



*The future of cancer therapy*

## **EORTC CODE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

We live in an era where public confidence is essential. We gain credibility by adhering to our commitments, displaying honesty and integrity and reaching common goals through honorable conduct. Financial integrity is also key to EORTC's reputation for donors and fundraising activities.

Ultimately, the success of our organization is built on this trust as it influences how patients and stakeholders perceive us as an international research organization.

Together, we will build on our legacy of independence, transparency and compliance. It is up to all of us to protect EORTC reputation and to commit to the highest standards of ethics and integrity.

### **2. EORTC MISSION STATEMENT**

EORTC's mission, as a not for profit organization, is to coordinate and conduct international translational and clinical research to improve the standard of cancer treatment for patients, with no commercial aim. We aim ultimately to increase people's survival and quality of life by testing new therapeutic strategies based on existing drugs, surgery and radiotherapy. We also help develop new drugs and approaches in partnership with the pharmaceutical industry and in patients' best interest.

EORTC is able to act this way by being international, multidisciplinary, and independent while complying with regulations. We pride ourselves on our reliability, unwavering independence and accountability to ensure that patients and the oncology community benefit from our learnings.

### **3. PURPOSE OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

EORTC's code of conduct is based on our core values and principles. It addresses our relationships with the membership under EORTC legal entity and outlines the behavior we must follow to uphold our organization's ethical standards.

All people working for or collaborating with EORTC (employees, investigators and groups/task forces members and Board/General Assembly members, Peer Review Committees) must act according to the principles set forth in EORTC code of conduct and are expected to adhere to our ethical standards.

**The aim of this code of conduct is not to replace or supersede any existing policy but to help understand and comply with these standards of conduct and to show how to resolve some ethical issues and dilemmas. We all have a shared responsibility to act ethically as individuals.**

#### **4. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Conflicts of interest may arise in many different forms. This code of conduct should be read in light of policy 01, available on the EORTC website. In general, a “conflict of interest” occurs when a personal, institutional or family interest interferes, or even has the potential to interfere with our ability to make sound, objective decisions on behalf of the organization. Such a situation might create bias and should be avoided. Therefore, we must prevent any relationship or activity that might impair, or appear to impair, our ability to make objective and fair decisions when performing daily tasks. EORTC reputation for excellence is key and we must never do anything to put that reputation at risk.

Other possible conflicts of interest are:

- 1. Conducting activities not in line with EORTC mission (e.g. commercial activities with pharma companies).** EORTC officers may not accept new activities conflicting with EORTC missions during their mandate i.e. coordinating commercial clinical trials conflicting with EORTC activities while being a group officer.
- 2. Source of funding.** We emphasize the importance of ethical sources of funding in compliance with our mission. As an example, funding from companies whose missions may play against health or ethical values is not recommended and will not be accepted, unless they address counter measures towards better health.
- 3. Giving and accepting gifts and entertainment from (potential) commercial partners**  
Business gifts and entertainment can be appropriate courtesies that build corporate goodwill between EORTC and those in the commercial sector with whom we collaborate. However, a conflict of interest may arise if these courtesies are used to influence a business decision.

A business gift or entertainment should not be accepted by an individual representing EORTC in an interaction with a commercial entity if:

- Doing so would make it difficult, or appear difficult, to make a fair and unbiased decision
- It exceeds a nominal value of 50 euros
- It exceeds commonly accepted business practices

Common examples of acceptable forms of entertainment or gifts are benefits that have a nominal value or a meal at a moderately priced restaurant for the purpose of partnership discussion.

Furthermore, if the person allocating a benefit / grant / payment as a representative of an EORTC group, and the person receiving it, as an individual, member of an external group or institution, are the same person, this constitutes a major conflict. In another word, an individual cannot be both part of a granting committee and being one of the grantees.

