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ISPOR VISION: ISPOR is the leading global scientific and educational organization for health economics and outcomes research and their use in decision making to improve health.

ISPOR MISSION: to promote health economics and outcomes research excellence to improve decision making for health globally.

1 **ABSTRACT**

2
3 As the leading health economics and outcomes research (HEOR) professional society, ISPOR
4 has a responsibility to establish a uniform, harmonized international code for ethical conduct.
5 ISPOR has updated its [2008 Code of Ethics](#) to reflect the current research environment. This
6 code addresses what is acceptable and unacceptable in research, from inception to the
7 dissemination of its results.

8 There are **nine chapters: 1 – Introduction; 2 – Ethical Principles** (respect, beneficence and
9 justice) with reference to a non-exhaustive compilation of international, regional, and country-
10 specific guidelines and standards; **3 – Scope; 4 - Research Design Considerations** (primary
11 and secondary data related issues, e.g., participant recruitment, population and research
12 setting, sample size /site selection, incentive/honorarium, administration databases,
13 registration of retrospective observational studies and modelling studies); **5 – Data**
14 **Considerations** (privacy and data protection, combining, verification and transparency of
15 research data, scientific misconduct, etc.); **6 – Sponsorship and Relationships with Others**
16 (roles of researchers, sponsors, key opinion leaders and advisory board members, research
17 participants and IRB/EC approval and responsibilities); **7 – Patient Centricity and Patient**
18 **Engagement** (new addition, with explanation and guidance); **8 - Publication and**
19 **Dissemination; and 9 - Conclusion and Limitations.**

20 In addition, the ISPOR Code of Ethics Task Force developed a **64-point summary** that is
21 woven through the first eight chapters. The summary, in its entirety, follows the report (p.23).
22 **A glossary** follows. Additional material can be found in **10 detailed appendices** that include:
23 other relevant codes of ethics, HEOR data sources, data protection considerations, recruitment,
24 safety and reporting, incentive and disclosure requirements, IRB/EC roles and research
25 participant involvement. These are in a separate attachment and/or can be accessed via this
26 link to: <https://www.ispor.org/TaskForces/ISPOR-Code-of-Ethics.asp>

27 **PREAMBLE TO CODE OF ETHICS 2017**

28
29 ISPOR expects its members to adhere to the highest ethical standards because ISPOR's activities and
30 those of its members affect a number of constituencies. These include, but are not limited to:

- 31 • **Patients** - who are ultimately going to experience the greatest impact of the research.
- 32 • **Health care professionals** - who will be treating or not treating patients with therapies,
33 medications and procedures made available or not made available due to healthcare research.
- 34 • **Decision-makers and Payers** - who must decide what is covered so as to optimize 1) the health
35 of patients and 2) resource utilization. This includes:
 - 36 ○ **Government Groups** - who require the results of healthcare research to set policy and
37 prices.
 - 38 ○ **Insurers** - who base health care coverage and/or payment decisions on healthcare
39 research.
 - 40 ○ **Employers** - where healthcare research affects their decisions on providing health
41 benefits.
 - 42 ○ **Administrators and Others**, such as U.S. managed care personnel, - who need results
43 that are both practical and useful.
- 44 • Professional **Outcomes Researchers**
- 45 • **Pharmaceutical Manufacturers** - whose products are often the subject or focus of healthcare
46 research.
- 47 • **Colleagues** - where relationships in conducting research and related activities are particularly
48 critical.
- 49 • **Research employees** – who are concerned about how they are regarded, compensated and
50 treated by the researchers for whom they work
- 51 • **Students** - where respect and appropriate behavior by researcher / employers is important. They
52 are the future of the profession.
- 53 • **Clients** - for whom healthcare research is conducted and researcher relationships are
54 maintained.

55 Through behaviors and practices intended to ensure that healthcare research is designed, conducted,
56 and reported in the most proper and ethical way possible, the Code is a means for the science of health
57 economics and outcomes research to avoid or address credibility challenges based on methodology or
58 bias concerns. By accomplishing this, the various affected constituencies will be able to trust and
59 benefit from research findings as much as possible. The Code also includes some general ethical
60 considerations for the Society.

61 As part of membership, members agree to compliance with ISPOR's Code of Ethics when they join or
62 renew. However, we recognize that members' own organizations may also have ethical codes that
63 should be followed. We also recognize legal considerations may sometimes be important, for example,
64 in relation to employment law. ISPOR may deny or revoke membership, participation in groups or
65 meetings if a member is convicted of a felony or other act or moral turpitude, or upon suspension of a
66 license in a medical or health profession.

67 **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

68
69 As the leading health economics and outcomes research (HEOR) professional society*, ISPOR has a
70 responsibility to establish a uniform, harmonized international set of standards or guidelines for
71 members to follow. Since 1998, an ISPOR Code of Ethics (Code) has been publicized to HEOR

* Pharmacoeconomics is a sub-discipline of health economics. The ISPOR Code of Ethics uses the broader term, health economics, combined with outcomes research to form health economics and outcomes research or HEOR, which has become predominant since ISPOR was founded more than 20 years ago.

72 practitioners. This latest 2107 edition reflects the changing environment in which ISPOR and its
73 membership conduct research.

74
75 Those practicing in the HEOR area have a long history of civil discourse and of developing “good
76 practices” associated with different research designs. Such discussions and the templates developed
77 are ways to reduce the unwarranted variation in professional outputs. Nonetheless, a code of ethics
78 differs from a recommended good or best practice recommendation. It is concerned with principles,
79 such as informed consent, data privacy and equity in healthcare.

80 The core principles embodied in a code of ethics represent values that, on one hand, must not be
81 compromised but, on the other hand, may need to be weighed against one another. They are the
82 guiding standards that are essential for the professionalism of researchers, and the confidence that
83 users and members of other professions can have in HEOR.

84
85 The composition of ISPOR as an organization is an important preface to what is to follow. The global
86 nature of ISPOR sets it apart from many other organizations, with differences in cultures and
87 sometimes, points of view on important issues, such as data privacy. ISPOR members represent
88 multiple disciplines that approach intellectual problems in HEOR with a variety of tools and research
89 designs. They differ in the relationships that they have with different healthcare systems around the
90 globe. They come from diverse employment settings with complex and dynamic structures.

91 As a multidisciplinary, global organization, ISPOR strives for representativeness, transparency, and
92 balance in its activities, thereby, avoiding the appearance of bias or conflict of interest. This includes,
93 but is not limited to, sponsorship of its conferences and other activities, as well as presenters at its
94 conferences. To the extent that it is feasible, ISPOR program planning and selection committees should
95 have a membership representative from all of its major constituencies. ISPOR should also have a Board
96 of Directors that is representative of the various constituencies the Society serves.

97 Furthermore, because significant research funding will come from funders with interests in specific
98 findings (at times commercial, private non-profit, as well as governmental institutions, all have hoped-for
99 outcomes), ISPOR should continue to maintain its own statement of objectivity and autonomy. ISPOR
100 strives to assure that its journal, Value in Health, only publishes papers that have gone through a
101 rigorous peer-review process, and whose authors are listed pursuant to strict criteria.

102
103 Even though economics is a major part of ISPOR’s identity, price and coverage discussions, and similar
104 topics, should not be construed as encompassing ISPOR’s total identity. Rather, ISPOR is conscious
105 of broader ethical issues impacting global and regional medical resource allocation, public health
106 policies and the global healthcare environment, and, on the research side, topics such as patient
107 autonomy, patient outcomes and research conduct. These issues include, but are not limited to:
108 prejudice, equity in healthcare delivery, and access.

109
110 The HEOR profession and research landscape have changed dramatically since the publication of the
111 current Code in 2008¹ (Appendix 1) with the increased collection and use of real world data, rise of
112 health information technology (IT), genomic information, focus on patient centricity, social media, and
113 privacy issues, among others. Furthermore, most professional codes that ISPOR referenced in the past
114 have been updated since last publication. Finally, due to the Society’s immense growth in both
115 membership and geographic coverage, it is important to recognize that there may be conflicting
116 standards of professional conduct in regions of the world that now need to be considered in ISPOR’s
117 Code (version 4).

118
119
120
121
122

Rather than merely reducing unwarranted variance, a code of ethics is intended to promulgate the standards that define what is acceptable and unacceptable in the conduct of all aspects of research, from its inception to the dissemination of its results. This revised Code represents a collective effort to articulate those standards.

