



**MEDICAL SCIENCES COUNCIL
OF NEW ZEALAND**

TE KAUNIHERA PŪTAIAO HAUORA O AOTEAROA

**POLICY AND GUIDELINES:
CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR MEDICAL
LABORATORY SCIENCE AND ANAESTHETIC
TECHNOLOGY PRACTITIONERS IN AOTEAROA
NEW ZEALAND**

JUNE 2020

Policy Title	Code of Ethical Conduct for Medical Laboratory Science and Anaesthetic Technology Practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand
Reference Number	2020-Jun-V2-MSC Code of Ethical Conduct
Scope	The Code of Ethical Conduct applies to all medical laboratory science practitioners and anaesthetic technology practitioners registered with the Medical Sciences Council

Associated Policy Documents	
Social Media and Communications	
Cultural Competence	

Revision Schedule			
Version Number	Version Date	Approved By	Next Review
One	February 2018	Medical Sciences Council	2020
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Introduction

The Medical Sciences Council (the Council) is appointed by the Minister of Health to regulate the practice of medical laboratory science practitioners and anaesthetic technology practitioners under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act).

Protection of the health and safety of the public is the underpinning cornerstone of the Act and the Council has a responsibility to have mechanisms in place to ensure medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners are competent and fit to practise their professions.

Setting and monitoring standards in the interests of the public and the profession is a core responsibility of the Council whose primary concern is public safety. The *Code of Ethical Conduct for Medical Laboratory Science and Anaesthetic Technology Practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand* (the Code) articulates the standards of ethical conduct set by the Council under section 118(i) of the Act.

The Code applies equally to all practitioners registered with the Council including:

- Medical Laboratory Scientists
- Medical Laboratory Technicians
- Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technicians
- Anaesthetic Technicians

Code of Ethical Conduct: Context and Purpose

The Code is a set of standards set out by the Council to describe the conduct or behaviour expected of registered medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners.

The Code provides a framework against which a practitioner's behaviour may be measured. It serves as an educational source for those entering the medical laboratory science or anaesthetic technology professions, as well as a guide for the public as to the conduct expected of this class of health professionals.

It is important for medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners to understand that there is an expectation they will adhere to these standards. The Code applies equally to all medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners who are registered with the Council. Failure to uphold the standards as set out in the Code could lead to a disciplinary investigation.

The Code complements the legal obligations medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology have under the Act, the Health and Disability Commissioner (Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights) Regulations 1996, and the Health Information Privacy Code 1994.

The Code is the overarching document that describes professional conduct and should be read in conjunction with other Council-issued conduct specific documents such as the *Social Media and Communications* policy and guidelines (2020).

The Code acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand. Its principles of partnership, protection, and participation are integral to providing appropriate diagnostic medical laboratory and anaesthesia services for Māori. The Council's *Cultural Competence* policy (2018) provides specific guidelines for medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners in respect of culturally competent practice.

The Code articulates the values fundamental to the practice of medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is not exhaustive and does not aim to provide specific advice on every situation a practitioner may encounter in their professional practice. Medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners are professionally accountable for their practice. This includes taking responsibility for their actions (or inactions) irrespective of advice or

direction given by a manager or professional colleague. The principles encapsulated in this Code should be the basis for making decisions and can be of assistance in situations where there is a conflict of interest or competing professional responsibilities.

Legal Authority of the Code of Ethical Conduct

Setting and monitoring standards in the interests of the public and the profession is a core responsibility of the Council whose primary concern is public safety.

The Code of Ethical Conduct for Medical Laboratory Science and Anaesthetic Technology Practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand (2020) is prescribed by the Council pursuant to section 118(i) of the Act.

