

# Handbook of WMA Policies



**The World Medical Association, Inc.**

## Version History

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**Version 2010, Vancouver; Printed in March 2011**

**Version 2011, Montevideo; Printed in December 2011**

- Replacements

Code	Short Title	Page Numbers*
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\* to be printed from double-sided pdf for printout (HB-E(print)-2012.pdf)

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## PREFACE

Before World War II came to an end, a number of medical associations gathered in London to reinvent the approach to international collaboration among the world's physicians. The old model, represented by the pre-war "Association Professionnelle Internationale des Médecins" (APIM), would no longer meet the needs of the post-war medical profession. It was time to create something new.

After only two years of preparation, 27 national medical associations met in Paris on September 18th, 1947 for the inauguration of a new global physicians' association, the World Medical Association (WMA). The lead-up to this first Assembly was paralleled by the Nuremberg trial against Nazi doctors, which was a key driver of the mission focus of the new WMA. This terrible episode in the history of medicine dictated that the organization must seek to become the authoritative voice on global standards for medical ethics and professional conduct, rather than focus solely on protecting the interests of the profession.

Effectively coordinating an international organization was anything but easy in the late 1940s. There was no internet, e-mail, mobile phones, personal computers, fax, or even photocopiers. For many physicians, attending the Assembly required a cross-continental, multi-day journey across a deeply scarred planet, by train and ship and only in exceptional circumstances by plane. Yet the commitment of these founding WMA members to their vision was even greater than the challenges they faced in achieving it. That vision, and the accompanying goals, ideals, and unity of purpose, are as relevant today as they were during those early days. They are now ours to carry on.

The WMA Handbook of Policies is evidence that the engagement of the world medical profession does, in fact, persist. The WMA now is bigger, stronger and more active than ever before, and our Handbook is the product of physicians coming together for more than half a century to provide ethical guidance, moral support and practical advice to help their colleagues serve their patients to the best of their ability. From the Declaration of Geneva, often referred to as the "Modern Hippocratic Oath" to the Declaration of Helsinki advising physicians doing medical research on human subjects, to the Declaration of Tokyo prohibiting physicians from participating in torture and degrading treatment – to mention just a few of WMA's landmark policies – the guidance provided by the WMA is as necessary now as it has ever been.

There are many other policies in this world dealing with physician conduct, many of which try to be "modern", "easily readable" and "politically correct". The WMA has never capitulated against the "Zeitgeist", but has stood firm with its values, the most important of which are caring, ethics and science.

Sir William Osler said: "The most important thing is caring, so do it first, for the caring physicians best inspires hope and trust." Hope and trust are the basis for any treatment. A physician who cannot generate trust will face more challenges than the one who receives the trust of the patients. A patient with hope is far better off than one without.

But caring must go hand-in-hand with medical ethics and proper conduct. Physicians are often confronted with questions of life and death, resource allocations, and dual loyalties when serving a single patient and at the same time respecting the needs of a community or population. The questions are often too difficult and the problems too burdensome for one person alone. We are far away from having answers for all such questions, but for many, the WMA can provide the ethical guidance that protects patients, supports physicians, and duly considers the interests of the communities and populations they both belong to.

Finally, science is what distinguishes medicine from well-intended kindness. In medicine, quality care and ethical conduct cannot be separated from sound science. Still, despite our sincere and continual quest for increased scientific knowledge, understanding and solutions, we will never be protected from all mistakes. Therefore, practicing the science of medicine with faithful adherence to clear ethical guidance is the best we can do.

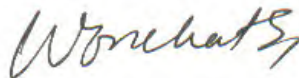
This new handbook\* provides a good part of this guidance. It is proof of our continued engagement with our colleagues in the different parts of this world and our commitment to our patients, wherever and whoever they may be. It is a living document and the WMA will continue to improve and expand it, in service to the profession and the health of those we serve as physicians.



J. Edward Hill  
Chairman of Council



Otmar Kloiber  
Secretary General



Wonchat Subchaturas  
President 2010-2011

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\* The World Medical Association is most grateful to the Korean Medical Association for seconding Ms. Seong Mi Lee to the WMA Office at Ferney-Voltaire, providing valuable help in putting this collection of policies together.

