



August 4, 2005

**Response from the American Psychological Association to
“A stain on medical ethics”**

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The essay, “A stain on medical ethics” by Michael Wilks claims that the American Psychological Association (APA) takes a position that in actuality the Association and our Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security explicitly reject. A central finding of the recently released Task Force report and the position of the APA—contrary to Wilks’ claim—is that psychologists are always bound by the ethical responsibilities set forth in the APA ethics code—regardless of the work setting and regardless of whether they are referred to as psychologists, behavioral consultants or scientists, or some other term. Our code of ethics always applies – no exceptions, including in settings outside traditional therapeutic contexts.

In his essay, the author states that according to certain reports, medical personnel have “failed to report evidence of torture, failed to intervene to stop it being repeated, and made available to interrogators information from confidential medical files.” The APA Task Force report states explicitly that psychologists have an ethical obligation to report evidence of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment to appropriate authorities, and that it is unethical for psychologists to use information from a medical file to the detriment of an individual's safety and well-being.

A copy of the report of the APA Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security can be found on the web at

<http://www.apa.org/releases/PENSTaskForceReportFinal.pdf>