

The European Register for Specialists in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine: Code of Conduct

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Abstract

The European Communities Confederation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EC4) opened a Register for European Specialists in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine in 1997. The operation of the Register is undertaken by a Register Committee (EC4RC). During the last 6 years more than 1500 specialists in clinical chemistry and laboratory medicine have joined the Register. In this article a Code of Conduct for Registrants which was approved at the EC4 Register Committee meeting in Amsterdam, 8 November 2003 is presented.

Keywords: Code of Conduct; European Register; registration.

Introduction

One of the primary goals of the European Communities Confederation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (EC4) is to stimulate the professional development of the Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine and the maintenance of his²⁾ professional activities at a very high level (1, 2). To further this aim EC4 has set up the European registration system, in which Specialists in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine of all countries affiliated to EC4 can be registered (3–5). One of the conditions for registration is that the Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine undertakes to comply with the EC4 Code of Conduct (5). This Code of Conduct is additional to and does not replace any Code of Conduct to which the registrant might be subject in his own country. The following Code of Conduct has been adopted.

EC4 Code of Conduct

General principles

In all their work Specialists in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine shall conduct themselves in a manner that does not bring into disrepute the discipline and the profession of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine. They shall value integrity, impartiality and respect for persons and evidence and shall seek to establish the highest ethical standards in their work. Because of their concern for valid evidence, they shall ensure that research is carried out in keeping with the highest standards of scientific

²⁾ In this text "his" are taken for "he/she" and "his/her".

integrity. Taking account of their obligations under the law, they shall hold the interest and welfare of those in receipt of their services to be paramount at all times and ensure that the interests of participants in research are safeguarded.

Particular clauses

1. The Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine shall put his knowledge and ability concerning laboratory diagnostics (including the indication for analyses, the reliability of the results, the interpretation of results and scientific research) at the service of diagnosis, therapy and prevention of human and animal diseases.
2. In order to optimally fulfill his duties and in accordance with what is regarded as a good practice in his profession and having regard to the laws of the country in which he is working, the Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine shall
 - a. maintain his competence at the highest level of quality by following all relevant (scientific and practical) developments concerning health care in general and Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine in particular, by participating in relevant training courses and by practising his profession on a regular basis;
 - b. accept assignments only within the area of his competence; beyond this limit, he will seek the collaboration of appropriate experts.
3. The professional integrity and intellectual honesty of the Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine shall be the guarantees of his impartiality of analysis, judgment and consequent decisions.
4. The Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine shall at all times avoid deceit in professional and scientific respect, such as fraud, plagiarism, concealment, improper omission of information, and expressing incorrect or misleading opinions.
5. Without prejudice to legislation on privacy applicable in the country where he is working, the Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine will consider himself bound to respect the confidentiality of information obtained by him in his professional work. The Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine will be on his guard against misuse of such information.
6. The Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine will serve the individual patient to the best of his ability and provide the general public with clear information, only in his field of competence, to enable a proper understanding of health care matters of public interest.
7. The Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine will display his commitment to the profession of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine by taking part in the activities of its associations, notably those which promote the profession and contribute to continuing training of their members.
8. As head and/or member of the team operating in the Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine laboratory, the Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine will, given the specific circumstance of the situation concerned:
 - a. obtain a clear definition of the services required of him and/or his team;
 - b. ensure that all activities in the laboratory are organised and executed as accurately and as quickly as possible;
 - c. protect the safety and well-being of his colleagues and be conscious of nature and the environment;
 - d. show respect for superiors, colleagues and subordinates by taking due account of their requirements and aspirations, provided they conform to the laws and the ethics of their profession;
 - e. strive for a high level of technical achievement which will also contribute to and promote a healthy and agreeable environment for his colleagues.
9. The Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine will not accept any obligation that brings him into conflict with his professional independence. In particular he undertakes:
 - a. not to solicit for, or accept, gifts, pecuniary advantages or benefits from the medical product or diagnostic industry, unless they are of low monetary value and relevant to the practice of the Specialist in Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine;
 - b. not to solicit for, or accept, hospitality at sales promotions, symposia or congresses and the like unless this hospitality is reasonable in level and secondary to the main purpose of the meeting and does not extend to persons other than health professionals;
 - c. not to accept financial support from the industry, directly or indirectly, other than for events for purely professional and scientific purposes; such gifts must always be reasonable in level and remain subordinate to the main scientific objective of the event and must not be extended to persons other than health professionals.

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