

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

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This article describes some common ethical challenges in medical practice, namely, conflicts between the interests of patients and those of other individuals and organizations. The first responsibility of physicians is to their patients but they also have other responsibilities. Sometimes there is no conflict between these different responsibilities; sometimes there is a conflict but it is easy to resolve; and sometimes it is not at all clear how to resolve a conflict. The issues of patient confidentiality, clinical research and commercial relationships are used to illustrate how physicians can identify and deal with conflicting responsibilities.