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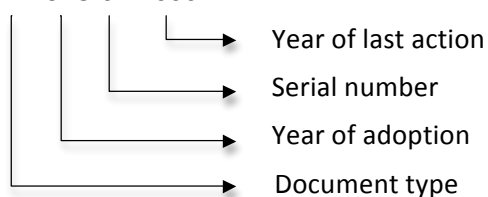
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**\* Code explanation (sorting criteria):**

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D: Declarations / S: Statements / R: Resolutions / CR: Council Resolutions

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Body Searches of Prisoners .....	S-1993-01-2005
Bolivian Medical Association .....	CR-2006-01-2006
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Capital Punishment .....	R-2012-03-2012
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Child Health (Ottawa) .....	D-1998-01-2009
Child Safety in Airline Travel .....	R-2006-02-2006
Chronic Disease .....	S-2011-01-2011

Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases .....	CR-2005-01-2005
Climate Change (Delhi) .....	D-2009-01-2009
Collective Action by Physicians .....	S-2012-02-2012
Conflict of Interest .....	S-2009-01-2009
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Criminalisation of Medical Practice .....	CR-2013-02-2013
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Delhi (Climate Change) .....	D-2009-01-2009
Denunciation of Acts of Torture .....	R-2003-02-2007
Detention and Imprisonment (Tokyo) .....	D-1975-01-2006
Determination of Death (Sydney) .....	D-1968-01-2006
Dietary Sodium Intake .....	S-2008-01-2008
Disaster Preparedness (Montevideo) .....	D-2011-01-2011
Disasters .....	S-1994-01-2006
Drain of Healthcare Skills .....	CR-2005-02-2005
Drug Prescription .....	R-2010-01-2010
Drug Substitution .....	S-2005-02-2015

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Edinburgh (Prison Conditions on TB) .....	D-2000-01-2011
Elderly Abuse (Hong Kong) .....	D-1989-01-2015
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End-of-Life Medical Care .....	D-2011-02-2011
Environmental Degradation .....	S-2010-01-2010
Environmental Issues .....	S-1988-04-2006
Euthanasia .....	D-1987-01-2015
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Female Genital Mutilation .....	S-1993-02-2005
Forced and Coerced Sterilisation .....	S-2012-03-2012
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Genocide in Darfur .....	CR-2005-03-2005

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Helsinki (Medical Research involving Human Subjects) .....	D-1964-01-2008
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Hong Kong (Elderly Abuse) .....	D-1989-01-2015
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Hunger Strikers (Malta) .....	D-1991-01-2006

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Lisbon (Patient's Rights) .....	D-1981-01-2015
Living Wills .....	S-2003-02-2013

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Malta (Hunger Strikers) .....	D-1991-01-2006
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Medical Ethics .....	D-1949-01-2006
Medical Liability Reform .....	S-2005-04-2015
Medical Neutrality .....	CR-2009-01-2009
Medical Research involving Human Subjects (Helsinki) .....	D-1964-01-2013
Medical Workforce .....	R-1998-04-2009
Mercury .....	S-2008-02-2008
Migrant Workers' Health and Safety in Qatar .....	R-2014-02-2014
Minimum Price for Alcohol .....	R-2012-01-2012
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Non-Discrimination in Professional Membership .....	S-1985-01-2005
Nuclear Testing in North Korea .....	R-2006-04-2006
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Opiate and Psychotropic Drug Abuse .....	S-2006-06-2006
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Organ Donation and Transplantation .....	S-2000-01-2006
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Patient Safety .....	D-2002-03-2012

Patient's Rights (Lisbon) .....	D-1981-01-2015
Patients with Mental Illness .....	S-1995-02-2006
Physicians and Commercial Enterprises .....	S-2004-02-2009
Physicians and Pharmacists in Medical Therapy .....	S-1999-02-2010
Plain Packaging of Cigarettes .....	R-2012-02-2012
Poppies for Medicine Project for Afghanistan .....	R-2008-02-2008
Prioritisation of Immunisation .....	S-2012-05-2012
Prison Conditions on TB (Edinburgh) .....	D-2000-01-2011
Professional Autonomy and Clinical Independence (Seoul) .....	D-2008-01-2008
Professional Autonomy and Self-regulation in Turkey .....	CR-2012-02-2012
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Professionally-led Regulation (Madrid) .....	D-2009-02-2009
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Protection and integrity of Medical Personnel .....	S-2011-03-2011
Protection of Healthcare Workers .....	D-2014-01-2014
Public Health .....	S-1995-04-2006

