

Australian Thermology Association Inc. Code of Ethics

Preface

Medical and Veterinary Thermology is increasingly being recognised by clinicians as a valid and valuable imaging modality in the academic and clinical communities. As a screening technology, high definition Digital Infrared Thermal Imaging provides objective, clinically valuable data which can significantly contribute to a clinician's diagnostic decision making process.

Definitions

ATA – Australian Thermology Association Inc.

Member – The term “member”, when used singly or in plural, will indicate any practitioner, business or practice which is associated or affiliated with the ATA. Members are bound by the ATA's Constitution, Code of Ethics, Code of Practice, and the ATA Policy Statements, with responsibility and accountability accepted by each member individually.

Client – The term “client”, when used singly or in plural, shall mean the person receiving Thermographic/Thermological services from a member, and extend to include any and all matters arising from thermal imaging activities by ATA members. Because the ATA concerns itself with the practice of both Medical and Veterinary Thermology, those persons who would normally be thought of as patients will for the sake of this document be known as clients. Any member's responsibilities to their clients extend to the client's animals in all applicable ways.

Thermology– the term “Thermology” and its derivatives shall singly or jointly mean the practice, science, art , industry at large, and performance of thermal imaging, thermal image interpreting and the study and research of medical and veterinary thermal imaging and thermal imaging practices.

Practice Guidelines – The principles, rules, laws and policies set out in the ATA's Constitution, Code of Ethics, Code of Practice and ATA Policy Statements.

Grievance and Disciplinary Committee – The mechanism of the ATA for arbitrating and/or administering grievances or disciplinary matters.

PREAMBLE

The ATA Practice Guidelines bind all members to the same standards and measure, and is drafted with the intent of protecting and advancing the cause of both the practitioner and their client. The practitioner of Thermology must recognise their responsibility, not only to their client and their profession, but also to society at large, to other health professionals, and to self. The Australian Thermology Association Inc. is dedicated to the advancement of the practice of Medical and Veterinary Thermal Imaging and Thermology in Australasia and New Zealand. Its perpetual goals include; raising the awareness and utilisation of Thermology and Thermographic imaging in the medical and veterinary fields, promoting Thermological research and case study, encouraging the highest standards of professionalism from ATA members, and providing members with the necessary services and training to remain the pre-eminent Medical and Veterinary Thermological Association in Australia. All members of the ATA have the right to expect that the ethics, professional practices and standards applied to themselves and their qualifications be applied equally and without prejudice or favour to all other members. ATA members have the right to expect that anyone found guilty of breaking the ATA's Practice Guidelines will be censured immediately and fairly, so that by association, their good names not be brought into question. The ATA's Practice Guidelines in general, and this Code of Ethics in particular represent the standards of professional conduct and practice, define the essentials of honourable behaviour, and set parameters and boundaries of professional conduct and practice required of all ATA members and associates of both themselves and their peers.

CODE OF ETHICS

Member's commitment to upholding and supporting this Code of Ethics

1. All ATA members agree to be bound by the letter and spirit of the ATA's Practice Guidelines, and do all that they can to promote and edify the practice of Thermology and the ATA.

General tenet

2. Members shall strive to maintain integrity and honesty in all professional, commercial and private dealings. Members shall adhere to, and be contained by, the ATA Practice Guidelines. Members shall honour any contract or agreement entered into, and execute their responsibilities in all matters to the very best of their ability.

Rules governing dealings with clients and the public

3. Members shall represent themselves honestly with regard to practice and qualification. Members shall not imply, infer or allude that they hold academic, industry or other qualifications or titles unless those qualifications or titles have been conferred by a legitimate academic or industry body. Current financial members in good standing may use the letters "ATA" or the term "member of ATA" in addition to their clinical qualifications. Should a member become non-financial, cease membership or their membership be suspended or terminated through disciplinary action, the non-member, suspended member or ex-member must immediately cease all claims of and to membership or affiliation with the ATA.

