

JEA

Declaration of research ethics and code of practice in epidemiological studies

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Epidemiological studies aim to improve human well-being by promoting health, preventing disease, increasing longevity, and improving quality of life. Epidemiology has contributed to society, and to the Japanese public, in fields such as control and eradication of infectious diseases, including tuberculosis; prevention of lifestyle-related chronic diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular diseases; prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and financial assistance for intractable diseases; and identification and management of environmental problems. Such studies carefully considered human rights and used approaches that were ethically appropriate at the time they were conducted. It was and is necessary to conduct epidemiological studies that protect all relevant rights of study participants. However, due to heightened awareness of confidentiality rights and social trends in attitudes toward protection of personal information, JEA concluded it that it was necessary to express our ethical code of practice so as to ensure the efficient execution of future epidemiological studies.

JEA members affirm that they will conduct epidemiological studies in accordance with five principles:

(1) Seek the truth

Epidemiological studies, like other academic research, must seek the truth. In addition, epidemiological studies should contribute to improving human well-being.

(2) Protect the human rights of study participants

Because the subjects of epidemiological studies are human beings, such studies must respect the human rights of all participants. Thus, it is important for us to obtain informed consent whenever possible, to guarantee protection of personal information, and submit all studies for evaluation by a third party such as an ethical review board.

(3) Pursue the optimal approach to achieve the stated goals

The most reasonable approach should be selected to achieve the primary study goal, after considering the importance of the methods and results, as well as existing knowledge at the time the study was designed and conducted. The study should be designed so as not to damage the health of study participants.

(4) Do not violate societal norms

Studies must be conducted in accordance with the law and societal norms. Studies that violate established bioethical principals should not be allowed. Our overriding concern is adherence to existing ethical standards and codes of practice for conducting medical research and epidemiological studies.

(5) Make studies open to the public

Studies should be evaluated to ensure that they satisfy the above principles. In addition, it is our responsibility to make studies open to the public by publishing their content and results.