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Quality Improvement in Health Care .....	D-1997-01-2009
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Refugees' Medical Care .....	S-1998-02-2010
Refusing Torture (Hamburg) .....	D-1997-02-2007
Right of Woman on Family Planning .....	S-1996-04-2007
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SARS .....	R-2003-04-2003
Self-Medication .....	S-2002-02-2012
Seoul (Professional Autonomy and Clinical Independence) .....	D-2008-01-2008
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Social Media .....	S-2011-05-2011
Solitary Confinement .....	S-2014-03-2014
Sports Medicine .....	D-1981-02-2010
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Suicide Physician-Assisted .....	S-1992-06-2015
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Terminal Illness (Venice) .....	D-1983-01-2006
Therapeutic Abortion .....	D-1970-01-2006
Tobacco Products Health Hazards .....	S-1988-05-2011
Tobacco-WHO FCTC .....	CR-2005-05-2005
Tokyo (Detention and Imprisonment) .....	D-1975-01-2006
Torture - Prohibition of Physician Participation .....	CR-2009-02-2009
Trade Agreements and Public Health .....	CR-2015-01-2015
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Tuberculosis .....	R-2006-05-2006

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Venice (Terminal Illness) .....	D-1983-01-2006
Veterinary Medicine .....	R-2008-03-2008
Victims of Torture .....	S-2013-04-2013
Violence against Women and Girls .....	R-2010-02-2010
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Washington (Biological Weapons) .....	D-2002-01-2003
Water and Health .....	S-2004-03-2014
Weapons of Warfare .....	S-1996-05-2006
WFME .....	R-2004-01-2014
Women and Children to Health Care .....	R-1997-03-2008
Women's Right to Health Care .....	R-2002-06-2013





## WMA DECLARATION OF GENEVA

Adopted by the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the World Medical Association,  
Geneva, Switzerland, September 1948  
and amended by the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Medical Assembly, Sydney, Australia, August 1968  
and the 35<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Venice, Italy, October 1983  
and the 46<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Stockholm, Sweden, September 1994  
and editorially revised by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session,  
Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2005  
and the 173<sup>rd</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2006

AT THE TIME OF BEING ADMITTED AS A MEMBER OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION:

I SOLEMNLY PLEDGE to consecrate my life to the service of humanity;

I WILL GIVE to my teachers the respect and gratitude that is their due;

I WILL PRACTISE my profession with conscience and dignity;

THE HEALTH OF MY PATIENT will be my first consideration;

I WILL RESPECT the secrets that are confided in me, even after the patient has died;

I WILL MAINTAIN by all the means in my power, the honour and the noble traditions of the medical profession;

MY COLLEAGUES will be my sisters and brothers;

I WILL NOT PERMIT considerations of age, disease or disability, creed, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, social standing or any other factor to intervene between my duty and my patient;

I WILL MAINTAIN the utmost respect for human life;

I WILL NOT USE my medical knowledge to violate human rights and civil liberties, even under threat;

I MAKE THESE PROMISES solemnly, freely and upon my honour.

## **WMA INTERNATIONAL CODE OF MEDICAL ETHICS**

Adopted by the 3<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly of the World Medical Association,  
London, England, October 1949  
and amended by the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Medical Assembly, Sydney, Australia, August 1968  
and the 35<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Venice, Italy, October 1983  
and the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **DUTIES OF PHYSICIANS IN GENERAL**

A PHYSICIAN SHALL always exercise his/her independent professional judgment and maintain the highest standards of professional conduct.

A PHYSICIAN SHALL respect a competent patient's right to accept or refuse treatment.

A PHYSICIAN SHALL not allow his/her judgment to be influenced by personal profit or unfair discrimination.

A PHYSICIAN SHALL be dedicated to providing competent medical service in full professional and moral independence, with compassion and respect for human dignity.

A PHYSICIAN 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 SHALL not receive any financial benefits or other incentives solely for referring patients or prescribing specific products.

A PHYSICIAN SHALL respect the rights and preferences of patients, colleagues, and other health professionals.

A PHYSICIAN 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 SHALL certify only that which he/she has personally verified.

A PHYSICIAN SHALL strive to use health care resources in the best way to benefit patients and their community.

A PHYSICIAN SHALL seek appropriate care and attention if he/she suffers from mental or physical illness.

A PHYSICIAN SHALL respect the local and national codes of ethics.