4. Members will honestly and forthrightly represent their business and professional practices in all matters in keeping with the ATA's Practice Guidelines. Should a member believe that in their dealings with a client, for whatever reason, they are likely to fail, or are failing to meet the ATA's Practice Guidelines, the member should immediately refer the client concerned to another practitioner, and disqualify themselves from any further dealings with the client.
5. Members shall use, advertise and employ only those skills in which they are competently trained and certified. Members shall continually strive to maintain and increase their knowledge of the science and art of Thermology. A member shall recognise their professional and personal limitations, and when indicated, recommend that additional opinions and services be sought.
6. In providing Thermology services, members will not discriminate against any client on such grounds as age, gender, marital status, medical condition, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, occupation or socio-economic status BUT with these conditions in mind, a member may refuse to accept a client for non-discriminatory and legitimate personal, professional or ethical reasons.
7. Members shall disclose fully all costs and levies with regard to their professional practice that are likely to be made upon a prospective client prior to the prospective client committing to a course of action with the member. Additionally, members shall provide their client with such information as required by them to make informed and educated decisions regarding the members practices, potential benefits of the member's practices, and answer any of their questions to the best of their ability with the intent to encourage and nurture a state of informed consent where practicable.
8. Members shall safeguard the interests and integrity of the individual client. The client shall be treated with compassion, care and respect. Co-operation with the patient should be based upon mutual trust, and where possible, on informed consent. The client, either personally, by assignment, or on behalf of their legal ward or charge has right of access to all relevant case material held by a member. Information which may be thought to be particularly difficult to bear shall be given with care.
9. Members will make and keep client's records such that they are safeguarded from all reasonable potential for disclosure, compromise, destruction or damage. Client records shall be kept in accordance with ATA Practice Guidelines.
10. A member shall not exploit a client sexually, financially, religiously or in any other way. Members recognise and affirm that a client's consent does not absolve them, nor diminish them of these responsibilities. Members shall remain dedicated to providing competent Thermological services with compassion and respect for the client's individuality, rights and dignity.
11. Members shall at all times respect and uphold the client rights of confidentiality, and shall safeguard and maintain the confidences of the client in all matters arising from discussion, consultation or interaction during or subsequent to any supplied Thermology services and further, that the giving or dissemination of information must be grounded in the client's implicit or explicit consent, or in a statute in accordance with the laws of the land.

12. Members shall recommend only those procedures, referrals or courses of action that they honestly and in good faith consider to be potentially and directly beneficial to their clients, and conduct themselves with professional integrity such that they will give a client an honest, unbiased and unfettered professional opinion to the very best of their ability within the limits of their training, and state openly and truthfully to the client when their area of expertise has been, or is being exceeded.
13. Members shall recognise their responsibility to espouse and disseminate the principles and charter of the ATA as described in the ATA's Practice Guidelines when advertising, displaying or by any other means contributing Thermological subject matter and claims to the public. When a member performs otherwise, they will make it clear that their words, claims or actions are those of themselves solely, and not the ATA. It is the individual responsibility of a member to ensure their ability to review and censor any public presentations, advertisements, interviews or the like to avoid misquotation or misrepresentation. Should a member inadvertently find themselves in a position of unwilling participation in said misquotation or misrepresentation, they shall contact the ATA Executive immediately.
14. When dealing with a minor, as defined by the laws of the state or country in question, members shall have a parent or legal guardian present continuously throughout the course of their dealings with the said minor.
15. Members shall refrain from the use, influence or abuse of alcohol, performance impairing pharmaceuticals and/or drugs when acting in any professional capacity. Any members so impaired shall disqualify themselves for a sufficient time to purge all such agents from their body, and be under no further effect or influence from the said agents.
16. Members and affiliates shall refrain from canvassing ATA members for membership of other organisations or professional association. Neither shall ATA members attempt to influence, coerce or entice members of other organisations or professional associations to join the ATA. ATA membership registers are for ATA business only, and shall not be used for distribution of material, opinions or literature by a current or past member or affiliate or any other person or business unless sanctioned by the ATA Executive. This rule must be strictly followed at congress and symposia.

