

Intro

Welcome, and thank you for joining us for this podcast brought to you by the American heart association.

This podcast is part of the series focused on the consensus conference report on professionalism and ethics released jointly by the American Heart Association and the American College of Cardiology.

The goal of this series is to amplify the reports details and actionable steps for healthcare professionals, researchers and educators.

Mariell Jessup:

Hi. I'm Mariell Jessup, Chief Science and Medical Officer of the AHA. This is your 3 minutes or less power bite: Building on our long history of collaboration to formally address issues of medical ethics and professionalism, the AHA and ACC convene the 2020 consensus conference to update guidance from the 2004 consensus and to address important and timely topics including diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, racial, ethnic, and gender inequalities, clinician wellbeing, data privacy, social justice, and modern healthcare delivery systems.

The joint AHA-ACC effort is based on the common ground of understanding put forward by prior conferences, including the obligation of medicine's social contract, the tenants of medical ethics and the principles and of medical professionalism. With the purpose of making specific recommendations to address contemporary issues. This has been a tumultuous year and social equity, social justice, and the rights of the patients, the rights of citizens and the behavior of professionals has been called to action more than ever. This, therefore, is such a timely conference, and I hope you'll join us over our next series of podcasts on this important subject.

I'm joined today by Dr. Ivor Benjamin. Dr. Benjamin was a lead author of this paper and is a past president of the American Heart Association. Dr. Benjamin is the Professor and Director of the Cardiovascular Center at the Medical College of Wisconsin. Dr. Benjamin is a gentleman, a scholar, and I am very lucky to count him as my friend. Ivor, it's a pleasure to talk with you today as you were the lead author for the 2020 AHA ACC Consensus Conference Report on professionalism and ethics.

Ivor Benjamin:

Thank you Dr. Jessup for that generous introduction, and I'm honored to be your colleague and friend. And it's also my pleasure of course, to talk with you about this important consensus report.

Mariell Jessup:

Would you take us on a short historical journey to provide an overview regarding what led to the development of this report? How did we get to where we are today with the publication of this important consensus document?

Ivor Benjamin:

American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology I've had a very rich history of collaboration in cardiovascular medicine. Beginning back in 1989, and then followed in 1997 called Bethesda Conferences. These organizations have taken on the difficult but important task of addressing the dilemmas that cardiovascular medical professionals face. That was then followed by a conference in 2004. And you can just imagine some of what these early conferences began to take on. Issues related to cardiovascular specialists as they end their relationships with patients or the physicians and physician on organizations. Managed care, palliative care, end of life care, research objectivity. As we began to move into the molecular area, what about clinical research, the Human Genome Project. And of course, more critical issues such as physician assisted suicide, including of course anti-kickback statutes and start laws. So, over the years, these two organizations have really been able to drive the conversation for how professionals in this space practice.

Now, fast forward to 2021 a viral pathogen has challenged the physical and economic health of the entire country. A year later, there've been a series of tragedies that have awakened our sense of social justice, previously unexpressed nationally. And of course, the political climate rivals the divisiveness seen since the birth of our nation. There is no better time for us to take on this important task and be able to have a conversation around medical ethics and professionalism in the light of the established norms and current stressors. In addition, the American College of Cardiology and AHA recognize this importance assessment should be taken on a more regular basis and several topics and subtopics have been addressed in five task force reports that comprise the comprehensive medical ethics and professionalism consensus report.

Mariell Jessup:

Thanks so much Ivor for laying out the formative events that have occurred. At this time I think our listeners would also like to know why this is such an important undertaking when as you pointed out so many other things are happening right at the same time.

Ivor Benjamin:

Medical ethics and professionalism, you may want to think of them as sort of the bookends that drives the social contract. These are the principles that form the basis of the medical

profession and what it has become in the years since of course incorporating the social contract. Medical ethics are the foundations of, of course, the principles of clinical behavior and we'll discuss further about what the professionalism entails as well as the social contract.

Mariell Jessup:

So it sounds like you're talking to me about the principles of medical ethics. Can you walk us through and identify and review the definitions for the principle of medical ethics please?

Ivor Benjamin:

So medical ethics are the foundational principles of clinician behavior. It consists of autonomy, which is a duty to protect and foster a patient's free un-coerced set choices. Beneficence, which is a duty to promote good and act in the best interests of the patient. No malfeasance, which is the duty to do no harm in every interaction with the patient. And of course, justice, including social justice, which is the duty to promote fairness and equity in health care.

Mariell Jessup:

Those are such powerful principles. I have to admit that in all my years of training other doctors and being trained myself, I don't think we talked about it enough. So thanks so much for reviewing those for us.

Now, I'd like to invite your thoughts regarding how the principles and commitments of medical professionalism outlined in the report, inform medical ethics and professionalism in current clinical practice. In other words, what does this have to do with those of us that are out on the front line?

Ivor Benjamin:

Well, to me, Mariell, the important question and medical professional really gets to the heart of why we as healthcare professionals do what we do, which is to serve the interests of our patients. We do this by being an advocate for the needs of patients. In essence, if you adhere to the principles and commitments of being a healthcare professional it's as if these were road signs, the outcome or destination that you reach will be one in which you approach all your patients ethically and professionally. As you know, this is so important as we work towards eliminating health disparities.

Mariell Jessup:

We have one more important foundational area to cover and that is the obligation of medicine's social contract. So we have principles and now we have medicine social contract. Please help me understand what that means.

Ivor Benjamin: By definition, a contract requires a commitment and agreement between clinicians and society, which defines how each party behaves with respect to each other. When we talk about the social contract, one may ask, well what does society agree to? Well, it provides us the trust as medical practitioners. We have autonomy. We're allowed to self-regulate for medical practitioners within legal boundaries. We're able to create and maintain ourselves within a healthcare system that's value-based adequately funded and reasonably flexible.

But what about the other side of the coin, what do we then expect for the other side of the social contract? Well, as practitioners, we agreed to fulfill the role of a healer. To achieve and maintain proficiency and the knowledge of our area of practice. To achieve and maintain a high level of skill in areas of practice. Provide for the patient's need of [inaudible 00:08:19]. As well as of course provide access to affordable health care, which is of course is near and dear to the heart of the American Heart Association. This in principle constitutes the social contract.

Mariell Jessup: Dr. Benjamin, I can't thank you enough for walking us through the fundamental basis for ethical decision-making and behaviors in healthcare professionals. As well as kicking off the six-podcast series based on the five task force report, which are comprised in the 2020 consensus report. Thank you for all that you do Dr. Benjamin.

Ivor Benjamin: You are so welcome, and it's a pleasure to join you today, Dr. Jessup.

Mariell Jessup: So I'm inspired by reading this document and listening to Dr. Benjamin walk us through the principles and the social contract. For a call to action, the 2020 American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology Consensus Conference on Professionalism and Ethics, a Consensus Conference Report is an important document for every healthcare professional to read and commit to using as a guide in all patient interactions, professional conversation and throughout one's career. So please partner with the American Heart Association's deep concern about the current healthcare and scientific environment and the impact on patients and communities.

Our mission, to be a relentless force for a world of healthier, longer lives is more important than ever. Please return to the Heartbeat Series for additional podcasts in this series, covering conflicts of interests, relationships with industry and expert testimony, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, clinician

wellbeing, patient autonomy, privacy, and social justice in healthcare and modern healthcare delivery.

Also, please visit the AHA's lifelong learning platform for the webinar recording of the American Heart Association's round table discussion of the paper.