



SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL

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PRESS RELEASE

2016 EDITION OF THE SINGAPORE MEDICAL COUNCIL ETHICAL CODE AND ETHICAL GUIDELINES AND HANDBOOK ON MEDICAL ETHICS

1. The Singapore Medical Council (SMC) Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines (ECEG) were last revised in 2002. Since then, medical practice in Singapore has evolved to become more complex, with advanced technology, innovative communication means, new modalities of treatment, a wide range of organisational as well as business models in medicine and changing expectations of the community we serve. To better address and to enable practitioners to navigate the ethical issues encountered in modern medical practice, the SMC has revised and updated the ECEG and the revised ECEG is now referred to as the **2016 edition of the SMC ECEG** (2016 ECEG).
2. The 2016 ECEG is accompanied by an educational resource that is called the **SMC Handbook on Medical Ethics** (2016 HME). This Handbook contains additional material that elaborates on the 2016 ECEG, explains its application and provides advice on the best practices.

Background to review process

3. A Working Committee to review the ECEG was appointed by SMC in September 2010 comprising Council members and other senior doctors and an ethicist with considerable experience in medical ethics (see Annex). The review process involved:
 - (a) Thorough research into the medical ethical code publications of many overseas medical bodies that have well developed ethical frameworks to provide essential reference points;
 - (b) Inviting and receiving initial inputs and suggestions from the medical profession, including public and private healthcare institutions, medical professional bodies and individuals;
 - (c) Drafting a revised ECEG for consultations with the medical profession;
 - (d) Legal review including checking for consistency with Singapore law;
 - (e) Holding three focus group discussions on the draft ECEG and dialogues with representatives from various sectors of the medical community and laypersons from the SMC Complaints Panel in 2011;
 - (f) Refining the draft ECEG in response to the focus group's input;
 - (g) Presentation of the draft ECEG for Council's inputs before proceeding to profession-wide consultation exercises;

- (h) First profession-wide consultation exercise in 2014;
- (i) Deliberation by the Working Committee on the feedback and re-writing of the draft;
- (j) Presentation of draft ECEG to Council for approval to proceed to further profession-wide consultation;
- (k) Second profession-wide consultation exercise in 2015;
- (l) Deliberation by the Working Committee on the feedback and finalisation of the draft ECEG and HME to be presented to Council;
- (m) Deliberation by Council on the draft ECEG and HME; and
- (n) Final approval by Council for the 2016 ECEG and HME.

4. The principles which the SMC and the Working Committee applied in reviewing and approving the 2016 ECEG and the corresponding HME are:

- (a) Relevance to modern medical practice;
- (b) Adapting to the complexities and variations of medical practice;
- (c) Protecting patients' best interests while being fair to doctors;
- (d) Maintaining the values important to society and to the medical profession;
- (e) Regulating ethical behaviour rather than imposing blanket prohibitions; and
- (f) Upholding the principle of professional self-regulation.

Key updates and new sections

5. The document makes significant updates on areas such as:

- (a) Medical records;
- (b) Medical certificates;
- (c) Prescription of medicine;
- (d) Medical research;
- (e) Consent;
- (f) Medical confidentiality;
- (g) Advertising; and
- (h) Relationships with the medical industry / non-medical companies etc.

6. There are a number of new sections dealing with, for example:

- (a) Working in teams;
- (b) Telemedicine;
- (c) End-of-life care;
- (d) Complementary and alternative medicine;
- (e) Aesthetic practice;
- (f) Personal beliefs;
- (g) Propriety and sexual boundaries;
- (h) Caring for minors (persons below age 21);
- (i) Caring for patients with diminished mental capacity;
- (j) Third parties in attendance;
- (k) Dealing with adverse outcomes and medical errors;
- (l) Students in a healthcare setting; and
- (m) Fees for services.

Feedback from the medical profession

7. The SMC and the Working Committee are grateful for the feedback from the medical profession during the initial stage of providing suggestions on the areas for revision, focus group discussions and consultation exercises. The authority and integrity of any ethical framework for the medical profession has to be based upon the collective wisdom that exists within the medical profession and its associated professional and institutional bodies.