123 *Therefore:*

124 - *ISPOR should publicize this Code of Ethics to members and non-members involved in*
125 *pharmacoeconomics and outcomes research.*

126 - *ISPOR should strive for a balance in sponsorship of its conferences and other activities by providing*
127 *criteria for accepting of funding and ensuring full transparency, thereby avoiding the appearance of bias*
128 *or conflict of interest.*

129 - *Because, as a practical matter, most funding will come from different entities, ISPOR should continue*
130 *to maintain its own statement of objectivity and autonomy.*

131 - *ISPOR should strive to assure that its journal, Value in Health, only publishes papers that have gone*
132 *through a rigorous peer-review process.*

133 - *ISPOR should have a Board of Directors that is representative of the various constituencies the*
134 *Society serves.*

135 - *The ISPOR program planning and selection committees should have membership representative of all*
136 *of its major constituencies.*

137 - *Like other professional societies, ISPOR should be conscious of broader ethical issues impacting*
138 *global and regional medical resource allocation, public health policies and the global healthcare*
139 *environment, and research topics such as patient autonomy and research conduct. These issues*
140 *include, but are not limited to: prejudice, equity in healthcare delivery, and access.*

141 **CHAPTER 2: APPLICATION OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES TO THE ISPOR CODE**

142

143 Both the past and the current Code of Ethics draw from international standards and guidelines. A non-
144 exhaustive compilation of international, regional, and country-specific guidelines and standards in the
145 research field including patient engagement resources and publication ethics codes was reviewed and
146 summarized (Appendix 2). This range of standards includes, but is not limited to, the Belmont Report,
147 the International Conference on Harmonization Good Clinical Practice (ICH GCP), the Agency for
148 Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) of the United States, the European Federation of
149 Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA), Guidelines for Research Ethics in Japan, and the
150 Genetic Alliance for patient engagement.

151

152 *Therefore:*

153

154 - *Members should maintain a current knowledge of research practices, with due consideration of those*
155 *practices most relevant to the research that is being done in their own countries.*

156

157 The ISPOR Code closely follows the Belmont Report's three fundamental ethical principles that form the
158 basis for the National Commission's topic-specific reports and the regulations that incorporate its
159 recommendations. Application of these principles requires careful consideration of informed and

160 voluntary consent, risks and benefits, and the selection of participants for research.

161
162 **Respect for persons:** protecting the autonomy of all people; treating them with courtesy and
163 respect; and allowing for informed and voluntary consent. Researchers must be truthful and
164 conduct no deception;

165
166 **Beneficence:** the philosophy of "Do no harm" while maximizing benefits for the research project
167 and minimizing risks to the research participants; and

168
169 **Justice:** ensuring reasonable, non-exploitative, and well-considered procedures are
170 administered fairly — the fair distribution of costs and benefits to potential research participants
171 — and equally.

172
173 ISPOR's Code places additional emphasis on privacy, transparency and civility. This reflects the
174 responsibilities associated with increased data access, the global nature of research, and a broad range
175 of research participants and health care system stakeholders.

176
177 *Therefore:*

178
179 - *Privacy: Members who work in HEOR can be privy to data sources containing protected health*
180 *information (PHI) and other personal data from patients. It is essential that these data are handled with*
181 *utmost care so that patient confidentiality be maintained at all times and no breaches to patient privacy*
182 *occur.*

183 - *Transparency and Integrity: Members must disclose research methods in sufficient detail to permit*
184 *replication. The funding sources should be clearly acknowledged, and any conflicts of interests declared.*
185 *Designing, conducting and especially reporting of the study should be an unbiased reflection of the full*
186 *range of findings generated.*

187 - *Civility: Members' research and discussion should respect the dignity of all participants. Respecting the*
188 *dignity of patients and providers of care is clearly a responsibility. It is also a responsibility to treat fellow*
189 *researchers with respect.*

190 All HEOR studies should respect and protect the human subjects enrolled in those studies, using the
191 principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (1964-2013).² Medical research is subject to ethical standards
192 that promote and ensure respect for all human subjects and protect their health and rights. While the
193 primary purpose of medical research is to generate new knowledge, this goal can never take
194 precedence over the rights and interests of individual research participants.

195 **CHAPTER 3: SCOPE OF THE CODE**

196
197 The ISPOR Code of Ethics is specifically oriented to HEOR. While there is overlap with other fields, our
198 goal is a discipline-oriented Code. It is important to note that the scope of this Code of Ethics does not
199 include ethical considerations related to the use or impact of specific HEOR measures, e.g., potential
200 age-related biases implicit in quality-adjusted life years.

201
202 ISPOR's Code of Ethics covers the conduct of HEOR, but not societal decision making based on HEOR
203 evidence, such as formation of HTA policies. As long as reporting of research is complete and

204 transparent, users of ISPOR members' research can judge use or impact issues independently. For
205 more on these issues, please refer to the Second Panel on Cost Effectiveness in Health and Medicine.³
206

207 **Health economics** is a branch of economics, a discipline that analyzes the economic aspects of all
208 activities designed to improve or maintain health and health care, typically focusing on the costs (inputs)
209 and the consequences (outcomes) of health care interventions. It is concerned with issues related to
210 efficiency, effectiveness, utility, value, quality, ethics and behavior in the production and consumption of
211 health and health care. In broad terms, health economists study the functionality of health care systems
212 and health-affecting behaviors.⁴
213

214 **Outcomes research** is the scientific discipline that evaluates the effect of health care interventions on
215 patient well-being, including clinical, economic and patient-centered outcomes. (ISPOR Book of Terms)
216

217 **Difference and relationship to other research fields**

218 HEOR is closely related to other common research types, such as clinical trial/studies, non-
219 interventional observations, epidemiologic investigations, real world research and market research
220 studies (See Appendix 3 for more information).
221

222 There is no single legal instrument or practical guidance for HEOR. At times, this results in differences
223 in definitions and terms across groups and countries. HEOR can utilize any techniques from the
224 research types mentioned above. The objective is to evaluate the effect of health care interventions on
225 patient well-being, including clinical, economic, and patient-centered, and other relevant outcomes, as
226 well as the functioning of health care systems and health-affecting behaviors.
227

228 *Therefore:*

229
230 *- Members should adhere to the standards of practice for their respective fields of research and identify*
231 *any official guidelines and standards used.*
232

233 This 2017 Code of Ethics covers the following five topics in depth: research design, data
234 considerations, sponsorship, patient engagement, and publication and dissemination with appendices
235 providing ancillary detail to these sections.

236 **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

237
238 HEOR comprises a range of research designs from modeling and retrospective analyses using
239 secondary data to prospective observational and clinical trial designs (See Appendix 4 for more on
240 HEOR data sources). No matter the chosen research design, HEOR is conducted following the core
241 scientific principles of objectivity, transparency, reporting, and quality assurance. It is defined by the
242 objective(s) and the approach, not by the title of the work or the role of those commissioning the work.
243

244 **Primary Data-Related Research Considerations**

245 **Participant Recruitment**

246 ISPOR recognizes that study participants can be recruited via a number of methods.
247

248 *Therefore,*
249
250

251 *From the point of “first contact” researchers should provide potential subjects information about study*
252 *intentions and how the research is funded, as well as all information mandated in their proposals as*
253 *reviewed by institutional review boards (IRBs)/research ethics committees (RECs). (See Appendix 5 for*
254 *more details.)*

256 **Population and Research Setting**

257 Researchers should be specific with regard to population and setting.

258
259 *Therefore,*

260
261 *Members should describe the analytic study population in terms of persons, geography, time period, and*
262 *selection criteria. Members should choose, and obtain permissions to use, a suitable research setting*
263 *and/or existing data or literature to provide information about a specific population to which the study*
264 *results are meant to apply.*

266 **Sample Size, Site Selection**

267 Study sample size should not be larger than statistically necessary. Inadequate sample size (too low)
268 may provide insufficient data to answer the intended research questions or will provide low precision⁵.

269
270 *Therefore,*

271
272 *The number of patients and sites selected for a study should be appropriate to meet the research*
273 *objectives.*

275 **Safety / (Serious) Adverse Events**

276 Safety and adverse event reporting (AER) is an important aspect of all primary research involving
277 patients and medical interventions. The Guideline on good pharmacovigilance practices (GVP)⁶ laid
278 down in the European Union’s Directive 2010/84/EU⁷ applies to investigational medicinal products and
279 non-investigational medicinal products. Similar regulations exist in most other jurisdictions. AER is
280 applicable to some HEOR activities, including clinical trials, primary research, non-interventional
281 studies, market research, and real world research. (For more information, see Appendix 6.)

282
283 Researchers are expected to collect and report adverse events, not only due to regulatory and legal
284 requirements, but also with an understanding of the responsibility to patients and society to
285 comprehensively inform the safety of treatment options.

286
287 A strong international collaborative approach to post-approval surveillance and mandatory adverse
288 reporting is critical. Data collected through social and digital media can be useful, but often do not follow
289 clear pharmacovigilance reporting guidelines because there is no single marketing authorization holder.

290
291 *Therefore:*

292
293 *- The balance of risk or harm to benefit for patients must be considered in HEOR studies, and must be*
294 *communicated to patients via informed consent.*

295 *-Safety and adverse event reporting (AER) are important aspects of all primary research involving*
296 *patients and medical interventions, are applicable to many HEOR activities, and must follow*
297 *international guidelines.*

299 **Incentive/Honorarium**

300 An 'incentive' or honorarium is any benefit given to a participant to encourage participation in a
301 research study. It is commonly used in prospective research and surveys to provide participants with
302 compensation for expenses that may be incurred as part of participating in research. Remuneration is
303 compensation to investigators or consultants for their work or contribution to the study. For specific
304 details on incentives and honoraria, see Appendix 7.

