIs prop up in numerous settings. All relevant actions must comply with the essential principles of Bioethics. In the article by Fink, several aspects on conflict of interest, in terms of its definition, classification, applications, management and other challenges are described.

As we mentioned previously, another two articles deal with challenging topics from the ethical point of view. One of them is the second article in this issue penned by Beshir and is related to incidental findings (IFs). With the advancement in areas of genetics and genomics, special and additional ethical considerations should be made as genetic research can reveal

information about susceptibility of an individual to disease. The duty of researchers to disclose IFs to participants under ethical guidelines is discussed and an approach to its disclosure is recommended. In the article written by Verona, Integrating System of Electronic Health Record applied at city level in a Latin-American country is described. Detailed ethical considerations taken into account were analyzed as patient-centered conception was employed.

Finally, Banys presents in an opinion paper, in the form of an answer to a question referred to the MedTech Europe Code of Ethical Business Practice created by the medical technology industry, and how it influences the activities of professional societies in Laboratory Medicine. He described the experience of a National Society, the Lithuanian Society of Laboratory Medicine (LLMD). It addresses the importance of an ethical use of resources and fair management of educational grants, public disclosure of provided educational grants, compliance of conferences with the Conference Vetting System and other allocation of resources as examples.

The TF-E with this thematic issue, seeks to promote Ethics teaching, to catalyze discussion between stakeholders, and perhaps may also prove useful for improving guidelines and documents at local or national levels.

## REFERENCES

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