

## THE WMA DECLARATION ON PATIENT SAFETY

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### PREAMBLE

1. Physicians strive to provide the highest quality health and medical care to patients. Patient safety is one of the core elements of quality in health and medical care.
2. Progress in medical and allied science and technology has transformed modern medicine into an advanced and complex health system.
3. Inherent risks have always existed in clinical medicine. Developments in modern medicine have resulted in new and sometimes greater risks - some avoidable, others inherent.
4. Physicians should attempt to foresee these risks and manage them in the treatment of patients.

### PRINCIPLES

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5. Physicians must ensure that patient safety is always considered during medical decision-making.
6. Individuals and processes are rarely solely responsible for producing errors. Rather, separate elements combine and together produce a high-risk situation. Therefore, there should be a non-punitive culture for confidential reporting healthcare errors that focuses on preventing and correcting systems failures and not on individual or organization culpability.
7. A realistic understanding of the risks inherent in modern medicine requires that physicians must go beyond the professional boundaries of health care and cooperate with all relevant parties, including patients, to adopt a proactive systems approach to patient safety.
8. To create such a systems approach, physicians must continuously absorb a wide range of advanced scientific knowledge and continuously strive to improve medical practice.
9. All information that concerns a patient's safety must be shared with all relevant parties, including the patient. However, patient confidentiality must be strictly protected.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

10. Hence, the WMA recommends the following to national medical associations:

- 10.1 National medical associations should promote policies on patient safety to all physicians in their countries;
- 10.2 National medical associations should encourage individual physicians, other health care professionals, patients and other relevant individuals and organizations to work together to establish systems that secure patient safety;
- 10.3 National medical associations should encourage the development of effective models to promote patient safety through continuing medical education/continuing professional development;
- 10.4 National medical associations should cooperate with one another and exchange information about adverse events, including errors, their solutions, and "lessons learned" to improve patient safety.

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