305
306 *Therefore,*

307
308 *Any such proposed payments are, of course, subject to receivers and providers' internal compliance*
309 *guideline and IRB/EC approval, and must be detailed in the research proposal submitted for review.*

310
311 *Researchers need to be diligent in ensuring that the incentive would not induce research participants to*
312 *accept risks they would not be willing to accept if they were offered a smaller or no incentive.*

313
314
315 **Secondary Data-Related Research Considerations:**

316
317 **Administrative Databases and Other Large Datasets**

318 Health care systems generate operational and administrative data that have been used extensively in
319 HEOR studies. HEOR uses a wide range of secondary research sources, including proprietary
320 databases, claims databases, patient registries, routine data sources, systematic reviews, evidence
321 synthesis, social media, Internet of Things (IoT), and other related sources. Data can range from a
322 longitudinal administrative database to a constant flow from IoT and wearable devices, or from
323 controlled clinical trials to unstructured social media feeds.

324
325 Examples include governmental databases like the US's Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services
326 (CMS), Chronic Condition Data Warehouse (CCW), SEER Medicare⁸, the United Kingdom's HES⁹,
327 France's SNIIRAM¹⁰ etc., as well as a number of private databases. Some research involves
328 combining various datasets (e.g. Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey and Medicare Claims Parts A, B,
329 C or D). This diversity in types of datasets presents multiple analytic challenges.

330
331 Because the data were initially collected for another purpose, the key first step for those creating and
332 then using secondary data is to be sure that all intellectual property rights have been respected and that
333 the appropriate permissions have been secured. This is typically done by the database supplier. These
334 permissions include protection of the privacy of the individuals whose characteristics are captured in the
335 database, as well as their informed consent for secondary use of their data, where applicable. Privacy is
336 discussed below.

337
338 The cost of creating databases for secondary use is sometimes borne by governments and the users are
339 charged nominal fees. When private entities build databases for secondary use they will often do so in
340 anticipation of higher user fees that make database creation and distribution a worthwhile commercial
341 endeavor. In either case, the researcher needs to be assured that the database was legally and
342 ethically constructed.

343
344 The vast majority of HEOR studies currently conducted involve the analysis of secondary data.
345 Retrospective observational studies are often conducted using administrative databases or clinical
346 registries. Modeling studies involve the synthesis and analysis of data from several sources, including
347 previously conducted clinical trials, clinical registries, routinely available cost data, and the published

348 literature. The use of secondary data has ethical challenges related to the collection and storage of
349 personal data that are different from those in primary research studies (discussed above), since the data
350 are already anonymized. If there is doubt or moral concern regarding how the secondary data were
351 generated, researchers can consider a due diligence process on the data source before using it, or can
352 use an alternative dataset for the study.

353
354 There are instances where a secondary database may not be considered de-identified. One example is
355 the CMS Chronic Condition Warehouse where age and postal zip code information are included.
356 However, given the large degree of analyst discretion, secondary research studies do raise a number of
357 ethical challenges relating to the avoidance of methodological bias due to the selective use of the
358 available data and the inappropriate use of assumptions regarding such things as missing data, the
359 nature of selection bias, outliers, and so on. Therefore, the most important general ethical principles in
360 the analysis of secondary data are those of 'transparency and reasonableness, i.e., in the absence of
361 consensus on principles, a fair process allows us to agree on what is legitimate and fair.'¹¹

362
363 Therefore,

- 364
365 - *When using secondary data sources initially collected for another purpose, HEOR researchers*
366 *should ensure that intellectual property rights are respected and that all the appropriate*
367 *permissions have been secured.*
- 368
369 - *Given the potential for bias in the analysis of secondary data, the most important general ethical*
370 *principles are those of 'reasonableness' and 'transparency'.*

371 372 373 **Registration of Retrospective Observational Studies**

374 For purposes of this Code, observational studies are defined as analysis of existing datasets.¹²¹³ While
375 the registration of research is more common for clinical trials than for observational studies, Williams et
376 al (2010) argue that 'Much of the rationale for the prospective registration of clinical trials applies to the
377 registration of observational studies'.¹⁴ These obligations include oversight by ethical review boards,
378 informed consent, and public release of the study findings to advance biomedical knowledge. As with
379 clinical trials, incomplete reporting of observational studies has been documented. Some researchers
380 suggest that observational studies are also at increased risk for publication bias or other types of bias,
381 including misrepresentation of pre-specified analyses or disease classification coding. Such biases are a
382 concern because they undermine the validity of observational studies, which are an important
383 component of the medical evidence base in areas of public health, such as detection of rare adverse
384 events.

385
386 Therefore,

- 387
388 - *In those instances in which study methods include analysis of a database, members should describe*
389 *approaches, methods, technologies used to ensure data completeness and validity as well as the*
390 *software package(s) used for data analysis. Members should have the education, training and*
391 *experience to perform the assigned tasks.*
- 392
393 - *While registration of observational studies is generally not required at this time, members are*
394 *encouraged to register such studies prospectively to recognize ethical obligations to patients and to*
395 *avoid the potential for publication bias.*

396
397 - Where a HEOR study is being conducted alongside a clinical study gathering data prospectively (such
398 as a clinical trial or observational study), where possible members should ensure that the clinical study
399 concerned has been registered on ClinicalTrials.gov, Patient Registries (e.g. patientregistry.ahrq.gov),
400 EU electronic Register of Post-Authorisation Studies (EU PAS Register)¹⁵, or equivalent database in
401 their own country.

402
403 ISPOR has published a number of Good Practices for Outcomes Research Reports¹⁶ on conducting
404 outcomes research (clinical, economic or patient-reported) or using outcomes research in health care
405 decisions. While these reports do not address ethical principles directly, the specification of good
406 research methods is an important component of recognizing and eliminating analytic bias.

407 **Modeling Studies**

408
409 In these HEOR studies, secondary data from multiple sources are synthesized using a decision-analytic
410 model. Although this is the main application of modeling, models are sometimes used to extrapolate
411 costs and benefits beyond the end of a clinical trial in a primary research study. The ethical principles
412 discussed here apply equally to both situations.
413

414
415 The general ethical principles of reasonableness and transparency suggest a number of approaches for
416 the conduct of modeling studies. ISPOR with the Society for Medical Decision Making published seven
417 Modeling Good Research Practices Task Force Reports¹⁷. The seventh, on model transparency and
418 validation¹⁸, is the most relevant task force report to the ISPOR Code of Ethics.

419
420 *Therefore,*

421
422 *In conducting modeling studies, members should ensure that the input parameters are estimated based*
423 *on a comprehensive review of the available literature. For the key parameters of the model (e.g., the*
424 *estimate of relative treatment effect) it may be necessary to conduct a full systematic review and meta-*
425 *analysis.*

426
427 However, decision-analytic models typically rely on numerous parameter estimates and it will not be
428 possible to undertake a full systematic review for each. Therefore, members should be transparent about
429 the estimates they use for key parameters, provide the logic they used in selecting particular estimates
430 and explore the impact of their choices through sensitivity analysis. (Sensitivity analysis is widely used in
431 economic evaluation and explores the sensitivity of the study results to the variation in the input
432 parameters.)

433
434 Another important feature of modeling studies is the need to make assumptions, either about the
435 parameter estimates in situations where data are absent or inadequate parameter uncertainty¹⁹, or about
436 model structure (structural uncertainty). The ethical principles of reasonableness and transparency
437 would dictate that any assumptions are clearly explained and justified. In addition, sensitivity analyses
438 should be conducted to explore the importance (in terms of the overall estimate of cost-effectiveness) of
439 the assumptions made.

440
441 Reporting is discussed further in Chapter 8: Publication and Dissemination.

CHAPTER 5: DATA CONSIDERATIONS

This section provides guidance on data considerations in privacy, data protection, combining research data, data validity²⁰, transparency, and scientific misconduct. Members should ensure selection of suitable data sources and adequate sample size to power the question(s) being studied.

Privacy and Data Protection

Protecting participants' privacy is paramount to all forms of clinical research, including HEOR. Regulations such as the EU GDPR²¹ U.S. HIPAA²²), Japan APPI²³ cover the collection of data relating to an identifiable person. For data protection purposes, original holders of personal data can, if contractually bound, transfer personal data to other parties without seeking additional explicit permission of the data subject, as long as the data are being used for a purpose for which the original holder has a lawful basis to process the personal data, including the consent of the data subject. This would need to be an integral part of the informed consent process and would require IRB approval. Details of data processing, security, storing, transfer, and participants' rights to their personal data are detailed in Appendix 8.

