

# WMA International Code of Medical Ethics

Adopted by the 3rd General Assembly of the World Medical Association, London, England, October 1949  
and amended by the 22nd World Medical Assembly Sydney, Australia, August 1968  
and the 35th World Medical Assembly Venice, Italy, October 1983  
and the WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

## DUTIES OF PHYSICIANS IN GENERAL

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| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | always exercise his/her independent professional judgment and maintain the highest standards of professional conduct.   |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | respect a competent patient's right to accept or refuse treatment.  |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | not allow his/her judgment to be influenced by personal profit or unfair discrimination.  |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | be dedicated to providing competent medical service in full professional and moral independence, with compassion and respect for human dignity.                                       |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | deal honestly with patients and colleagues, and report to the appropriate authorities those physicians who practice unethically or incompetently or who engage in fraud or deception. |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | not receive any financial benefits or other incentives solely for referring patients or prescribing specific products.  |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | respect the rights and preferences of patients, colleagues, and other health professionals.   |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | recognize his/her important role in educating the public but should use due caution in divulging discoveries or new techniques or treatment through non-professional channels.        |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | certify only that which he/she has personally verified.   |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | strive to use health care resources in the best way to benefit patients and their community.  |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | seek appropriate care and attention if he/she suffers from mental or physical illness.  |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | respect the local and national codes of ethics.   |

## DUTIES OF PHYSICIANS TO PATIENTS

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| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | always bear in mind the obligation to respect human life.  |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | act in the patient's best interest when providing medical care.  |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | owe his/her patients complete loyalty and all the scientific resources available to him/her. Whenever an examination or treatment is beyond the physician's capacity, he/she should consult with or refer to another physician who has the necessary ability.                        |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | respect a patient's right to confidentiality. It is ethical to disclose confidential information when the patient consents to it or when there is a real and imminent threat of harm to the patient or to others and this threat can be only removed by a breach of confidentiality. |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | give emergency care as a humanitarian duty unless he/she is assured that others are willing and able to give such care.  |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | in situations when he/she is acting for a third party, ensure that the patient has full knowledge of that situation.   |
| A PHYSICIAN<br>SHALL | not enter into a sexual relationship with his/her current patient or into any other abusive or exploitative relationship.  |

## DUTIES OF PHYSICIANS TO COLLEAGUES

- A PHYSICIAN SHALL behave towards colleagues as he/she would have them behave towards him/her.
- A PHYSICIAN SHALL NOT undermine the patient-physician relationship of colleagues in order to attract patients.
- A PHYSICIAN SHALL when medically necessary, communicate with colleagues who are involved in the care of the same patient. This communication should respect patient confidentiality and be confined to necessary information.