

“Nebulous”

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“Nebulous” is the adjective sometimes conjured when the concepts of Ethics are debated... and in recognising that insubstantiality, philosophers, teachers and practitioners have through the ages endeavoured, paradoxically, to define solidly concrete principles in ethical practice. It is as though we all know what is meant... but need the reassurance of having guidelines spelt out.

Carl Sandberg made these somewhat sardonic comments: “I have taken a course in Ethics. I read a thick textbook, heard the class discussions and came out of it saying I had not learnt a thing I did not know before about morals and what is right or wrong in human conduct.”

Be that as it may, the experience of the profession over these many years is conclusive... reinforcement of the principles of Ethics is essential to good practice. To that end the HPCSA has devoted much time and effort to condense otherwise rather tenuous beliefs into those desired guidelines. It is warranted to repeat the Core Ethical Values published by the HPCSA.

These represent all required of a professional to maintain good ethical practice. Juxtaposed below next to each Value is a quotation designed to stimulate pensive meditation on the concept. It may even be that as a result the practice of Good Ethics becomes routine!

1. **Respect for persons:** Healthcare practitioners should respect patients as persons, and acknowledge their intrinsic worth, dignity, and sense of value.

Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do. - Potter Stewart

2. **Best interests or well-being: Non-maleficence:** Healthcare practitioners should not harm or act against the best interests of patients, even when the interests of the latter conflict with their own self-interest.

In law, a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others - in Ethics he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so.
- Immanuel Kant

3. **Best interest or well-being: Beneficence:** Healthcare practitioners should act in the best interests of patients even when the interests of the latter conflict with their own personal self-interest.

The first step in the evolution of Ethics is a sense of solidarity with other human beings. - Albert Schweitzer

4. **Human rights:** Healthcare practitioners should recognise the human rights of all individuals.

Ethics is in origin the art of recommending to others the sacrifices required for cooperation with oneself.

- Bertrand Russel

5. **Autonomy:** Healthcare practitioners should honour the right of patients to self-determination or to make their own informed choices, and to live their lives by their own beliefs, values and preferences

Ethics are more important than Law. - Wynton Marsalis

6. **Integrity:** Healthcare practitioners should incorporate these core ethical values and standards as the foundation for their character and practise as responsible healthcare professionals.

While academic abilities remain integral it is work Ethics that form the soul of the business (or practice).

- Jamshyd Godret

7. **Truthfulness:** Healthcare practitioners should regard the truth and truthfulness as the basis of trust in their professional relationships with patients.

You do not teach morals and Ethics and empathy and kindness in the schools .. you teach them at home and children learn by example. - Judy Sheindlin

8. **Confidentiality:** Healthcare practitioners should treat personal or private information as confidential in professional relationships with patients - unless overriding reasons confer a moral or legal right to disclosure.

In civilised life, Law is on a sea of Ethics. - Earl Warren

9. **Compassion:** Healthcare practitioners should be sensitive to, and empathise with the individual and social needs of their patients and seek to create mechanisms for providing comfort and support where appropriate and possible.

Non violence leads to the highest Ethics, which is the goal of all evolution. Until we stop harming all other living beings we are still savages. - Thomas Edison

10. **Tolerance:** Healthcare practitioners should respect the rights of people to have different ethical beliefs as these may arise from deeply held personal, religious or cultural convictions.

It may not have the virtuous ring of the golden rule but the maxim “Never say Never” is one of the most important in Ethics. - Julian Baggini

11. **Justice:** Healthcare practitioners should treat all individuals and groups in an impartial, fair and just manner.

In just about every area of Society , there is nothing more important than Ethics. - Henry Paulson

12. **Professional competence and self-improvement:**

Healthcare practitioners should continually endeavour to attain the highest level of knowledge and skills required within their area of practice.

Medicine rests on four pillars – philosophy, astronomy, alchemy... and Ethics. - Paracelsus

13. **Community:** Healthcare practitioners should strive to contribute to the betterment of society in accordance with their professional abilities and standing in the community.

There is no question that as science, knowledge and technology advance, we will attempt to make more significant things... and there is no question that we will always have to temper these things with Ethics.

- Benjamin Carson

After that pensive meditation, “Nebulous “ may not yet have retreated into thin air... but at least there may be a greater confidence in the guidelines for enhanced Ethical awareness.

Do the CPD questionnaire on page 588

The Continuous Professional Development (CPD) section provides for twenty general questions and five ethics questions. The section provides members with a valuable source of CPD points whilst also achieving the objective of CPD, to assure continuing education. The importance of continuing professional development should not be underestimated, it is a career-long obligation for practicing professionals.



Online CPD in 6 Easy Steps

- 1 Go to the SADA website www.sada.co.za.
- 2 Log into the 'member only' section with your unique SADA username and password.
- 3 Select the CPD navigation tab.
- 4 Select the questionnaire that you wish to complete.
- 5 Enter your multiple choice answers. Please note that you have two attempts to obtain at least 70%.
- 6 View and print your CPD certificate.