Combining Research Data

It is sometimes possible to enrich an existing database by linking additional information that is relevant to the individual patient or the provider. Examples include linking socioeconomic information about the neighborhood surrounding the patient's home or the training history of the specific provider delivering a service. The most effective linkages take full advantage of the identifying characteristics of the patient or the provider. Adding data to an existing database can lead to the subtle erosion of privacy protections. As a result, some database providers insist on limiting potential links. It is critical to protect the commitment to privacy during and after the linkage of additional data. Combining of research data must also have been approved by the IRB.

Data Verification

On occasion, access to these data may be requested by journal reviewers or other researchers wishing to verify the analyses used in the research. It is important that researchers, sponsors and the owners of data recognize that the credibility of the research is lessened if other parties cannot adequately verify it.

This is particularly important if one of the objectives of the research is to inform health care decision makers, who in turn may have to justify the basis on which they made a particular decision. This suggests that the maximum level of access, within the law, should be granted by researchers to anonymized, group-level data and that the contracts for undertaking the research should reflect this consideration.

Therefore:

- When a database (from primary data collection and/or secondary data use) is analyzed, members should provide a description of approaches, tools, and technologies used to store the data and maintain patient privacy/confidentiality and de-identification.

- Personal data should be maintained securely and adequate back-up should be maintained. Data access should be limited to authorized individuals. Control systems should be put in place to ensure authenticity, integrity, and confidentiality of data records when transmitted electronically.

- Researchers should offer the maximum level of access to the anonymized, group-level data used in

491 *their research. If data access is restricted by proprietary or contractual considerations, those*
492 *considerations should be disclosed. If journal reviewers deem it important that statistical review of*
493 *proprietary data be conducted, authors should work with both the data owners and the reviewers to find*
494 *appropriate confidential arrangements for such review whenever feasible.*

496 **Transparency of Research and Data**

497
498 Transparency and replicability are crucial to HEOR. Transparency of data and replicability of results are
499 important issues that pose challenges for authors, reviewers and journals (Cochrane 2015)²⁴. Some
500 journals have explicit data policies; ISPOR's journal *Value in Health* has its own, and ISPOR members
501 – as well as all contributors – are expected to comply with this policy²⁵.

502
503 Nevertheless, it is recognized that for many, if not most reviewers, detailed review of data, programs,
504 and results is not feasible in the context of performing a timely manuscript review. For those who are
505 able to do so, such review is encouraged (see Cochrane 2015). Those who are not able to do so, but
506 have reason to believe that data review is indicated, should inquire with the editor about the possibility
507 of employing an independent statistical reviewer.

508
509 *Therefore:*

510
511 *- Members' hypotheses and research designs should be defined a priori, reported transparently,*
512 *defended relative to alternatives, and planned to recognize and minimize all types of bias.*

513
514 *- Members should fully disclose the identity of sponsors of their research.*

515
516 *- Members should strive to avoid bias and the appearance of bias in conducting research, such as in the*
517 *choice of methods and data inputs, or in the selective reporting of results*

518
519 *- Members should be aware of conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of interest. As a point*
520 *of reference, members should look to the rules on disclosure of potential conflicts of interest laid down*
521 *by major peer-reviewed journals and their own institutions.*

522
523 *- Members should maintain their professional autonomy and objectivity in conducting and reporting, in*
524 *writing or verbally, research findings.*

525
526 *- Methods sections of papers should identify and justify all departures from the a priori analysis plan.*

527
528 For authors, posting of data and programs is good practice and strongly encouraged whenever
529 feasible. Best efforts should be made to make them at least available to reviewers when requested,
530 under confidential arrangements, if necessary. When citing articles in a manuscript, known replicability
531 of those articles' results should be an important consideration. This is particularly true for those that
532 are influential to the manuscript's approach or conclusions.

533
534 Similarly, transparency of data and replicability of research results should be serious considerations for
535 those organizing conferences, discussing papers, serving on awards or selection committees, writing
536 promotion or tenure letters, hiring researchers, etc.

538 **Scientific Misconduct**

539 Scientific misconduct is the violation of standard codes of scholarly conduct and ethical behavior in

540 professional scientific research. According to the ICMJE²⁶, it includes, but is not necessarily limited to:
541 data fabrication, data falsification including deceptive manipulation of images, and plagiarism. See also
542 Chapter 8: Publication and Dissemination.

543
544 The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has developed procedures for editors to follow if there
545 are concerns about the integrity or conduct of work in submitted or published papers or if scientific
546 misconduct is suspected. The procedure emphasizes transparency and accountability throughout the
547 investigation, as well as communication of the whole process. While some may consider failure to
548 publish clinical trial results or other human studies a form of scientific misconduct, each situation of
549 alleged misconduct requires individual assessment by relevant stakeholders.

550
551 *Therefore:*

552
553 *- Members should maintain and protect the integrity of data used in their studies as well as on any*
554 *other aspect of their research, as previously discussed (e.g., respect for patient autonomy such as*
555 *informed consent and data privacy).*

556
557 *- Members should not draw conclusions beyond or inconsistent with what their data would support and*
558 *discuss any limitations in a transparent manner.*

559 **CHAPTER 6: SPONSORSHIP AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS**

560
561 HEOR sponsors range from life sciences industry and health care insurers to provider and patient
562 associations and governmental bodies. However, it is understood that much of the funding available to
563 those who pursue HEOR is provided by bodies with vested interests. A central principle of ISPOR's work
564 is the maintenance of its own objectivity and autonomy from sponsors and commercial interests.

565 **Researchers**

566
567 Those who conduct HEOR should strive to make the nature, scope, and potential of their work clear to
568 sponsors. This not only includes being transparent about the kind of knowledge scientific research can
569 generate but also pertains to the ethical dimension of conducting research. Thus researchers should
570 make it clear to sponsors that all outputs from a research project will include the acknowledgement of all
571 sources of funding as part of a conflict of interest declaration.

572
573 Furthermore, researchers should not only avoid being placed in a position where they experience a
574 conflict of interest, they should also avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, and the possibility that
575 their research will be perceived as biased.

576
577 When engaging with sponsors, researchers should be clear about the need to maintain their professional
578 autonomy over all stages of the research, including its design, conduct, and publication. The autonomy
579 of science contributes to the objectivity of research and, therefore, the authority of the researcher.

580
581 Sponsors should be informed about the opportunities to enter studies into research registries, as well as
582 their rights (or lack thereof) of access to - and ownership of - the data generated or collected as part of
583 the research.

585 When researchers accept sponsorship for a particular project they should be in a position to conduct the
586 research in a manner that is both timely and reflects the required level of scientific quality and
587 methodological rigor.

588
589 HEOR is conducted through close collaboration within teams and between teams, nationally and
590 internationally. The principle of civility is important to ensure that the contribution from all parties is
591 respected and understood. Employees and employers have responsibilities to ensure that reputations,
592 rights, interests of all parties are respected, and that work is done to appropriate standards protecting
593 proprietary information. Particular care should be taken to ensure that there is no perception of actual
594 abuse of the relationship between more senior faculty members and students.

595
596 *Therefore:*

- 597
598 - *Members should respect the reputations and rights of colleagues when engaged in collaborative*
599 *projects.*
600
601 - *Members should treat their research employees with respect and should compensate them fairly for*
602 *their work.*
603
604 - *Members should protect and promote the interests of their employers, provide competent work,*
605 *adhering to these broader guidelines, and protect proprietary information.*
606
607 - *Members should treat students with respect and refrain from exploiting them under any circumstances.*
608

609 **Responsibility to Sponsors**

610 HEOR must not be used to obtain confidential information about competing products and companies
611 from participants who are bound by confidentiality agreements with those companies.

612
613 A researcher may transfer any or all of the researcher's research duties and functions to one or more
614 subcontractors (e.g., CROs). All parties, including subcontractors, should be contractually bound by the
615 same legal and ethical requirements as the main researcher.

616
617 *Therefore:*

- 618
619 - *Members acting as sponsors should allow HEOR researchers at all times to maintain their scientific*
620 *integrity and adhere to relevant standards in conducting and reporting research.*
621
622 - *Members should respect contractual rights when they agree to perform work for hire and should refrain*
623 *from disseminating information which they agreed in advance to keep proprietary.*
624

625 **Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and Advisory Board Members**

626 The role of KOL brings some ISPOR members into close contact with sponsors. As such, we reiterate
627 the centrality of independence, professional autonomy and objectivity to the scientific process, including
628 dissemination of scientific findings.

629
630 *Therefore:*

631

632 - *When acting as KOLs, ISPOR members should be transparent about payments – and any other*
633 *benefits - they receive for acting in this capacity.*

634
635 - *When acting as KOLs, ISPOR members should ensure that the information they are presenting is an*
636 *accurate representation of the facts available. They should respond to questions and queries honestly*
637 *and to the best of their abilities.*

638
639 - *When relying on KOLs, ISPOR members should critically engage with the claims being made. Where*
640 *appropriate they should seek independent corroboration of any factual claims and consider the full range*
641 *of alternatives for themselves.*

642
643 - *When acting as Advisory Board Members, ISPOR members should maintain their independence and*
644 *professional autonomy and act transparently, e.g., declare conflicts of interest.*

645

646 **Responsibility to Research Participants**

647 Researchers should be open and transparent about the aim and objectives of their research, its design,
648 its conduct and its potential consequences or outcomes. They should be clear with participants about
649 what is being asked of them, the right to refuse to participate, and the possibilities of withdrawing at a
650 later date.