2016 ECEG and HME

8. Copies of the 2016 ECEG and the HME have been uploaded on SMC's website and the 2016 ECEG will come into force on 1 January 2017. Until this date, the 2002 ECEG will remain in force.

9. Should you have any queries, kindly direct them to enquiries@smc.gov.sg

**Working Committee for the review of the ECEG –
Appointed September 2010 to present:**

Working Committee Chairman / Member	Past and present roles
Dr Tan Chi Chiu (Chairman)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected member, SMC (1999 to present) • Chairman, SMC Ethics Committee (2000 to present) • Gastroenterologist, Gleneagles Medical Centre (1999 to present)
Prof Alastair Vincent Campbell (Member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member, Bioethics Advisory Committee (2006 to present) • Director, Centre for Biomedical Ethics, YYLSoM, NUS (2006 to 2016) • Former Professor, Ethics in Medicine in the Medical School of the University of Bristol and Director of its Centre for Ethics in Medicine (1996 to 2005) • Former President, International Association of Bioethics (1998 to 2000) • Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (2013 to present)
A/Prof Chin Jing Jih (Member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed member, SMC (2008 to present) • Member, SMC Ethics Committee (2008 to present) • Member, Bioethics Advisory Committee (2011 to present) • Adjunct Associate Professor, Centre for Biomedical Ethics, YYLSoM, NUS (2006 to present) • Chairman, Research Ethics Committee, NHG (2009 to present) • Chairman, Clinical Ethics Committee, TTSH (2003 to present)
Asst Prof Chua Swee Boon Raymond (Member, January 2015 to present)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected member, SMC (2010 to 2013; June 2014 to present) • Group Director, Health Products Regulation Group, HSA (July 2012 to present) • Ex-Managing Director, Eisai Clinical Research Singapore (2007 to 2010) • Ex Secretariat, National Medical Ethics Committee (2003 to 2007)
Adj Prof Chew Chin Hin (Member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honorary Advisor, Division of Graduate Medical Studies, National University of Singapore (1992 to present) • Emeritus Consultant, Tan Tock Seng Hospital (1998 to present) • Chairman, National Medical Ethics Committee (1994 to 2000) • Deputy Director of Medical Services, MOH (1981 to 1991) • Master, Academy of Medicine Singapore (1973 to 1975) • Member, SMC (1972 to 1993)

Working Committee Chairman / Member	Past and present roles
Prof Lee Eng Hin (Member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed member, SMC (2000 to 2006, 2010 to 2016) • Member, SMC Ethics Committee (2010 to present) • Emeritus Consultant, Division of Paediatric Orthopaedics, National University Health System Singapore (2010 to present) • Research Integrity Officer, NUS (2007 to 2014) • Senior Advisor, Division of Graduate Medical Studies, NUS (2010 to present) • Director, Division of Graduate Medical Studies, NUS (1999 to 2010) • Member, National Bioethics Advisory Committee (2006 to 2008 and 2016 to present) • Dean, YYLSoM, NUS (2000 to 2003) • Executive Director, Biomedical Research Council (2008 to 2012)
Dr Loh Wee Tiong Alfred (Member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physician, Raffles Executive Medical Centre (2008 to present) • CEO, World Organisation of Family Doctors, WONCA (2001 to 2011) • Examiner, Family Medicine for the Graduate School of Medical Studies, NUS (1995 to 2005) • Founding Partner, Raffles Medical Group (1976)
A/Prof Roy Joseph (Member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairman, Clinical Bioethics Committee, NUH (2006 to present) • Chairman, National Medical Ethics Committee (2009 to present) • Emeritus Consultant, Department of Neonatology, NUHS (2011 to present) • Team member, Medical Undergraduate Professionalism, Medical Ethics and Law Curriculum development (2006 to present)
Prof Tan Tiang Lee Walter (Member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed member, SMC (2004 to 2010) • Member, SMC Ethics Committee (2007 to 2010) • Medical Director, Raffles Hospital (2001 to present) • Member, Ethics Committee, Raffles Hospital (2009 to present) • Board member, HSA (2007 to 2013) • President, Singapore Association of Plastic Surgeons (2003 to 2009) • National Representative, International Confederation for Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery (IPRAS) (2003 to 2009) • Master, Academy of Medicine Singapore (2000 to 2002)