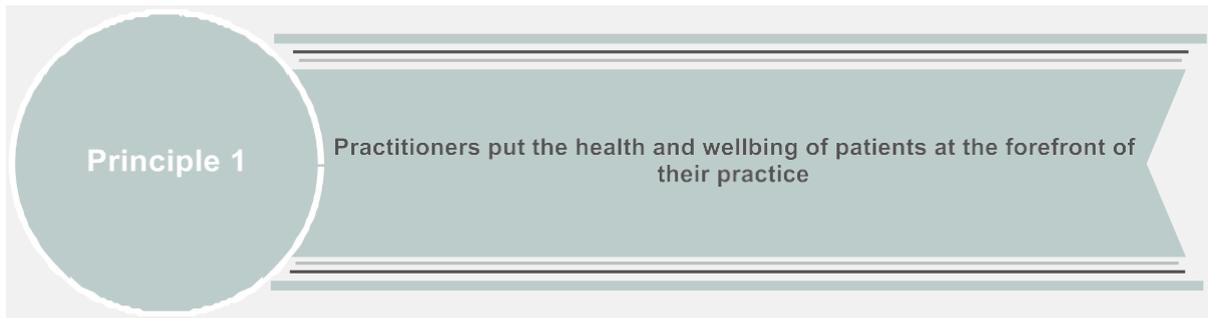
The Code of Ethical Conduct for Medical Laboratory Science and Anaesthetic Technology Practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand (2020) replaces the *Code of Ethics (2018)*. This latest revision more clearly articulates the Council's ethical conduct standards within a principle-based framework which aligns with the ethical conduct guidelines of other New Zealand responsible authorities.

Ethical Conduct Principles and Standards

Ethical conduct for medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners is expressed as a number of principles. Within each principle a set of practice standards provides additional guidance to support that principle. All five principles are of equal importance.

The Council acknowledges that many medical laboratory science practitioners do not usually have a direct interaction with patients when performing their work. However, this does not negate their duty of care in ensuring that they maintain patient confidentiality and treat all of the human samples within the laboratory with the same respect as they would if the interaction was with the patient in their entirety.

Principle 1: Patient Health and Wellbeing



Standards

Medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners act to:

- 1.1 Consider the health and wellbeing of the patient to be their first priority
- 1.2 Ensure their duty of care is not compromised by other interests, managing all conflicts in the interests of the patient
- 1.3 Respect the dignity of the patient in a culturally safe and responsive manner
- 1.4 Maintain a professional relationship with patients and their families and whanau at all times
- 1.5 Promote patient health and wellbeing
- 1.6 Prevent harm to the patient

Principle 2: Patient-Centred Service Delivery



Standards

Medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners act to:

- 2.1 Protect the autonomy, dignity, and privacy of patients at all times
- 2.2 Recognise and respect patients' diversity and do not discriminate against patients and their families and whanau based on ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, political or other opinion, disability, or age
- 2.3 Recognise Maori as tangata whenua of Aotearoa New Zealand and practise to meet their unique health needs
- 2.4 Protect vulnerable patients from exploitation and harm
- 2.5 In accordance with organisational protocol, clearly inform patients of the purpose and nature of the laboratory testing or anaesthetic procedure to enable patients to make an informed choice
- 2.6 Advise the patient when it will be necessary to disclose information to others in the healthcare team
- 2.7 Respect the patient's choice including the right to refuse a test or anaesthesia, care or advice, or to withdraw consent at any time
- 2.8 Respect and safeguard the privacy of all patients' personal information
- 2.9 Treat all patient information as confidential, using it for professional purposes only
- 2.10 Store patient records and results securely
- 2.11 Only access patient information when involved in that patient's care or they have specific permission to do so from the patient or their legal guardian. Patient information accessed for research purposes must have appropriate ethics approval