651

652 While it might not always be possible, realistic or particularly desirable, researchers should, where
653 appropriate, aim to communicate results of research to participants. Responsibilities to communicate
654 aggregated results to participants should be clearly stated in consent materials or processes.

655

656 Informed consent is the tool to ensure that trial participants understand the context and specifics of
657 clinical trials and/or health care-related research. The informed consent document should be relevant,
658 easily understandable and practical. It should not serve as a theoretical exercise for the researcher. A
659 copy of the signed informed consent must be provided to the participant.

660

661 Ethical review of research proposals should, where appropriate, seek input from individuals or
662 organizations that are able to represent the perspective of patients.

663

664 *Therefore:*

665

666 - *Members should respect the autonomy of research participants in designing and conducting studies,*
667 *specifically, but not limited to, informed consent and data privacy.*

668

669 **IRB/EC Approval**

670 Sponsors should ensure that IRB/EC approval is obtained, as appropriate for the planned research. It is
671 the responsibility of an IRB/EC to ensure that the rights, safety and well-being of those involved in
672 research are protected. Furthermore, it should provide public assurance of that protection by, among
673 other things, reviewing and approving / providing a favorable opinion on the research proposal, the
674 suitability of the investigator, facilities, and the methods and material to be used in obtaining and
675 documenting informed consent of research subjects.

676

677 Requirements of the IRB/EC approval shall depend on the research type, study objectives, interaction
678 with patients and competent authority requirement from different countries. Some recommendations of

679 IRB/EC for different studies appear in Appendix 9. The legal status, composition, function, operations
680 and regulatory requirements pertaining to independent ethics committees may differ among countries.
681
682 Appendix 10 provides for involvement of different participants groups, including healthy volunteers,
683 patients, protected classes, children and vulnerable populations.

684 **CHAPTER 7: PATIENT CENTRICITY AND PATIENT ENGAGEMENT IN RESEARCH**

685
686 The ISPOR Code has been updated to appropriately reflect an increased focus on patient centrality and
687 patient engagement in research by regulatory and health technology assessment (HTA) agencies, policy
688 and decision makers, medical technology manufacturers, research organizations, payers and other
689 stakeholders seeking to understand patients' perspectives and experiences. Organizations support
690 patient centrality in research for a number of reasons from improved research, utility and efficiency of
691 clinical trials to ethical concerns and societal and moral obligations. Furthermore, the involvement of
692 patients or their representatives increases transparency, mutual respect and trust between patients and
693 other stakeholders, including payers and providers.
694

695 Reflecting this evolution in the research environment, as an organization, ISPOR has moved to become
696 more patient-centered. It aligns with ISPOR's members' interests and ISPOR's overall mission to
697 promote health economics and outcomes research excellence to improve decision making for health
698 globally. In 2015, the ISPOR Board of Directors unanimously approved a motion to create a special
699 category of membership within ISPOR for patient representatives to increase patient involvement
700 throughout ISPOR's activities.
701

702 **Understanding Patient Centrality and Patient Engagement**

703 As of 2017, there is no standard definition of patient centrality or patient engagement. Significant
704 variation exists in how different stakeholders and sectors (e.g., regulators, HTA agencies, the
705 pharmaceutical industry, academia, hospitals, and patient organizations) define these terms.
706

707 Patient-centric research should focus on the outcomes that are meaningful and important to patients,
708 with "those outcomes important to patients' survival, function, or feelings as identified or affirmed by the
709 patients themselves, or judged to be in patients' best interests by providers and caregivers when
710 patients cannot report for themselves."²⁷ In order to understand what is important to patients, they must
711 be meaningfully engaged in the research from start to finish. Patient-centered outcomes may or may not
712 be measured by patient self-report²⁸.
713

714 **Operationalizing Patient Centrality and Patient Engagement**

715 *Levels of Patient Engagement*

716 Patient engagement can take many forms. Examples of little or minimal engagement include asking for
717 patient input by gathering patient reactions and regarding patients as study subjects only. It is low
718 intensity engagement with unidirectional communication.
719
720

721 More meaningful levels of engagement include collaboration and bi-directional communication.
722 Examples include patient experts in an advisory role providing *a priori* consultation on study design,
723 procedures and/or outcomes. It is more active, higher-intensity involvement between researcher and
724 consumer or patient representatives. At the high end of the engagement spectrum is shared leadership
725 and partnership, characterized by *a priori*, as well as continuous interaction. At this level, patients have

726 a governance role and are paid investigators or consultants. At the highest level of engagement, the
727 research is patient-driven.

728
729 There are a number of useful frameworks for patient engagement²⁹. They describe (1) patient
730 involvement through interchange between the patient and provider; (2) the stages of research in which
731 patients can be involved; and (3) prioritizing stakeholder engagement in research. They serve as a
732 conceptual basis for patient engagement in medical product development.

733
734 Researchers should also consider the role of families and family caregivers when taking a patient-
735 centered approach. Some patients will be unable to engage due to their age or condition. For some
736 illnesses, there is a significant impact on family life and family caregivers. It is important to include family
737 and caregiver engagement under these circumstances.

738
739 *Timing of Patient Engagement*

740 Patient input is valuable throughout the medical technology's lifecycle from early development through
741 dissemination and post-market surveillance. Early and meaningful involvement of knowledgeable
742 patient representatives and members of patient organizations in setting research questions is highly
743 recommended. Collaboration with patient organizations as part of the research team is also
744 encouraged. To accurately capture patients' values and preferences, patients should be involved in
745 benefit/risk evaluation and related activities throughout the development lifecycle. A planned sequential
746 approach is recommended where feedback from patients is collected and considered³⁰.

747
748 The patient perspective is especially critical in early phases to determine unmet needs and the correct
749 study endpoint(s) for medical label claims.³¹ Patient input at the study design stage can improve site
750 selection and recruitment, (e.g. within indigenous or other historically disadvantaged populations), data
751 collection, and reduce patient burden. Patients (or patient organizations), should actively contribute to
752 trial documents directed at patients to ensure that the content and format are understood.

753
754 Patients and patient organizations can also help in the translation of research results by helping to
755 develop and share lay-person-level summaries of clinical trial results. Finally, patient input is also
756 needed in assessing real-world effectiveness, cost effectiveness, and value. These assessments should
757 be enriched with patient input and guided by patient experiences³².

758
759 *Partnering with Patient Organizations*

760 Collaboration with patient advocacy organizations can be a sound platform for successful patient
761 engagement. Researchers will need to familiarize themselves with the many types of organizations that
762 vary in size and scope (e.g. rare versus high-prevalence diseases; local, regional to international).
763 They have a range of experiences, organizational cultures, governance structures priorities, and ability
764 and capacity to engage.

765
766 *Ethical Considerations*

767 Ethical issues often arise in the patient engagement process³³. Thus, following established protocols
768 and guidelines is recommended. Rare Diseases Europe (EURORDIS) has published a Charter for
769 Collaboration between Sponsors and Patient Organizations for Clinical Trials in Rare Diseases³⁴. The
770 European Patients' Academy (EUPATI) has developed guidance for stakeholders as well³⁵.

771
772 A research contract between patients and research partners is also recommended, even if patients are
773 driving the research themselves. The contract should be respectful and clearly outline roles and
774 deliverables. The contract should recognize patients as experts in their health condition and compensate

775 them appropriately. Further information on written agreements and compensation are available from
776 EUPATI³⁶, PCORI³⁷ and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations
777 (EFPIA)³⁸.

778
779 Researchers should recognize that patients are not trained researchers. Researchers should recognize
780 patients' input in framing research questions and selecting correct methods for study conduct versus
781 driving the research methodological or analytical approach. However, patients' opinions should be
782 included throughout in the research lifecycle.

783
784 *Therefore,*

785
786 *- Stakeholder input, including patients (and representatives of patients such as family caregivers and*
787 *advocacy organizations) in study development, can strengthen the study design and utility:*

788
789 *- Patient input is valuable throughout the research lifecycle from early development to*
790 *dissemination and post-marketing surveillance.*

791
792 *- Researchers should involve patients and their representatives as partners before, during, and*
793 *after conducting research.*

794
795 *- To prevent or address ethical issues arising in the patient engagement process, following established*
796 *protocols and guidelines is recommended.*

797 **CHAPTER 8: PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION**

798
799 The main purpose of publishing, or otherwise disseminating HEOR, is to provide reliable and relevant
800 information related to health care treatments and programs. Therefore, it is important that members
801 submitting manuscripts ensure that these contain no inaccuracies, nor misrepresent the data.
802 Publications can discuss methodological principles, the results of empirical studies, or policy choices.
803 The main users of HEOR include decision makers concerned with population-based choices, health
804 professionals deciding on treatment options, and patients wishing to understand more about the
805 treatments available.

