

SASA Member Code of Conduct for Anaesthesia Professionals

Health Professions Council Guidelines

SASA expects its members to adhere to all Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) rules and regulations regarding good professional and ethical practice. This document is to be read in conjunction with the HPCSA guidelines pertaining to good practice, ethical rules, etc. (Visit the website - [click here](#)). This incorporates the Generic Ethical Rules, Good Practice Guidelines, Patients' Rights Charter, and other relevant guidelines.

Oath of Care

Anaesthesia professionals are bound by the shared spirit and principles underlying the various oaths subscribed to by newly qualified healthcare professionals (i.e., revised Hippocratic Oath, and others). This social contract holds healthcare providers to a strict code of professional and personal conduct, forming the pillars of the SASA Code of Conduct for Anaesthesia professionals.

The practice of anaesthesia has its own, inherently unique demands and challenges regarding the nature of patient interaction, standards of care, quality of service delivery, safety requirements, and inter-collegial relationships. This Code of Conduct outlines the commitment every SASA member makes to ethical practice.

Basic Components of Ethical Practice

An anaesthesia professional has ethical responsibilities to:

- I.** Patients
- II.** Colleagues and community
- III.** Him-/herself
- IV.** Healthcare fraternity
- V.** Workplace

I. Responsibilities to patients

- i.** Always place the patient's interests foremost.
- ii.** Be truthful to patients.
- iii.** Appreciate and respect the patient's supreme rights in medical decision-making, appropriate to the patient's developmental capacity and medical circumstances. Medical knowledge and skills should never be used to coerce or restrain patients with adequate decision-making capacity.
- iv.** Appreciate that patients are extremely vulnerable in the perioperative period. Take care of the patient's physical and psychological wellbeing. The patient's right to dignity, privacy, and comfort is paramount. Patients should be treated with respect, at all times, regardless of the state of consciousness.
- v.** Honour confidentiality regarding medical and personal information.
- vi.** Honour and respect religious and cultural beliefs and be sensitive in this regard in the provision of treatment.
- vii.** Provide appropriate post-anaesthesia care, as and when applicable.
- viii.** Provide emergency care for all patients, irrespective of the patient's financial status.

II. Responsibilities to colleagues and community

- i.* Promote respectful and cooperative relationships with colleagues and healthcare workers to the benefit of patients.
- ii.* Consult with colleagues as and when appropriate.
- iii.* Cooperate and participate with colleagues to improve the quality and efficiency of anaesthesia care, and medical care in general.
- iv.* Advise and assist impaired/suspected impaired colleagues within the boundaries of your own abilities, to the benefit of patients.
- v.* Immediately and adequately address any dangerous/negligent practices that potentially endanger patients and/or healthcare personnel. This includes reporting a colleague to the relevant authority, sooner rather than later.
- vi.* Participate in keeping potentially dangerous substances secure from illicit use.

III. Responsibilities to yourself

- i.* Maintain competence and skill as is necessary in your particular practice.
- ii.* Take responsibility for your own mental and physical wellness.
- iii.* Seek timeously assistance, evaluation and care when in doubt about your own health and wellness.
- iv.* Seek timeous assistance and support when in doubt about your own clinical competence, be this in general, case or skill(s) specific.
- v.* Modify or cease practice when incapacitated in any way that has the potential to be detrimental to patients.
- vi.* Take responsibility for your personal financial protection and wellbeing, preventing financial needs from interfering with clinical decision-making.

IV: Responsibilities to the healthcare fraternity

- i.* Refrain from seeking or accepting potentially compromising donations, gifts, or sponsorships from any source.
- ii.* Avoid placing yourself in a position of perversity, potential position of perversity, or potentially perceived perversity.
- iii.* Declare all donations, gifts, or sponsorships where the potential exists for undue influencing, or perceived influencing. This is specifically expected from faculty at events, conferences, and congresses. Any interest, whether perceived as a direct influence on the topic or not, should be declared at the start of a presentation.
- iv.* Adhere to ethical and consistent billing practices, refraining from overreaching and overservicing practices. Additionally, appreciate your responsibility as an anaesthesia professional in seeking cost-saving treatment mechanisms.
- v.* Appropriately inform patients regarding cost and your billing practices, where possible, for the patient to make an informed financial decision.
- vi.* Refrain from participating in exploitative financial relationships.

V: Responsibilities in the workplace

- i.* Dress appropriately and always maintain yourself in a clean, dignified and presentable manner.
- ii.* Treat your co-workers with respect, including colleagues, nursing staff, cleaners, porters, etc.
- iii.* Refrain from using inappropriate and derogatory language and behaviour, in whatever situation.
- iv.* Maintain absolute professional conduct in theatre and in the workplace and refrain from doing anything that may make co-workers unhappy or uncomfortable.

This Code of Conduct represents the principles, values, and norms to be practiced and maintained by all anaesthesia professionals as SASA members. The purpose of the code is to provide a clear framework within which SASA members are expected to conduct themselves. Continuous self and peer assessment against this Code of Conduct serve the best interest of patient and practitioner, contributing towards a healthy and prosperous anaesthesia community in South Africa.