
WMA STATEMENT ON FAMILY PLANNING AND THE RIGHT OF A WOMAN TO CONTRACEPTION

Adopted by the 48th WMA General Assembly, Somerset West, South Africa, October 1996
and amended by the 58th WMA General Assembly, Copenhagen, Denmark, October 2007

The WMA recognizes that unwanted pregnancies and pregnancies that are too closely spaced can have a serious adverse effect on the health of a woman and of her children. These adverse effects can include the premature deaths of women. Existing children in the family can also suffer starvation, neglect or abandonment resulting in their death or im-paired health, when families are unable to provide for all their children. Social function-ing and the ability to reach their full potential can also be impaired.

The WMA recognizes the benefits for women who are able to control their fertility. They should be helped to make such choices themselves, as well as in discussion with their partners. The ability to do so by choice and not chance is a principal component of wo-men's physical and mental health and social well being.

Access to adequate fertility control methods is not universal; many of the poorest women in the world have the least access. Knowledge about how their bodies work, information on how to control their fertility and the materials necessary to make those choices are uni-versal and basic human rights for all women.

The role of family planning and secure access to appropriate methods is recognized in the 5th Millennium Development goal as a major factor promoting maternal and child health.

The WMA recommends that National Medical Associations:

Promote family planning education by working with governments, NGOs and others to provide secure and high-quality services and assistance.

Attempt to ensure that such information, materials, products and services are available without regard to nationality, creed, race, religion or socioeconomic status.