

**2008 Board of Ethics Convention Presentation  
Real Ethics: Case Studies Applying the  
ASHA Code of Ethics to the Practice of Audiology  
(2008 ASHA Convention Session # 0129)**

- I. Welcome and Introduction of Board of Ethics Members Present
  
- II. Session Learning Outcomes
  - A. Describe at least three principles in the ASHA Code of Ethics
  - B. Analyze ethical principles relevant to complex cases
  - C. Apply principles and rules of the ASHA Code of Ethics to complex cases
  
- III. Scenarios
  - A. The Audiology Assistant
  - B. Audiologic Rehabilitation: Somebody's Got to Do It
  - C. The Hearing Aid Vendor Saves the Day
  
- IV. Summary: Q & A

**ASHA's Ethics Team**

The Ethics Team provides ethics information, resources, and guidance directly to members, certificate holders, Clinical Fellows, students, and consumers.

**David R. Denton, J.D., M.A. CCC-SLP**

Director of Ethics

Phone: 301-897-5700 Ext. 4146

Email: [ddenton@asha.org](mailto:ddenton@asha.org)

**Linda D'Aloisio**

Ethics Program Manager

Phone: 301-897-5700 Ext 4143

Email: [ldaloisio@asha.org](mailto:ldaloisio@asha.org)

## **Scenario A – The Audiology Assistant**

Melody A. is a third year Au.D. student at Marshall City University in Idaho Springs, Id. She is enthusiastic about her education and has achieved a 4.0 GPA. She completed her first externship at a nearby hospital and her performance reviews suggested she is motivated and has shown great improvement in her diagnostic abilities. Following her externship, Melody contacted some local audiologists looking for work as an Audiology assistant. She sent a resume to Dr. Patricia L, a private practice audiologist in a nearby town. Although Dr. L did not have an affiliation with the University, she felt this would be a good opportunity for Melody. Melody was hired on a part-time basis to assist in filing, making appointments and helping the audiologists test young children.

It was not long before Melody began get more involved in client assessment. Dr. L secured a new contract with a local tool factory and offered complete audiology evaluations for all employees who failed an on-site hearing screening. She underestimated the drain this service would have on her existing practice and began having Melody perform the audiological evaluations on these clients. Melody was thrilled. She would evaluate five to six people a day and felt she was gaining great experience. The effort paid off. Not only was Melody becoming proficient in audiological assessment, Dr. L was able to double book her practice, see her own case-load and comply with the arrangements she had made with the factory. Since this program was funded through the corporate hearing conservation program, no private insurance was billed and Dr. L was reimbursed for her services directly from the company.

Since Dr. L was seeing her own patients while Melody was testing, she was unable to offer any direct supervision. She did however, review the audiograms before she signed them at the end of the day. She was listed as the clinical audiologist and Melody was listed as an audiology assistant. Dr. L was so pleased with Melody's performance, she offered her a job as an audiologist when she completed her education.

### **Ethic Questions:**

1. What is/are the ethical dilemma(s)?
2. Are there issues that are not "ethical" ones?
3. What portions of the Code of Ethics are applicable?
4. Who is at fault, Melody, Dr. L neither or both?
5. What information does Melody need?
6. What are her possible courses of action, both immediately and in the near future?

## **Scenario B – Audiologic Rehabilitation: Somebody’s Got to Do It**

Greg S., AuD. CCC-A runs a successful Speech and Hearing Center on Long Island, New York with his wife Mary T, M.A., CCC-SLP. Their office is located in a medical building directly adjacent to a thriving ENT practice. Greg provides the audiological services for the three physician practice. He is a strong believer in hearing aids and audiologic rehabilitation. Mary’s practice is primarily voice and swallowing though she does see patients with adult language disorders secondary to CVA. She works closely with one of the Laryngologists in the ENT practice.

One afternoon Greg got a call from Dr. Smith from the ENT practice asking if he could evaluate a 72 year old woman with report of a sudden sensori-neural hearing loss. Greg immediately made room in his schedule. This patient, Janet A. informed Greg of a pre-existing moderately severe sensori-neural hearing loss in the right ear and now has suffered hearing loss in the left ear. Audiological test results indicated bilateral moderate to severe sensori-neural hearing loss with poor word recognition bilaterally. This patient was sent back to ENT with a Williams Pocketalker for use while undergoing medical treatment. Janet was treated with oral steroids and anti-viral medications but no recovery of hearing was obtained. She was once again referred to Greg for hearing aids.

