

Position Statement
on
Photographic Enhancement
(Approved by the Board of Directors August 2, 1997:
Reviewed by the Board of Directors August 5, 2007)

Photographic documentation of skin diseases and their response to therapy is an established tradition in dermatology. In scientific reports, representational images are synonymous with data and subject to the same rules of ethical scientific conduct. They should be acquired and presented in an objective, accurate and unbiased manner. As in collecting any data, the technology used can influence the results obtained. This is true for traditional photographic techniques and processing, and more recently for digital manipulation of electronically captured, processed, or rendered images. Use of these technologies to misrepresent or alter the scientific content of an image for purposes of promoting one result or interpretation over another is unethical.

The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) shall adhere to the highest scientific and ethical standards in all of its presentations of medical and dermatologic information, including images, to professionals and the public. This rule shall apply to the Academy's scientific meetings, printed journals, electronic publications and resources, an educational products and offering. Objective balanced and unbiased presentation of data, including images, is expected and required of all participants in AAD scientific and educational activities, whatever the venue. Similar ethical and professional behavior is expected of AAD members in all of their individual professional activities.

Authors of articles in AAD publications, presenters at AAD-sponsored meetings, or those otherwise acting on behalf of AAD or its affiliates, should make all reasonable efforts to obtain an objective and accurate original image that portrays an entity with fidelity. "Before" and "after" images should be obtained under identical (similar) reproducible conditions. The fidelity and scientific content of the original image should be retained in the final published or presentation medium. Manipulations (e.g. cropping, contrast, color balance, etc.) to properly and accurately prepare an image are acceptable practices. Image manipulation with the intent to enhance, expunge, diffuse, alter, or misrepresent its scientific data content is unethical and will not be tolerated. An original transparency, negative, or electronic file of the image must be maintained and made available to the AAD or its affiliates upon request.

All images that have been manipulated by any means must carry a disclaimer when submitted to the AAD for use in its activities. An image that has been manipulated to alter extraneous non-scientific content of material (e.g. deleted background objects), without altering its scientific content, is acceptable, provided that a disclaimer is attached to the image detailing specifically what was done and why it was done. Acceptability of images for purposes of AAD activities remains the sole prerogative of the AAD. Photographically or electronically manipulated or rendered images must bear a symbol in the lower right hand corner ("E" or similar notation), denoting that the image has been altered. If questioned, presenter must accurately explain how the image was altered and how it differs from its original.