

Position on Bioethics

Background

Bioethics refers to the application of ethical principles to address potential ethical questions arising from biological research, science and medicine. Bioethics may include ethical dimensions of medical research, clinical trials, use of different forms of technology in healthcare, public policy, prioritization of research and resources, and much more. For any company involved in healthcare, bioethics questions frequently arise and require resolutions based on accepted bioethics principles. The four commonly accepted principles of bioethics¹ are:

- **Autonomy:** Requires that the patient have autonomy of thought, intention and action when making decisions regarding healthcare procedures and must give fully informed consent with knowledge of all risks and benefits of the procedure and the likelihood of success.
- **Justice:** Requires that procedures uphold the spirit of existing laws and are fair to all players involved, ensuring that no population be overly burdened or overly valued in research and scientific progress.
- **Beneficence:** Requires that the procedure be provided with the intent of doing good for the patient involved, considers individual circumstances of all patients and strives for net benefit.
- **Non-maleficence:** Requires that a procedure not harm the patient involved or others in society.

Relevance

Bioethics plays a critical role in the advancement of human health by ensuring safe, ethical and just applications of new science and technological and therapeutic breakthroughs. As the world's largest and most broadly based healthcare company—reaching patients and consumers each day with our medicines, consumer care products and medical devices—Johnson & Johnson is a leader in healthcare research and development. We employ significant resources in the development of new medicines and medical devices

¹ <https://jme.bmj.com/content/28/5/332.2>

and their application. In every development process, we face decisions that have ethical implications for patients and consumers, for our employees, and for the industry as a whole. A responsible approach to bioethics protects patients, consumers and society, and is at the core of our longstanding commitment to people-driven, ethical decision-making.

Guiding principles

As stated in [Our Credo](#): “We believe our first responsibility is to the patients, doctors and nurses, to mothers and fathers and all others who use our products and services.” These responsibilities include respecting the rights of all and fully considering the ethical implications of decisions that may affect them.

Our guidelines on upholding ethical conduct are embedded in Johnson & Johnson’s [Code of Business Conduct](#), which states that it is every employee’s duty to “uphold ethical, scientific and clinical standards and comply with all laws and regulations in all research and development activities worldwide.”

Our position

Johnson & Johnson is strongly committed to ensuring ethical conduct in all our activities and specifically in matters of bioethics. To address the complex ethical questions arising in the field of biological research, science and medicine, our global Johnson & Johnson Bioethics Committee (JJBC), overseen by the Chief Medical Officer, serves as an advisory body to our worldwide teams on ethical issues. Composed of a diverse group of employees and external medical experts with training and experience in evaluating bioethical questions, the JJBC is responsible for advocating adherence to bioethical principles, providing an expert forum for teams to obtain guidance on bioethical issues, and for championing our commitment to ethical decision-making across the enterprise. The JJBC is guided by the fundamental principles of bioethics, including beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy and justice, and our [Ethical Code for the Conduct of Research and Development](#). We uphold our commitment by:

- Acting in accordance with fundamental bioethics principles and guidance contained in our proprietary Ethical Code for the Conduct of Research and Development, as mentioned above.
- Providing an expert forum for, and encouraging consultation with, JJBC on any ethical matter arising in any part of the world.

- Providing training and refresher training on bioethical questions for staff involved in research and development, including clinical trials.
- Engaging with other industry members and actively contributing to the dialogue on current bioethical issues, such as clinical trial data transparency and access to investigational medicines. See our [Position on Clinical Trial Data Transparency](#) and [Position on Pre-Approval Access and Compassionate Use](#).
- Collaborating to advance bioethics standards across the industry to honor our commitment to patients and consumers.

Application

This Position is relevant for the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies, as detailed in our [governance materials](#). We provide updates relating to bioethics in our annual [Health for Humanity Report](#). Note that bioethics considerations also apply to animal welfare. Please see our [Animal Welfare Policy](#) for details.

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