Principle 3: Collaborative Practice to Optimise Health Outcomes

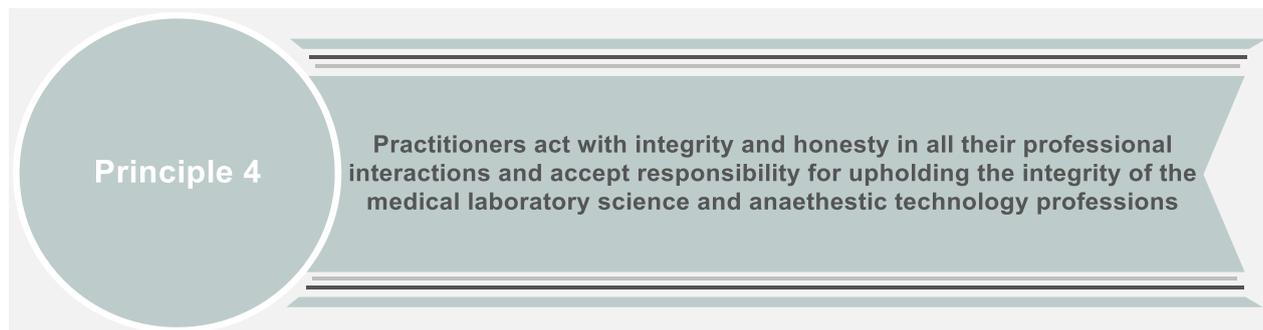


Standards

Medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners act to:

- 3.1 Treat colleagues with respect, working with them in a professional, collaborative, and cooperative manner, recognising that others have a right to hold different opinions
- 3.2 Recognise the expertise and experience of colleagues, respecting the contribution of all practitioners involved in the care of the patient
- 3.3 Exercise independence and professional judgement working within their scope of practice when providing support and advice to other health professionals
- 3.4 Clearly, effectively, and respectfully communicate with colleagues both within the profession and the wider healthcare setting. Communication is timely and accurate and for the benefit of the patient

Principle 4: Honesty and Integrity



Standards

Medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners act to:

- 4.1 Interact with patients and their families and whanau with respect and honesty, including when facing matters of complaint or criticism and uphold their right to make a complaint
- 4.2 Promptly address any compromise of patient safety
- 4.3 Avoid conflicts of interest by not offering, requesting, or accepting incentives, gifts, or hospitality that may be perceived as, and/or result in, a personal benefit
- 4.4 Not enter a business arrangement with a patient or former patient that may result in a personal benefit
- 4.5 Declare and manage any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest in a clear and timely manner
- 4.6 Maintain a professional boundary between themselves and the patient and their families and whanau, or other people nominated by the patient to be involved in their health care
- 4.7 Not engage in sexual or intimate behaviour or relationships with a patient in their care or with those close to the patient
- 4.8 Ensure their practice is not compromised by the use of alcohol and/or drugs
- 4.9 Take responsibility to maintain their personal health and wellbeing, promptly seeking assistance if their health compromises their ability to practise safely
- 4.10 Advise their employer and/or relevant regulatory authority if they believe a colleague's health, conduct, or competence is compromising public safety or bringing the profession into disrepute
- 4.11 Maintain a high standard of professional and personal behaviour which is inclusive of their use of social media and electronic communication

Principle 5: Responsibility for Professional Decisions



Standards

Medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners act to:

- 5.1 Make sound professional judgements within their scope of practice and level of expertise, taking accountability for their professional decisions and actions
- 5.2 Seek collegial advice and assistance when care may be compromised due to a lack of knowledge or skill
- 5.3 Comply with all legal obligations and organisational policies and protocols
- 5.4 Practise in accordance with the competence standards articulated for their scope of practice
- 5.5 Ensure the safety of patients and colleagues through incorporating safety and risk management strategies into their everyday practice
- 5.6 Provide appropriate direction and support for less experienced colleagues and support staff, ensuring they communicate in a clear and unambiguous manner
- 5.7 Ensure the laboratory testing or anaesthesia services they provide are clinically justifiable
- 5.8 Keep clear and accurate records
- 5.9 Actively engage in ongoing learning and ensure their clinical and professional skills are up to date
- 5.10 Reflect on their practice and engage in peer review activities