#### **4. Organization of public events with commercial entities**

Groups may be invited to organize workshops or conferences in partnership with the commercial sector. This should be done with caution to avoid any commercial ties. Such meetings should in principle be discussed with the EORTC Headquarters. It is strongly discouraged to hold events with a single company to avoid any ties with a company’s portfolio. Such events should be organized with a panel of companies and/or organizations representing the commercial sector, usually to exchange on generic and not pipeline specific questions. This does not affect the possibility for EORTC and/or one its group to hold a private strategic meeting for potential cooperation, with the involvement of the EORTC HQ.

**When in doubt, it is each one’s responsibility to seek advice or guidance from the EORTC Director General, or the Head of the relevant department or team.**

## **5. EXPENSE MANAGEMENT**

EORTC has financial assets, which are managed by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). Though acting under the same legal entity, EORTC groups and Task Forces also have their own accounts, which are managed by the group treasurer together with the EORTC CFO. EORTC group assets are meant to support research primarily but also to support groups for their day-to-day functioning such as but not limited to travel of group officers or group meeting related expenses. Expense-related decisions must be made keeping in mind the best interests of EORTC. Being members of an academic organization, all are expected to use EORTC funds in a reasonable way as required by ethical standards and only for directly EORTC related purposes.

When submitting expenses for reimbursement or spending money on behalf of the EORTC, make sure that the cost is reasonable, directly related to the organization and supported by appropriate original documentation. Expenses are subject to EORTC financial management review and approval prior to payment. All costs should be reasonable and justifiable i.e. lunches/dinners at luxury restaurants must be avoided or paid with personal funds

- **Travel**

Investigators and groups/task forces members are required to make their own travel arrangements for the purpose of a meeting or conference. Some expenses are refunded by the groups/task forces, others by the EORTC HQ. It is recommended to check beforehand with your institution or your contact person at the EORTC, which case is applicable to you.

For refundable travel expenses by EORTC, they will be reimbursed upon receipt of the refund form (sent by the EORTC contact person) together with the original tickets/receipts. Only economy class tickets will be reimbursed for flights, unless otherwise agreed with the Director General. First class train tickets are deemed acceptable. No other kind of travel expenses will be refunded unless prior written authorization.

Any personal expenses (mini-bar, telephone, internet, etc.) will not be refunded.

- **Restaurant**

Restaurant costs should be reasonable and justifiable. Meals at luxury restaurants must be avoided or paid with personal funds.

## **6. COMMUNICATION TO THIRD PARTIES**

It is important for EORTC to speak about our organization with one consistent voice. Therefore, no public statements on EORTC's behalf should be made unless prior authorization to do so as the organization spokesperson. This is specifically important for communication engaging EORTC strategy or finances.

Whatever the communication, it should be along the lines of standards of the EORTC mission. In case of doubt, advice should be sought from the EORTC Communications department. EORTC templates and logos should be used on all EORTC documents and mails.

## **7. SIGNATURE OF CONTRACTS**

Only the legal representatives of the EORTC have the right to sign a contract on behalf of the EORTC.

## **8. DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

The EORTC shall consistently enforce this Code through appropriate means of discipline, pursuant to procedures adopted by the Board or the Executive Committee.

The disciplinary measures, which may be invoked at the discretion of the Board or the Executive Committee, include, but are not limited to, counseling, warnings, suspension of collaboration, etc.

## **9. WAIVERS**

For Board members and executive officers (group officers, chairs of committees, EORTC special guests), any waiver of this Code of conduct must be approved by the Board, the Executive Committee, or the Director General.

## **10. PUBLICATION AND AMENDMENT**

This Code of conduct should serve as a first-line resource for ethical decision-making. It cannot address every situation that may occur. We are all expected to exercise good judgment and ask questions to the Director General when we need guidance and clarification.

The document is posted on EORTC website and may be amended. All amendments are effective immediately upon posting.

Done in Brussels, on March 9, 2018

Denis Lacombe, MD  
Director General, EORTC