



Confidentiality

As professionals, we need to adhere to the highest standards of confidentiality. We cannot let others know that we are visiting a particular person, much less discuss what we find or talk about. As part of the study, the women are told that information about them will be kept confidential. We must make sure their information is actually kept confidential in order for the study to be kept in compliance with the Investigation Review Board (Committee on Human Investigation).

Excerpt from an Ann Landers Column (1986):

Dear Ann Landers:

The following gripes have made my blood boil for years and I need to tell somebody.

Our next-door neighbor's teenager is pregnant. How do I know? The doctor told my husband when they were playing tennis.

A prominent executive and his wife are on the brink of divorce. How do I know? The church secretary spilled the details at her card club. The couple has been seeing the pastor for counseling.

A well-known attorney has genital herpes. The pharmacist let the delivery boy wrap the bottle of Zorovax. He blabbed it to his pal, who happens to be my hairdresser.

A very affluent dentist and his wife have borrowed to the hilt. They may lose their home. Guess who spilled the beans? The loan officer at the bank. He told his barber.

This morning my manicurist told me the head of a large insurance company is drying out in a hospital in Minnesota and his wife has been telling everyone he's in Switzerland on business.

Why do people tell professional secrets? Don't they realize it is a serious violation of ethics and can do tremendous damage? Please, Ann, speak to this in your column.

Speechless in Pebble Beach

Dear Speechless,

People who blab professional secrets do so because it gives them a feeling of importance. They like to drag down those at the top to get even for not having made it themselves. A person of your character will stop the dirt distributor in his/her tracks by saying, "I'm sorry you told me that. It diminishes you in my eyes."

Ann Landers