Rules governing dealings with colleagues and collaborators and other health professionals

17. Members shall show respect for the professional practice, reputation and fame of colleagues and collaborators, and assist, advise and guide them to the best of their abilities. Members shall refrain from publicly criticising, belittling or berating a colleague, collaborator or other health professional in anything other than a confidential forum, limiting all professional or personal disagreements private and confidential to the concerned parties and/or the ATA Grievance & Disciplinary Committee.
18. Members shall participate in and subject themselves to the process of peer review. Thermology's privilege of self-regulation is recognised by the ATA as a privilege that can only be maintained through open, ethical practice and self-regulation of its practitioners. Peer review is recognised by the ATA as a vital part of this process.
19. A member who, without animosity, concealed agenda, personal or ulterior motive, sees signs of professional or ethical failings in a colleague or collaborator should first take the matter up directly and privately with the person concerned. The approach should be tactful, factual and without rancour or acrimony. Should this approach not be satisfactory, the concerned member should take the matter to the ATA Grievance and Disciplinary Committee.

20. Members shall seek help from colleagues and/or appropriately qualified professionals for personal problems that adversely affect their performance, objectivity or services to their clients or to the profession and/or public at large.
21. Members shall not make recommendations or endorsements to a client for products, services, referrals or other similar things unless motivated solely by the patient's direct welfare, and not by the real or potential financial, material or other gain of the member.

Rules governing research, reporting and case study

22. Prior to a client's images, case matter or case details being released from those directly and professionally concerned with the client's welfare, an ATA approved format consent form must be signed by, or on behalf of the client by a legal guardian (or the animal's owner or legal agent in the case of an animal). A statement stating that this consent form has been signed shall accompany all subsequent distribution (except advertising) of the client's case material, and the signed consent form shall be kept by the member, and a copy of the consent form lodged with the case material to the ATA Executive.
23. A client's identity shall be protected at all times, and should be made available only to those directly involved with the client's welfare, and the ATA executive when reviewing a case study. Under no circumstances shall the client's identity be shared outside of the prior mentioned parties without the direct and explicit WRITTEN and WITNESSED permission of the client.
24. Those members who offer Thermological reporting services, aside from being certified by the ATA to do so, and performing such services in accordance with the ATA's Practice Guidelines, shall keep confidential and private all case material unless released by the client via the consent mechanisms of clauses 21 and 22, and with due regard of the ATA's Practices Guidelines regarding patient confidentiality and anonymity.
25. A member shall not knowingly purport, propagate or use information which is false, misleading or contravenes the clients rights to confidentiality and anonymity as described in the ATA Practice Guidelines. Should a member inadvertently find that they have used or disseminated misinformation, they should upon notification do their utmost to stop, and where possible, retract any further use of the said information or material.
26. Members conducting research shall not perform any action which will be, or potentially will be harmful to the client. Research protocols and methods should be passed before and approved by the ATA Executive prior to commencement of such work. The research guidelines of the relevant medical authority shall be the governing standard for defining the acceptability of risk to any subject. Any real and potential risks to a subject must be explained in writing, and acknowledged as having been explained to the said subject before the subject participates in the said research, and a copy of their acknowledgement shall be forwarded to the ATA Executive as soon as is practicable.
27. Members preparing cases for study should make themselves aware of, and ensure compliance with the ATA Case Studies Guidelines when preparing and submitting any case for review or publication.

Rules governing advertising and canvassing of Thermology

28. Advertising by any means that has been commissioned by members shall not include any claims which fall outside the parameters set by the ATA Practice Guidelines. Advertising by any means shall not include inferences of benefits other than those specifically endorsed by the ATA Practice Guidelines. Specifically prohibited is advertising that directly or indirectly implies that failing to avail oneself of the advertised service is placing, or likely to place, one's own or another's somatic, mental or social health at risk.
29. Member's advertising shall not include a client's identity, nor inference to identity, nor material adequate to imply the identity of the client.
30. Members shall not knowingly use any material which is copyright (without appropriate permission), material which a client has not consented for use, or any other false or misleading material. Should this occur, the member shall be privately advised of this in the first instance by the member noting the infringement, and if unsuccessful in the initial approach the matter shall be referred to the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee. Should a breach as described above be brought to a member's attention, the member shall immediately cease all further dissemination of such material, and where practicable, recall and destroy any outstanding material which can be practically recalled.