806 **Scientific Misconduct: Plagiarism**

807
808 Plagiarism - the act of passing off as one's own any writing, verbatim or paraphrased, that which was
809 authored by another - is perhaps the most fundamental ethics violation for any author in any field of
810 endeavor. Copyright laws protect writers' words as their legal property. Furthermore, it is extremely
811 important to give comprehensive citations in order to avoid unintentional plagiarism.

812
813 In the health and medical sciences, including HEOR, there is a gray area as to what constitutes
814 plagiarism in the context of an individual author publishing new work that is similar in many respects to
815 prior work on which he or she was one of several authors. On occasion, an author is invited to submit a
816 special article or book chapter due to prior participation in an area of important research with the
817 expectation that their contribution will derive from the prior work. In these instances, it is important that
818 the author double-check to make sure that no written material (or tables or figures) is being replicated
819 from the earlier work without permission from the copyright holder.

820

821 In addition, ISPOR initiated a scientific and health policy group publication rule that “No member of an
822 ISPOR Task Force or Special Interest Group should publish any material from an upcoming report,
823 public presentation, or project deliverable without first consulting the larger group for permission prior to
824 submission and publication.”

825
826 Therefore:

- 827
828 - *Members should not engage in any act of plagiarism, including self-plagiarism.*
829 - *Members should not publish any material relating to the activities of an ISPOR Task Force,
830 Special Interest Group or other ISPOR group at any stage, without first consulting fellow group
831 members / co-authors for permission.*
832

833 See chapter 5 for more on scientific misconduct.
834

835 **Bias**

836 A key concern in publication and dissemination is the possibility of bias, either *publication bias*, whereby
837 studies with negative or inconclusive results tend not to be published, or *analytic bias*, whereby analysts
838 make inappropriate methodological choices that favor one treatment option over another. Bias is a
839 particularly pertinent concern in the field of HEOR, where a high proportion of studies are sponsored and
840 where the analyst often has considerable discretion in the choice of methods and assumptions.
841

842 ISPOR has published more than 50 Good Practices for Outcomes Research Reports on conducting
843 outcomes research (clinical, economic or patient-reported) or using outcomes research in health care
844 decisions. (Please see ISPOR Good Practices for Outcomes Research Index,
845 https://www.ispor.org/workpaper/practices_index.asp) While these reports do not address ethical
846 principles directly, the specification of good research methods is an important component of recognizing
847 and eliminating analytic bias.
848

849 The main method of disseminating HEOR is through peer-reviewed journals. Therefore, a major source
850 of ethical principles and good publishing practice is the recommendations of the ICMJE³⁹, which have
851 the endorsement and support of all the major clinical and health services research journals (ICMJE,
852 2016). The recommendations for ISPOR members in this chapter are consistent with those of the ICMJE
853 but offer more details relevant to this particular field of research.
854

855 **Freedom to Publish the Findings without Restrictions**

856 Both peer-reviewed journals and the users of HEOR take an interest in the nature of the relationship
857 between the researcher and the sponsor, as this is one indicator of the likelihood of any bias in the
858 research. This relationship is usually expressed through a contract between the researcher and sponsor.
859 In negotiating the contract, researchers should pay particular attention to the need for transparency
860 throughout the research process and the freedom to publish the findings without restrictions⁴⁰.
861

862 Members should seek to establish, in advance, a clear agreement with the sponsor on whether the
863 results of a given piece of work can be published or presented. This could include statements on
864 whether the sponsor has a right to review or approve any manuscript prior to publication and on which
865 party has the intellectual property rights in the outputs of the research. It is important to specify
866 publication rights, one way or the other, in the contract. University contracts usually do specify and
867 generally a university will not sign off on a contract that allows the sponsor to disallow publication. Prior
868 review and comment is generally accepted by universities. Individual researchers or vendors may be
869 willing to do “work for hire” which does not guarantee publication rights; in such a case, if anything is

published, it should be disclosed that publication rights were not guaranteed in advance. Considerations where preventing publication would not be acceptable in any case could include revelations of safety issues, in which failure to disclose could result in a public health hazard.

Therefore:

- In the case of sponsored research, members should agree to a contract that clearly sets out their rights, and those of the sponsor (e.g., intellectual property rights and rights to publish), in the conduct and reporting of the study. The nature of this agreement should be summarized in the published paper.

Transparency in Reporting

Transparency in reporting is also essential to reduce the possibility of bias in research. Several reporting guidelines exist, including those developed by CONSORT for clinical research (including quality of life measurement)^{41 42 43 44} and STROBE for observational studies⁴⁵. High-quality reporting also aids the peer-review process, although journal editors and reviewers may also ask for access to the original data, the statistical analyses performed, or the models used in the research.

Authors of publications should endeavor to respond as fully as possible to requests for additional information on their data or methods. Offering full access to data, analyses and models represents a level of transparency that can enhance the credibility of the research. However, access to some data may be restricted by contractual obligations, proprietary reasons, IRB restrictions or the general need to protect the privacy of participants in the research. Also allowing access to executable electronic copies of models has raised specific concerns on the part of researchers who fear that their intellectual capital could be undermined if the model were copied⁴⁶.

On the other hand, peer reviewers and journal editors may feel that access is required in order to adequately verify the quality of the research. Researchers should remember that peer reviewers are already bound by confidentiality agreements, and some journals have strengthened these in order to reassure authors that the intellectual capital in their work will be protected.

It was mentioned in Chapter 4 that the registration of the clinical study alongside which a HEOR is conducted can be a key element in ensuring the transparency of research, therefore:

- Where a HEOR study is being conducted alongside a clinical study gathering data prospectively (such as a clinical trial or observational study) members should report whether the clinical study concerned has been registered on ClinicalTrials.gov, Registry of Patient Registries (patientregistry.ahrq.gov), ENCePP e-Register of Studies⁴⁷, or equivalent databases of studies in their own country or region.

Where research is disseminated in non-peer-reviewed journals or through electronic media, such as websites or social media, the scrutiny of peer review does not generally exist (although comments sections on web posts might be considered an informal peer review). The way in which researchers should approach this depends on whether they are purporting to report fact or opinion—unless it is clear that mere opinions are being expressed, authors should be willing to offer the same level of access to underlying data and/or analyses as they would to journal peer reviewers.

Study Authorship

The named authors formally take responsibility for the report of the research. Therefore, some study users view the identity of the authors as one indicator of the likely quality and reliability of the research, although when acting as editors or reviewers of papers for journals, ISPOR members should make

919 judgments based solely on the quality of the research, not the identity or affiliations of the authors (if
920 these are not already anonymized by the journal concerned)

921
922 Authorship also provides recognition of the researchers' contribution. Therefore, it is wrong to include an
923 author who did not make a substantive contribution due to their name recognition and perceived status.
924 Similarly, it is wrong to exclude an individual who had made a substantial contribution because of their
925 affiliation. Criteria include:

- 926
927 1) Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis or
928 interpretation of data for the work; AND
929 2) Drafting of the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
930 3) Final approval of the version to be published; AND
931 4) Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the
932 accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved⁴⁸

933
934 Other individuals participating in the research, but not qualifying as authors, should be acknowledged.
935

936
937 In addition, the ICMJE and many peer-reviewed journals require the corresponding author to confirm
938 that these conditions have been met. Specific journals such as JAMA have guidelines, and these are
939 very useful generally.

940
941 Journals now generally require individual authors of a manuscript to certify by signature that they have
942 contributed sufficiently to be listed as an author. However, journals vary in their requirements for
943 certification so ISPOR, as an organization, encourages its members to adhere to fair and equitable
944 requirements for authorship and to respect their colleagues in the process.

945
946 **Financial Disclosure, Conflicts of Interest and Past Work Relationships**

947 Another important condition of authorship is that individuals disclose any financial and/or other
948 relationships that may be perceived to be conflicts of interest with respect to the work being reported. In
949 the field of HEOR, it is particularly important to disclose any present or past relationships with the
950 manufacturers of any products referred to in the research or any competitor products.

951
952 In reporting past relationships, many researchers will have a large number of such relationships
953 stretching back over a number of years. A common time frame is to report any relationships within the
954 past three years⁴⁹, but different journals have different guidelines. The ICMJE specifies no limit.

