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## Forensic Science International: Genetics Supplement Series

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/fsigss](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/fsigss)The *GeFI* (Italian Forensic Geneticists) code of conduct

Loredana Buscemi<sup>a,\*</sup>, Carla Bini<sup>b</sup>, Luciana Caenazzo<sup>c</sup>, Francesco De Stefano<sup>d</sup>,  
Ranieri Domenici<sup>e</sup>, Paolo Fattorini<sup>f</sup>, Paolo Garofano<sup>g</sup>, Emiliano Giardina<sup>h</sup>, Susi Pelotti<sup>b</sup>,  
Fabio Oldoni<sup>i</sup>, Andrea Piccinini<sup>j</sup>, Carlo Robino<sup>k</sup>, GeFI Group

<sup>a</sup> Legal Medicine, Polytechnic University of Marche, Ancona, Italy<sup>b</sup> Department of Medical and Surgical Science, University of Bologna, Italy<sup>c</sup> Department of Molecular Medicine, University of Padova, Italy<sup>d</sup> Department of Legal Medicine, University of Genova, Italy<sup>e</sup> Medico legal expert, former Professor at University of Pisa, Italy<sup>f</sup> Department of Medicine, Surgery and Health, University of Trieste, Italy<sup>g</sup> Forensic Biology and Genetics Division at CAD (Antidoping Regional Center), Orbassano, Turin, Italy<sup>h</sup> Genomic Medicine Laboratory-UILLDM, Santa Lucia Foundation, IRCCS, Rome, Italy<sup>i</sup> Arcadia University, Department of Chemistry & Physics, 450 S Easton Rd, Glenside, PA 19038, United States<sup>j</sup> Section of Legal Medicine, Department of Biomedical Sciences for Health University of Milan, Italy<sup>k</sup> Department of Public Health Sciences and Pediatrics, University of Turin, Italy

## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

GeFI  
Code of conduct  
Forensic genetics  
Practitioners

## ABSTRACT

The Ge.F.I. (Italian Forensic Geneticists) board has set up a working group aimed to develop the “Code of conduct of a Forensic Geneticist”. This group includes all practitioners working in the field of forensic genetics. The rules of the code of conduct apply to forensic geneticists belonging to the GeFI group and all of those sharing the GeFI’s mission, vision and values applicable to their professional practice, reciprocal relationship and relationship with third parties.

## 1. Introduction

A forensic geneticist uses modern molecular biology techniques for personal identification and parental relationships. He/she works as an expert witness for the Judicial Authority in both civil and criminal proceedings, and also for private individuals at request.

In Italy, forensic geneticists have however no official recognition that should provide certain rights and responsibilities to them: practitioners from various fields such as legal medicine, biology, biotechnology, with adequate qualifications, dedicate themselves to this discipline. The only possible restraint upon professional misconduct of a forensic geneticist is through membership of a scientific society or association, which establishes membership rules. Therefore, there is need to establish codes of conduct, which should be reviewed regularly to meet the growing scientific-technological advancements, novel laws and regulations, and any changes of deontological codes.

## 2. Material and methods

The code of conduct of forensic geneticists developed by the GeFI group consists of 7 chapters and 23 articles, which describe general principles, relationship with other forensic geneticists, duties of forensic geneticists testifying in Courts of Law, importance of informed consent privacy protection, and etc (Table 1).

## 3. Results and discussion

The code of conduct of the forensic geneticist developed by the GeFI group includes general principles concerning the professional activity of the forensic geneticist and in particular, the relationship with other forensic geneticists, duties of forensic geneticists testifying in court, importance of informed consent, respect for privacy, etc. The principles of the deontological codes applicable to all professionals within the forensic genetics profession as well as all main roles and responsibilities of forensic geneticists were considered [1–5]. The code emphasizes the importance of professional development in order to guarantee high

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [buscemi@univpm.it](mailto:buscemi@univpm.it) (L. Buscemi).<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsigss.2022.10.039>

Received 19 September 2022; Accepted 17 October 2022

Available online 20 October 2022

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**Table 1**  
Chapter index of the Italian GeFI code of conduct.

CHAPTER INDEX	
<b>I GENERAL PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>IV DUTIES OF A FORENSIC GENETICIST IN COURT</b>
Art. 1 – Role of a Forensic Geneticist	Art. 16 – Prohibition of offensive expressions
Art. 2 – Aim of the code	<b>V RELATIONS WITH THIRD PARTIES AND COUNTERPARTIES</b>
Art. 3 – Duties of forensic geneticists	Art. 17 – Relations with third parties
Art. 4 – Professional update	Art. 18 – Job recruitment against a part already assisted
Art. 5 – Publishing	<b>VI DUTIES OF A FORENSIC GENETICIST IN MATTER OF PRIVACY</b>
Art. 6 – Media relations duties	Art. 19– Data protection according to EU GDPR 679//16 regulation
<b>II RELATIONS WITH THOSE ASSIGNING THE JOB</b>	Art. 20– Data protection according to the Italian law n. 85/2009 (National forensic DNA database)
Art. 7 – Assignment	Art. 21– Transmission, reception, storage and deletion of sensitive data
Art. 8 – Conflict of interest	Art. 22– Data protection in judicial authorities and personal reports
Art. 9 – Fulfillment of the mandate	<b>VII FINAL PROVISION</b>
Art. 10 – Compensation agreement	Art. 23– Entry into force
Art. 11 – Information and consent duties	
Art. 12 – Professional confidentiality	
Art. 13 – Renounce of the assignment	
Art. 14 – Prohibition of professional activities without job titles	
<b>III RELATIONS WITH OTHER FORENSIC GENETICISTS</b>	
Art. 15 – Correctness between colleagues	

quality standard and proficiency in forensic DNA practice.

Another important aspect stated in the code of conduct relates to the management of relationship with media; a forensic practitioner must be inspired by criteria of balance and transparency and comply with duties of discretion and confidentiality.

The rules of conduct apply to all forensic geneticists belonging to the GeFI group and to all those who share the GeFI' s mission, vision and values applicable to their professional activity, reciprocal relationship and relationship with third parties. This code of conduct is intended to be an ethical guide not imposed by outside legislations and hence members voluntarily adhere. The guiding principles considered were drawn from professional deontological codes of each profession

involved in the forensic genetics field as well from suggestions made by the forensic scientific community. The principles were written with the hope that all forensic geneticists will incorporate them into their daily forensic practice and will also describe some specific rules to supplement existing codes adopted by professional organizations. Indeed, these principles are intended to create a culture of ethical behavior and professional responsibility.

The code of conduct is designed to promote full integrity among forensic DNA practitioners and increase public community confidence in the quality of forensic genetics. It is not meant to be that these principles are all-inclusive, but they represent general standards that each forensic geneticist should know and follow. Serious or repeated violations of these principles may be regarded as inconsistent and incompatible with the GeFI membership status. It is up to the Disciplinary Commissions of the professional registers to determine the adequate sanctions proportional to the ethical violation committed and in compliance with procedures and policies defined in the rules. All violations must also be reported to the interested Professional Boards.

### Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to all GeFI members.

### Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### References

- [1] GDPR, Regulation (Eu) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data and on the Free Movement of Such Data, and Repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation).
- [2] The Code of Deontology of the Italian National Federation of the Colleges of Physicians, Surgeons and Dentists and Subsequent Amendments (FNOMCeO), 2014. (<https://portale.fnomceo.it/codice-deontologico/>).
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