Members contravening the ATA Practice Guidelines

31. The sitting Grievance and Disciplinary Committee (G & D Committee) shall be made up of three knowledgeable professionals, and two current and financial ATA members, as proposed and selected by the ATA executive and affirmed by majority vote at a general meeting of the Association. An additional current and financial ATA member will serve in the capacity of reserve Grievance and Disciplinary Committee member, and in the event that they are called to serve upon the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee, they shall sit with full privileges and powers for that proceeding. Should the event arise where a second Grievance and Disciplinary Committee member is unable to sit on a proceeding, then they will be replaced with the highest ranked ATA Executive member who is not personally or professionally involved in the proceeding. The Grievance and Disciplinary Committee is the highest authority of the ATA in all matters concerning it. The Grievance and Disciplinary Committee may be requested to act by, or on behalf of a member, member's delegation, or the ATA Executive.
32. The ATA Grievance and Disciplinary Committee shall have power to censure, warn, penalise, suspend or expel from membership of the ATA any member on the grounds that their conduct is deemed by the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee to be detrimental to the honour, and or interests of Thermology, the ATA and/or its members, or is calculated to bring the profession or the ATA into disrepute, and that the member has wilfully and/or persistently refused to comply with the ATA Practice Guidelines.
33. An expelled member shall be liable to pay all sums due from them to the ATA at the time of their expulsion, regardless that they have ceased to be a member,
34. Should a member's alleged unethical or inappropriate conduct be brought before the ATA Grievance and Disciplinary Committee, the member alleging such misconduct will be required to present bonafide documentary and/or sworn oral evidence to the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee. Should the allegation be made and considered sufficiently proven by the member raising the matter to require further investigation by the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee, the committee will officially uphold the allegation. The member alleged to have broken the

ATA Practice Guidelines shall be defined as the defendant, and shall be provided with a written copy of the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee's decision to uphold an allegation, as well as transcripts and copies of all evidence, and a detailed mentioning of the area/s in which the ATA Practice Guidelines have allegedly been breached. In a period of no less than two weeks and not more than four from said notification and evidence of the allegation being received by the defendant, the defendant shall be required to present bonafide documentary and/or sworn oral evidence in defence of the mentioned allegations to the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee. If the defendant fails to present such evidence, or fails to appear before the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee, the case will be decided on the basis of the information at hand.

35. Should at least four of the five Grievance and Disciplinary Committee persons find that sufficient evidence has been presented to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that a member has broken the ATA's Practice Guidelines, the defendant will be so advised. The Grievance and Disciplinary Committee shall then consider and unanimously determine the disciplinary action to be taken against the member found guilty, which may include written warning, censure, forced apology, professional requirements, suspension of membership or expulsion of the member from the ATA, or any other disciplinary action that the Committee agrees upon.
36. Those serving on the Grievance and Disciplinary Committee have a professional and moral obligation of impartiality. They must be willing and consider themselves able to set aside any and all personal or professional predisposition to the accused, and prior opinion regarding the members, or the case in question. If any Grievance and Disciplinary Committee member feels that they can not do this they have the moral and ethical responsibility to disqualify themselves from proceedings.

NOTES

This Code of Ethics is not solely the original work of this Association alone, but has been inspired, in some cases, directly, by the Codes of Ethics of the following organisations; Norwegian Medical Association, Canadian Medical Association, American Medical Association, Georgia Professional Standards Commission and Association for Computing machinery.

These organisations have granted the ATA their kind permission to use words inspired by their ethical codes. In a number of instances, parts of the above phraseology has been taken verbatim from these Ethical Codes. In particular, the ATA would like to thank the Norwegian Medical Association's Leader of the Council of Ethics, Dr Reidun Foerde for his enthusiastic encouragement and support in this work. The ATA would be remiss in not acknowledging valuable contribution to the construction of this Code of Ethics from all of these organisations.

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