While Greg was able to fit her with binaural amplification, her response to the hearing aids was unsatisfactory. Greg counseled her on the need for aural rehab. services and arranged for speechreading and auditory training, twice a week for six weeks. Since Greg knew that Medicare would not pay for these services if they were provided by an audiologist, he contacted the ENT office and requested a referral to Mary for speech therapy for Janet. Greg began providing treatment and billed Medicare “incident to” under Mary’s ID. Greg kept accurate and descriptive notes that were then signed by Mary. Janet quickly gained confidence in her ability to communicate. She began wearing the hearing aids on a more regular basis and her hearing handicap was reduced significantly.

### **Ethics Questions:**

1. What is/are the ethical dilemma(s)?
2. Are there issues that are not "ethical" ones?
3. What portions of the Code of Ethics are applicable?
4. What are her possible courses of action, both immediately and in the near future?
5. Who presents with the ethics issue, Greg or Mary?

## **Scenario C – The Hearing Aid Vendor Saves the Day**

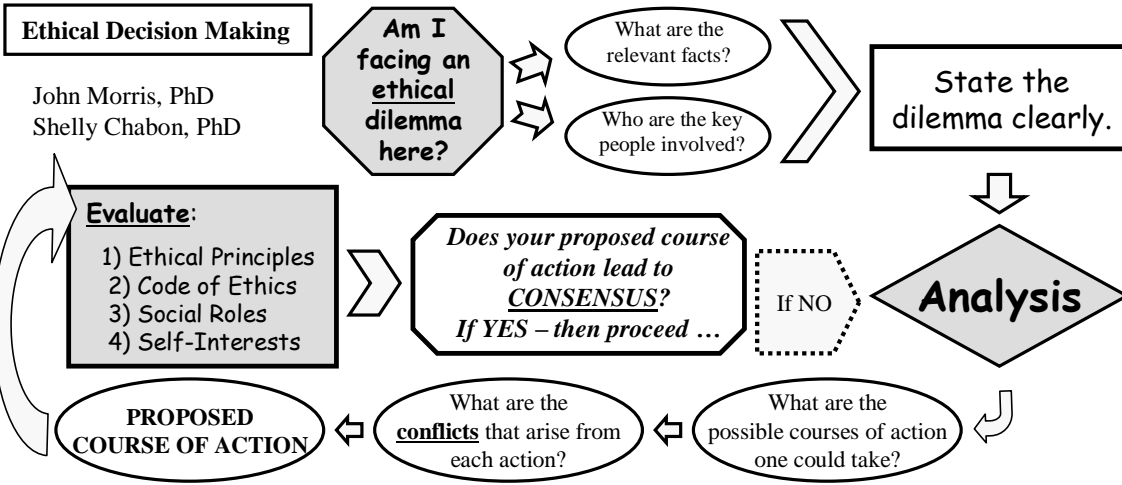
Meredith, is the Director of a busy hospital-based audiology practice in Detroit, Michigan. The five audiologists on staff are responsible for providing complete audiological services for a faculty ENT practice, a 500 bed acute care hospital and a 75 bed rehab facility. All audiologists are salaried and share a 5% commission on hearing aid sales after cost. Jetpack Hearing Aids offers an incentive package to Meredith that includes: 30% reduction on single unit hearing aids costs, dollars for sales accounts, continuing education credits and office equipment coop. As a result, Meredith has decided to use Jetpack hearing aids exclusively. The hearing aids are excellent quality and are comparable to Phonak, Oticon, Widex etc. Through this incentive program, all the staff audiologists were able to attend either ASHA or AAA conferences, their state association meetings and a training seminar in South Beach Florida. In addition, each audiologist received the equivalent of 500 dollars in “dollars for sales” coupons and was able to purchase items such as cameras, flat-screen televisions, hotel stays and computers directly from the JetPack catalog.

In addition to all the incentives provided by JetPack, the local representative, Diane, a certified audiologist, met regularly with the staff to help them with Jetpack hearing aid fittings. On occasion, when the office was particularly busy, Diane has been known to do a hearing aid fitting or follow-up while the scheduled audiologist takes another patient. Diane visits the Center about once or twice every other week at which time she buys lunch for the staff and helps them with any fitting issues.

### **Ethics Questions:**

1. What is/are the ethical dilemma(s)?
2. Are there issues that are not "ethical" ones?
3. What portions of the Code of Ethics are applicable?
4. What are her possible courses of action, both immediately and in the near future?
5. Who presents with the ethics issue, Meredith as the Director or all of the audiologists?





Am I facing an ethical dilemma here?

1) What are the relevant facts?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2) Who are the key people involved?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3) State the dilemma clearly?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---