

**We are in this together: The imperative to build a moral community**

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Rhea Cohn, PT DPT  
Chair, APTA Ethics and Judicial Committee (2023)

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**Ethical Realms**

INDIVIDUAL

ORGANIZATIONAL

SOCIETAL

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**Stakeholders**

Examples:

- Yourself
- Managers, other team members (inside and outside of PT)
- Patients/clients
- Witnesses
- Family members
- Payers
- Government

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### Key Ethical Principles

- Autonomy
- Beneficence
- Non-maleficence (Do-no-harm)
- Justice
- Veracity
  - Integrity

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### HPSO Physical Therapy Liability Claim Report: 4th Edition (2020)

**31 Distribution of License Defense Matters by Primary Allegation Class**

Allegation Class	Percentage
Professional conduct	59.4%
Management over the course of treatment	24.1%
Supervision or monitoring	7.6%
Treatment	6.5%
Improper use of a biophysical agent	1.8%
Assessment	0.6%

<https://www.hpso.com/Resources/Legal-and-Ethical-Issues/Physical-Therapy-Claim-Report-Fourth-Edition>

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### 32 Allegations Related to Professional Conduct

\* Other allegations in the professional conduct category, which account for <2.5% of all license protection matters in the 2020 dataset, include failure to follow policies and procedures, substance abuse, reciprocal action and issues related to information provided during the license/certificate renewal process.

Allegation Class	Percentage
Professional conduct	59.4%
Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse	18.2%
Inappropriate behavior, including misconduct	10.6%
Unlicensed practice	8.2%
Fraudulent billing	7.6%
Other*	5.9%
Breach of confidentiality or privacy	2.9%
Criminal allegations	2.9%
Practitioner functioning outside of scope of practice	2.9%

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### Applying the COE Linking Autonomy to Informed Consent

- Principle 1: *"Physical therapist shall respect the inherent dignity and rights of all individuals."*
- Principle 2: *"Physical therapists shall be trustworthy and compassionate in addressing the rights and needs of patients and clients"*
  - 2C: *"Physical therapists shall provide the information necessary to allow patients or their surrogates to make informed decisions about physical therapist care or participation in clinical research."*
  - 2D: *Physical therapists shall collaborate with patients and clients to empower them in decisions about their health care."*

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### Steps for reflection and deliberation of an ethical dilemma

- 1. Recognize a moral dilemma
- 2. Identify the realm(s): societal, organizational, individual
- 3. Identify the stakeholders
- 4. Identify pertinent ethical principles
- 5. Seek guidance from a trusted mentor
- 6. Brainstorm options
- 7. Determine best course of action
- 8. Later, analyze the results.

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### Quality Improvement Cycle for Ethical Action

1. *Identify what is missing and determine actions needed to fill the void (e.g. staff meetings, rounds etc.)*
2. *Analyze the options*
3. *Prioritize action plan*
4. *Take action*
5. *Analyze success of the plan*
6. *Adjust, Monitor and Improve as needed*
7. *Repeat*

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## APTA's Commitment

- House of Delegates 2021 "Maintain an Ethics Committee or designate a liaison to interact with the APTA Ethics and Judicial Committee".
- Task Force to Review Core Ethical Documents (in progress)

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## Thank you!

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## Tools

- 1. APTA Ethics and Judicial Committee (EJC): [ejc@apta.org](mailto:ejc@apta.org)
- 2. HPSO Report: <https://www.hpso.com/Resources/Legal-and-Ethical-Issues/Physical-Therapy-Claim-Report-Fourth-Edition>
  - Refer to "Self-Assessment Checklist: Professional Conduct" (pg 25)
- 3. DC or MD Ethics Liaison(s) – contact your Chapter

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