



**PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS REGARDING  
GENDER EQUITY GUIDELINES**

*(As approved by the Board of Directors September 2006)*

**AAO-HNS Ethics Committee  
G. Richard Holt, MD, MPH, Chairman**

The American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS) Code of Ethics endorses the current opinions of the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs of the American Medical Association. Opinion E-9.035 sets forth the AMA's position against gender discrimination in the medical profession. AAO-HNS Ethics Committee will receive and review complaints about such discrimination in accordance with the procedures, as elaborated in this document.

1. AAO-HNS will primarily respond to concerns or complaints regarding gender equity by providing information to the complainant member regarding resources and conflict resolution strategies for consideration by the complainant member.
2. Complainants who seek information on resolution of gender equity issues from the AAO-HNS shall not hold the AAO-HNS liable based on the information provided, and will be required to waive their right to bring litigation action against the association.
3. Complaints and concerns brought forward by a member will initially be addressed by the Chair of the Ethics Committee, who will explain the limited role of the Academy in responding to such complaints or concerns. The Chair of the Ethics Committee will further explain that the Academy cannot provide the remedies that a court or governmental agency may be able to provide, and that if the Complainant wishes to pursue legal remedies, such as filing charges with governmental agencies and/or filing a lawsuit, a complaint with the Academy does not toll the limitations periods for so doing. If the complainant member wishes to proceed with filing a gender equity-related complaint with the Academy, he or she must first sign of the waiver referenced in paragraph 2 above. As with all ethics proceedings, gender equity inquiries or complaints will be treated as confidential unless and until there is a final disposition by the Academy Board of Directors.
4. The Chair of the Ethics Committee will then direct AAO-HNS staff to provide the complainant member with written information on options, resources, and best practice standards and strategies for conflict resolution of gender equity issues as prepared and/or compiled by the Academy for this purpose.
5. Should the complainant member request informal discussion with the Ethics Committee after reviewing the materials provided, the Chair of the Ethics Committee shall refer the complainant

member to the “Gender Equity Resource Subcommittee” of the Ethics Committee for further discussion and review of possible avenues of conflict resolution. This subcommittee shall be composed of four (4) members, two of each gender. The purpose of this subcommittee’s activities is to provide information to the complainant member with regard to conflict resolution strategies. The subcommittee will offer no “advice,” but rather will review the resources available with the complainant member for his or her consideration.

6. Should the member allege violations of other sections of the AAO-HNS Code of Ethics, then the formal process for evaluation and investigation, as provided for in Procedure B, shall be invoked.