955
956 *Therefore:*

957
958 - *Members should endeavor to publicly disseminate their work and to publish it in peer-reviewed journals*
959 *when possible.*

960
961 - *Members should work, where appropriate, to encourage the establishment and/or maintenance of an*
962 *appropriate peer review process that examines the quality of the methodological rigor independently of*
963 *the organization for which the individual works.*

964
965 - *Members serving as peer reviewers for journals should respect the confidentiality of the material under*
966 *review and understand that their access to it is solely for the purposes of performing the review.*

967

- 968 - *The description of study methods (design, study setting, data sources and input values, sampling and*
969 *analyses) should be complete and transparent enough for a suitably trained researcher to replicate the*
970 *study.*
- 971
- 972 - *Methods sections of papers should give thorough, transparent attention to all measures taken to*
973 *minimize bias.*
- 974
- 975 - *Where allowable by law and IRB approval, members should respond favorably to requests from journal*
976 *editors and reviewers for access to original data and electronic copies of models where this access is*
977 *required to ensure a rigorous peer review process and where commercial-in-confidence arrangements*
978 *can be maintained.*
- 979
- 980 - *In those instances in which study methods include analysis of a database (retrospective or*
981 *prospective), members should describe approaches, methods, technologies used to ensure data*
982 *completeness, and validity as well as the software package(s) used for data analysis. Members should*
983 *have the education, training, and experience to perform the assigned tasks.*
- 984
- 985 - *In those instances in which sharing of model(s) and/or data source(s) is not feasible, members should*
986 *be encouraged to provide supporting material demonstrating model and/or data validity, such as range*
987 *and logic checks, and assessment of data completeness.*
- 988
- 989 - *If submitting to a journal or publication that does not have peer review, or disseminating a report via*
990 *electronic media, members should avoid the inclusion of material that is overly technical and/or cannot*
991 *be supported by basic article references, or make it clear that the article represents the author's own*
992 *opinion. If research is being reported, then access to the underlying data and/or analyses should be*
993 *offered in the same manner as would be done under a peer-review process.*
- 994
- 995 - *Members should never intentionally plagiarize another author's work and if publishing work similar to*
996 *anything jointly authored with others should ensure that no replication of the prior work was*
997 *unintentionally done.*

998 **CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS**

999

1000 ISPOR recognizes that within the fast changing climates of different health care systems, it is difficult to
1001 address all ethical issues HEOR practitioners face. New data sources might emerge; genomic
1002 sequencing and Internet of Things might make privacy almost impossible to protect; and open data
1003 might pose new challenges to intellectual property rights.

1004

1005 Nevertheless, ISPOR recognizes that its activities and those of its members affect a number of
1006 constituencies, and there may be conflicting standards of professional conduct. Patients as stakeholders
1007 and patient engagement are two relatively new concepts impacting health care research, especially in
1008 Europe and North America. While the impact of this much needed social movement is slowly starting to
1009 become clearer, its relevance and impact on ISPOR members, especially researchers, requires further
1010 elucidation and guidance. This Code, however, cuts across virtually all areas of research and
1011 dissemination and is meant to be a comprehensive guide for HEOR researchers.

1012

1013

1014

DO NOT COPY

1016
1017 **ISPOR CODE OF ETHICS 2017 SUMMARY POINTS**
1018

1019 **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**
1020

- 1021 1. *ISPOR should publicize this Code of Ethics to members and non-members involved in*
1022 *pharmacoeconomics and outcomes research.*
- 1023 2. *ISPOR should strive for a balance in sponsorship of its conferences and other activities*
1024 *by providing decision criteria for accepting of funding and ensuring full transparency,*
1025 *thereby avoiding the appearance of bias or conflict of interest.*
- 1026 3. *Because, as a practical matter, most funding will come from different entities, ISPOR*
1027 *should continue to maintain its own statement of objectivity and autonomy.*
- 1028 4. *ISPOR should strive to assure that its journal, Value in Health, only publishes papers*
1029 *that have gone through a rigorous peer- review process.*
- 1030 5. *ISPOR should have a Board of Directors that is representative of the various*
1031 *constituencies the Society serves.*
- 1032 6. *The ISPOR program planning and selection committees should have membership*
1033 *representative of all of its major constituencies.*
- 1034 7. *Like other professional societies, ISPOR should be conscious of broader ethical issues*
1035 *impacting on global and regional medical resource allocation, public health policies and*
1036 *the global healthcare environment, and the research side on topics such as patient*
1037 *autonomy and research conduct. These issues include but are not limited to: prejudice,*
1038 *equity in healthcare delivery and access.*

1039
1040 **CHAPTER 2: APPLICATION OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES TO THE ISPOR CODE**
1041

- 1042 8. *Members should maintain a current knowledge of research practices, with due*
1043 *consideration of those practices most relevant to the research that is being done in their*
1044 *own countries.*
- 1045 9. *Privacy: Members who work in HEOR can be privy to data sources containing protected*
1046 *health information (PHI) and other personal data from patients. It is essential that these*
1047 *data are handled with utmost care so that patient confidentiality can be maintained at all*
1048 *times and no breaches to patient privacy occur.*
- 1049 10. *Transparency and Integrity: Members must disclose research methods in sufficient detail*
1050 *to permit replication. The funding sources should be clearly acknowledged, and any*
1051 *conflicts of interests declared. Designing, conducting and especially reporting of the*
1052 *study should be an unbiased reflection of the full range of findings generated.*

1053 *11. Civility: Members' research and discussion should respect the dignity of all participants,*
1054 *including patients and providers of care. It is also a responsibility to treat fellow*
1055 *researchers with respect.*

1056
1057 **CHAPTER 3: SCOPE OF THE CODE**

1058
1059 *12. Members should adhere to the standards of practice for their respective fields of*
1060 *research and identify any official guidelines and standards used.*

1061
1062 **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

1063
1064 *13. When recruiting patients for a study, from the point of "first contact" researchers should*
1065 *be open about their intentions and how the research is funded, and should provide*
1066 *potential subjects with the information mandated in their proposals as reviewed by*
1067 *research ethics committees.*

1068
1069 *14. Members should describe the analytic population in terms of persons, geography, time*
1070 *period and selection criteria. Members should choose, and obtain permissions to use a*
1071 *suitable research setting and/or existing data or literature to provide information about a*
1072 *specific patient population to which the study results are meant to apply. The number of*
sites selected for a study should be appropriate to meet the research objectives.

1073
1074 *15. Safety and adverse events reporting (AER) are important aspects of all primary research*
1075 *involving patients and medical interventions, are applicable to many HEOR activities,*
and must follow international guidelines.

1076
1077 *16. The balance of risk or harm to benefit for patients must be considered in HEOR studies,*
and must be communicated to patients via informed consent.

1078
1079 *17. While an 'incentive', honorarium or remuneration is often necessary to recruit participants*
1080 *into a research study, researchers must ensure that the incentive would not induce*
1081 *participants to accept risks they would not be willing to accept if they were offered a*
1082 *smaller or no incentive. Any such proposed payments are subject to providers' internal*
1083 *compliance guideline and IRB/EC approval, and must be detailed in the research*
proposal submitted for review.

1084
1085 *18. When using secondary data sources initially collected for another purpose, HEOR*
1086 *researchers should ensure that intellectual property rights are respected and that all the*
appropriate permissions have been secured.

1087
1088 *19. Given the potential for bias in the analysis of secondary data, the most important general*
ethical principles are those of 'reasonableness' and 'transparency'.

1089
1090 *20. While registration of observational studies is generally not required at this time, members*
1091 *are encouraged to register such studies prospectively to recognize ethical obligations to*
patients and to avoid the potential for publication bias.

1092 *21. When study methods include analysis of a database, members should describe*
1093 *approaches, methods, technologies used to ensure data completeness and validity as*
1094 *well as the software package(s) used for data analysis. Members should have the*
1095 *education, training and experience to perform the assigned tasks.*

1096 *22. Where a HEOR study is being conducted alongside a clinical study gathering data*
1097 *prospectively (such as a clinical trial or observational study), where possible members*
1098 *should ensure that the clinical study concerned has been registered on*
1099 *ClinicalTrials.gov, Registry of Patient Registries (patientregistry.ahrq.gov), ENCePP*
1100 *(European Network of Centres for Pharmacoepidemiology and Pharmacovigilance) e-*
1101 *Register of Studies[†], or equivalent database in their own country.*

1102 *23. In conducting modeling studies, members should: ensure that the input parameters are*
1103 *estimated based on a comprehensive review of the available literature; be transparent*
1104 *about the estimates they use for key parameters; provide the logic they used in selecting*
1105 *particular estimates; and explore the impact of their choices through sensitivity analysis.*

1106 **CHAPTER 5: DATA CONSIDERATIONS**

1107
1108
1109 *24. When a database (from primary data collection and/or secondary data use) is analyzed,*
1110 *members should provide a description of approaches, tools and technologies used to*
1111 *store the data and maintain patient privacy/confidentiality and de-identification.*

1112 *25. Personal data should be maintained securely and adequate back-up should be*
1113 *maintained. Data access should be limited to authorized individuals. Control systems*
1114 *should be put in place to ensure authenticity, integrity and confidentiality of data records*
1115 *when transmitted electronically.*

1116 *26. Researchers should offer the maximum level of access to the anonymized, group-level*
1117 *data used in their research. If data access is restricted by proprietary or contractual*
1118 *considerations, those considerations should be disclosed. If journal reviewers deem it*
1119 *important that statistical review of proprietary data be conducted, authors should work*
1120 *with both the data owners and the reviewers to find appropriate confidential*
1121 *arrangements for such review whenever feasible.*

