

WMA RESOLUTION ON ACCESS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO HEALTH CARE AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE MEDICAL PROFESSION

Adopted by the 49th WMA General Assembly, Hamburg, Germany, November 1997
and amended by the 59th WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

PREAMBLE

For years women and girls worldwide have been suffering increasing violations of their human rights. These violations often arise from historically based gender bias where women and girls are restricted in their access to, inter alia, employment, education and health care.

In many countries, due to, inter alia, religious and cultural convictions, female doctors and nurses have been prevented from exercising their profession, which may lead to female patients and their children not having access to health care.

Girls have the same rights as boys, and women have the same rights as men. Discriminating against girls and women damages their health expectation. Education of girl children is a major factor affecting their likelihood of experiencing health and well-being as adults. It also improves the chances of their children surviving infancy. Secondary discrimination due to social, religious and cultural practices - which diminishes women's freedom to make decisions for themselves and to access work and healthcare - should be condemned.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Therefore, the World Medical Association urges its constituent members to:

- Categorically condemn violations of the basic human rights of women and children, including violations stemming from social, religious and cultural practices;
- Insist on the rights of women and children to full and adequate medical care, especially where religious and cultural restrictions hinder access to such medical care;
- Promote women's and children's health rights as human rights;
- Sensitize their membership on issues of gender equality and on participation of women in decision-making and health related activities;
- Increase broad-based representation and effective participation of women in the medical profession, especially in light of the increased enrolment of women in medical schools;

- Promote the achievement of the human right to equality of opportunity, equality of treatment and non-sexism;
- Promote a higher growth rate of membership in National Medical Associations amongst women through empowerment, career development, appropriate training to improve knowledge and skills, and other strategic initiatives.

RESCINDED