Code of ethics for radiographers in Denmark
- ethical guidelines which put the whole person at the centre

“The individual never interacts with another person without holding something of that person’s life in his hand.” (Løgstrup)

Adopted at the Danish Society of Radiographers’ 2008 congress

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Foreword

Why do we need ethical guidelines?
As radiographers, we face constant moral choices in professional contexts. Sometimes we make choices without pausing to think about them, and other times with a razor-sharp memory of previous choices and their consequences.

These choices fill our professional lives in the interaction between radiographer, patient, and the technology we use. The choices aim to find the right solutions and minimise injustice.
These moral choices can be difficult, and these guidelines can thus help to show the way and provide support in choosing the right solutions.
It is important to open the question of ethics in radiography to discussion, at all times and in all contexts. These ethical guidelines are intended to be a worthy “interlocutor” when dilemmas are discussed in a professional context. The intention was to seek simplicity in the formulation of the guidelines by consciously choosing words and formulations which are judged to be adequate for the area.

We draw the reader’s attention to the fact that these guidelines are not, and do not contain, law and legislation within radiography, and that ethical guidelines do not provide a final solution to all dilemmas – but they can help to find one.

Why publish ethical guidelines now?
All professions need time to mature. In 2008, it was forty years since the first radiographers commenced their studies in Denmark. Radiography has developed over the years, and the authorisation achieved in 2002 is a further recognition of the fact that radiography is an independent discipline. The time has now come to formulate our own ethical guidelines as a further building block on the road to a fully-developed profession.

Object

The ethical guidelines for radiographers in Denmark respect basic human rights and applicable legislation concerning radiography, and they must be viewed as a supplement to them.

The object of the preparation of these ethical guidelines is to strengthen radiography’s professional standing both in general and in specific situations by:

- enabling radiographers to identify ethical dilemmas in radiography
- helping radiographers to focus on different perspectives in ethical dilemmas
- enabling the individual radiographer to make decisions on a nuanced basis in order to develop radiography and thereby strengthen trust in and respect for the profession.

Radiography is practised with respect for and understanding of the individual’s own worth and perception of his or her own situation. The radiographer therefore has a humanist view of mankind, and thus of the individual patient’s interests, as his or her overriding priority.

This object is based on the definition of radiography:
“Radiography is the process of combining and using the knowledge of man and the knowledge of technology, placing the whole person at the centre in medical imaging, image processing, and radiotherapy”.
Dilemmas in radiography

The ethical dilemma generally arises in the field between

- I can
- I must
- I should

I can respect the patient’s choice, I must do so – but should I do so?

There are ethical dilemmas in radiography when several options are available and the radiographer cannot readily decide which choice best serves the patient in the current situation.

Ethical dilemmas can also arise when there is disagreement between colleagues or a conflict of interest.

The radiographer and the patient

The radiographer respects the fact that all people are unique, and that they are accorded first priority. The patient puts him- or herself in a subordinate position in the meeting with the radiographer – and the radiographer respects this situation by taking responsibility for

- protecting the patient’s dignity
- protecting the patient’s integrity and vulnerability
- ensuring the patient’s right and ability to make his or her own decisions and take part in the decision-making process
- guiding and informing the patient in accordance with the individual’s needs and actual situation.

This ensures that the radiographer treats all patients equally, taking due account of individual differences.

The radiographer and the profession

Radiography is performed carefully and responsibly in relation to the radiographer’s own area of expertise, and good judgment is maintained and developed by the radiographer’s
• making him- or herself available to discuss the profession, its practice and development
• assuming professional and personal liability for his or her own actions
• looking after the patient’s interests in the event of disagreements
• taking due account of the possibilities and limitations of the technology
This ensures that the radiographer is not a tacit witness to or observer of unprofessional and unethical activities, but objects if circumstances in the performance of the work are found to be incorrect or unreasonable.

The radiographer and the partnership

Radiography is organised, performed and developed in cooperation with colleagues, in that the radiographer
• shows respect for his or her own colleagues, and colleagues in other professions
• shows tolerance for colleagues’ practices
• supports colleagues in difficult dilemmas
• prioritises the patient if there are conflicts of interest
• commences a debate on any breaches of professional ethics.
This will ensure that the patient’s interests are considered with due regard for differences among colleagues.

The radiographer and society

An equitable and appropriate allocation of health service resources should be attempted by the radiographer’s
• taking a critical attitude to health technology with an influence on radiography
• debating and highlighting radiography and the training of radiographers
• documenting the results of research and development
This will ensure that radiography will benefit the individual patient and society, and thus the profession’s status and development, to a higher degree.

The working group

The working group consisted of:
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The following works were also consulted: Ethics for radiographers in Norway, Ethics for Dutch radiographers, Ethical guidelines in Denmark for bioanalysts, physiotherapists, ergotherapists, nurses and midwives, and other related courses.

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