1122 *27. Members' hypotheses and research designs should be defined a priori, reported*
1123 *transparently, defended relative to alternatives, and planned to recognize and minimize*
1124 *all types of bias.*

1125 *28. Members should fully disclose the identity of sponsors of their research.*

1126 *29. Members should strive to avoid bias and the appearance of bias in conducting research,*
1127 *such as in the choice of methods and data inputs, or in the selective reporting of results*

1128 *30. Members should be aware of conflicts of interest and the appearance of conflicts of*

[†] encepp.eu/encepp/studiesDatabase.jsp

1129 *interest. As a point of reference, members should look to the rules on disclosure of*
1130 *potential conflicts of interest laid down by major peer-reviewed journals and their own*
1131 *institutions.*

1132 *31. Members should maintain their professional autonomy and objectivity in conducting and*
1133 *reporting, in writing or verbally, research findings.*

1134 *32. Methods sections of papers should identify and justify all departures from the a priori*
1135 *analysis plan.*

1136 *33. Members should maintain and protect the integrity of data used in their studies as well*
1137 *as on any other aspect of their research, as previously discussed (e.g. respect for*
1138 *patient autonomy such as informed consent and data privacy).*

1139 *34. Members should not draw conclusions beyond or inconsistent with what their data would*
1140 *support and discuss any limitations in a transparent manner.*

1141
1142 **CHAPTER 6: SPONSORSHIP AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS**
1143

1144 *35. Members should respect the reputations and rights of colleagues when engaged in*
1145 *collaborative projects*

1146 *36. Members should treat their research employees with respect and should compensate*
1147 *them fairly for their work.*

1148 *37. Members should protect and promote the interests of their employers, provide competent*
1149 *work, adhering to these broader guidelines, and protect proprietary information.*

1150 *38. Members should treat students with respect and refrain from exploiting them under any*
1151 *circumstances.*

1152 *39. Members acting as sponsors should allow HEOR researchers at all times to maintain*
1153 *their scientific integrity and adhere to relevant standards in conducting and reporting*
1154 *research.*

1155 *40. Members should respect contractual rights when they agree to perform work for hire and*
1156 *should refrain from disseminating information which they agreed in advance to keep*
1157 *proprietary.*

1158 *41. When acting as key opinion leaders (KOLs), ISPOR members should be transparent*
1159 *about payments – and any other benefits - they receive for acting in this capacity.*

1160 *42. When acting as KOLs, ISPOR members should ensure that the information they are*
1161 *presenting is an accurate representation of the facts available. They should respond to*
1162 *questions and queries honestly and to the best of their abilities.*

1163 *43. When relying on KOLs, ISPOR members should critically engage with the claims being*
1164 *made. Where appropriate they should seek independent corroboration of any factual*
1165 *claims and consider the full range of alternatives for themselves.*

1166 44. *When acting as Advisory Board Members, ISPOR members should maintain their*
1167 *independence and professional autonomy and act transparently, e.g., declare conflicts of*
1168 *interest.*

1169 45. *Members should respect the autonomy of research participants in designing and*
1170 *conducting studies, specifically but not limited to informed consent and data privacy.*

1171
1172 **CHAPTER 7: PATIENT ENGAGEMENT**

1173
1174 46. *Stakeholder input including patients (and representatives of patients such as family*
1175 *caregivers and advocacy organizations) in study development, can strengthen the study*
1176 *design and utility.*

1177
1178 a. *Patient input is valuable throughout the medical product lifecycle from early*
1179 *development to dissemination and post-marketing surveillance.*

1180
1181 b. *Researchers should involve patients and their representatives as partners before,*
1182 *during, and after conducting research.*

1183
1184 47. *To prevent or address ethical issues arising in the patient engagement process, following*
1185 *established protocols and guidelines is recommended.*

1186
1187 **CHAPTER 8: PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION**

1188
1189 48. *Members should not engage in any act of plagiarism. Members should not publish any*
1190 *material relating to the activities of an ISPOR Task Force, Special interest Group or other*
1191 *ISPOR group without first consulting fellow group members for permission*

1192 49. *In the case of sponsored research, members should agree to a contract that clearly sets*
1193 *out their rights, and those of the sponsor (e.g. intellectual property rights and rights to*
1194 *publish), in the conduct and reporting of the study. The nature of this agreement should*
1195 *be summarized in the published paper.*

1196 50. *Where a HEOR study is being conducted alongside a clinical study gathering data*
1197 *prospectively (such as a clinical trial or observational study), members should report*
1198 *whether the clinical study concerned has been registered on ClinicalTrials.gov, Registry*
1199 *of Patient Registries (patientregistry.ahrq.gov), ENCePP e-Register of Studies, or*
1200 *equivalent database in their own country.*

1201 51. *Members should endeavor to publicly disseminate their work and to publish it in peer-*
1202 *reviewed journals when possible.*

1203 52. *Members should work, where appropriate, to encourage the establishment and/or*
1204 *maintenance of an appropriate peer review process that examines the quality of the*
1205 *methodological rigor independently of the organization for which the individual works.*

- 1206 *53. Members serving as peer reviewers for journals should respect the confidentiality of the*
1207 *material under review and understand that their access to it is solely for the purposes of*
1208 *performing the review.*
- 1209 *54. The description of study methods (design, study setting, data sources and input values,*
1210 *sampling and analyses) should be complete and transparent enough for a suitably*
1211 *trained researcher to replicate the study.*
- 1212 *55. Methods sections of papers should give thorough, transparent attention to all measures*
1213 *taken to minimize bias.*
- 1214 *56. Members should respond favorably to requests from journal editors and reviewers for*
1215 *access to original data and electronic copies of models where this access is required to*
1216 *ensure a rigorous peer review process and where commercial-in-confidence*
1217 *arrangements can be maintained.*
- 1218 *57. In those instances in which study methods include analysis of a database (retrospective*
1219 *or prospective), members should describe approaches, methods, technologies used to*
1220 *ensure data completeness, and validity as well as the software package(s) used for data*
1221 *analysis. Members should have the education, training and experience to perform the*
1222 *assigned tasks.*
- 1223 *58. In those instances in which sharing of model(s) and/or data source(s) is not feasible,*
1224 *members should be encouraged to provide supporting material demonstrating model*
1225 *and/or data validity, such as range and logic checks, and assessment of data*
1226 *completeness.*
- 1227 *59. If submitting to a journal or publication that does not have peer review, or disseminating*
1228 *a report via electronic media, members should avoid the inclusion of material that is*
1229 *overly technical and/or cannot be supported by basic article references, or make it clear*
1230 *that the article represents the author's own opinion. If research is being reported, then*
1231 *access to the underlying data and/or analyses should be offered in the same manner as*
1232 *would be done under a peer-review process.*
- 1233 *60. Members should discourage, where possible, listing of an author on any publication*
1234 *where the individual has not performed substantial work. As a point of reference,*
1235 *members should look to the checklists provided by major peer reviewed journals to*
1236 *assist them in deciding inclusion of authors.*
- 1237
1238 *61. Any contributor to a report or publication should disclose any current or past*
1239 *relationships with a company or competitor of any product discussed in the work.*
- 1240 *62. Members should never intentionally plagiarize another author's work and if publishing*
1241 *work similar to anything jointly authored with others should ensure that no replication of*
1242 *the prior work was unintentionally done.*

1243 **CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

1244 No summary points included

ISPOR CODE OF ETHICS 2017 GLOSSARY

- 1245
1246
1247 **AER** – Adverse Event Reporting
1248 **AHRQ** – Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
1249 **APPI** – The Act on the Protection of Personal Information
1250 **CMS** – Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services
1251 **CONSORT** - Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials
1252 **COPE** – Committee on Publication Ethics
1253 **CRO** – Clinical Research Organization
1254 **EC** – Ethics Committee or Research Ethics Committee
1255 **EFPIA** – European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations
1256 **ENCePP** – European Network of Centres for Pharmacoepidemiology and Pharmacovigilance
1257 **GDPR** – General Data Protection Regulation
1258 **HEOR** – Health Economics and Outcomes Research
1259 **HIPAA** – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
1260 **HTA** – Health Technology Assessment
1261 **ICH GCP** – International Conference on Harmonization Good Clinical Practice
1262 **ICJME** – International Committee of Medical Journal Editors
1263 **IoT** – Internet of Things
1264 **IRB** – Internal Review Board
1265 **KOL** – Key Opinion Leader
1266 **PHI** – Protected Health Information
1267 **REC** – Ethics Committee or Research Ethics Committee
1268 **SEER** – Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results
1269 **SNIIRAM** – Systeme National d’Information Inter Regimes de l’Assurance Maladie
1270 **STROBE** - STrengthening the Reporting of OBServational studies in Epidemiology.
1271 **TPP** – Target Patient Profile
1272 **UK HES** – United Kingdom Hospital Episode Statistics
1273

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