### **DUTIES OF PHYSICIANS TO PATIENTS**

A PHYSICIAN SHALL always bear in mind the obligation to respect human life.

A PHYSICIAN SHALL act in the patient's best interest when providing medical care.

A PHYSICIAN 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 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 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 SHALL in situations when he/she is acting for a third party, ensure that the patient has full knowledge of that situation.

A PHYSICIAN 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.



## WMA DECLARATION OF HELSINKI

### - ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS -

Adopted by the 18<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, June 1964  
and amended by the:

29<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Tokyo, Japan, October 1975

35<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Venice, Italy, October 1983

41<sup>st</sup> WMA General Assembly, Hong Kong, September 1989

48<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Somerset West, Republic of South Africa, October 1996

52<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Edinburgh, Scotland, October 2000

53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington DC, USA, October 2002

(Note of Clarification added)

55<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Tokyo, Japan, October 2004

(Note of Clarification added)

59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Republic of Korea, October 2008

64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

### PREAMBLE

1. The World Medical Association (WMA) has developed the Declaration of Helsinki as a statement of ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects, including research on identifiable human material and data.

The Declaration is intended to be read as a whole and each of its constituent paragraphs should be applied with consideration of all other relevant paragraphs.

2. Consistent with the mandate of the WMA, the Declaration is addressed primarily to physicians. The WMA encourages others who are involved in medical research involving human subjects to adopt these principles.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

3. The Declaration of Geneva of the WMA binds the physician with the words, "The health of my patient will be my first consideration," and the International Code of Medical Ethics declares that, "A physician shall act in the patient's best interest when providing medical care."
4. It is the duty of the physician to promote and safeguard the health, well-being and rights of patients, including those who are involved in medical research. The physician's knowledge and conscience are dedicated to the fulfilment of this duty.

## Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (Helsinki)

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5. Medical progress is based on research that ultimately must include studies involving human subjects.
6. The primary purpose of medical research involving human subjects is to understand the causes, development and effects of diseases and improve preventive, diagnostic and therapeutic interventions (methods, procedures and treatments). Even the best proven interventions must be evaluated continually through research for their safety, effectiveness, efficiency, accessibility and quality.
7. Medical research is subject to ethical standards that promote and ensure respect for all human subjects and protect their health and rights.
8. While the primary purpose of medical research is to generate new knowledge, this goal can never take precedence over the rights and interests of individual research subjects.
9. It is the duty of physicians who are involved in medical research to protect the life, health, dignity, integrity, right to self-determination, privacy, and confidentiality of personal information of research subjects. The responsibility for the protection of research subjects must always rest with the physician or other health care professionals and never with the research subjects, even though they have given consent.
10. Physicians must consider the ethical, legal and regulatory norms and standards for research involving human subjects in their own countries as well as applicable international norms and standards. No national or international ethical, legal or regulatory requirement should reduce or eliminate any of the protections for research subjects set forth in this Declaration.
11. Medical research should be conducted in a manner that minimises possible harm to the environment.
12. Medical research involving human subjects must be conducted only by individuals with the appropriate ethics and scientific education, training and qualifications. Research on patients or healthy volunteers requires the supervision of a competent and appropriately qualified physician or other health care professional.
13. Groups that are underrepresented in medical research should be provided appropriate access to participation in research.
14. Physicians who combine medical research with medical care should involve their patients in research only to the extent that this is justified by its potential preventive, diagnostic or therapeutic value and if the physician has good reason to believe that participation in the research study will not adversely affect the health of the patients who serve as research subjects.
15. Appropriate compensation and treatment for subjects who are harmed as a result of participating in research must be ensured.

### **RISKS, BURDENS AND BENEFITS**

16. In medical practice and in medical research, most interventions involve risks and burdens.

Medical research involving human subjects may only be conducted if the importance of the objective outweighs the risks and burdens to the research subjects.

17. All medical research involving human subjects must be preceded by careful assessment of predictable risks and burdens to the individuals and groups involved in the research in comparison with foreseeable benefits to them and to other individuals or groups affected by the condition under investigation.

Measures to minimise the risks must be implemented. The risks must be continuously monitored, assessed and documented by the researcher.

18. Physicians may not be involved in a research study involving human subjects unless they are confident that the risks have been adequately assessed and can be satisfactorily managed.

When the risks are found to outweigh the potential benefits or when there is conclusive proof of definitive outcomes, physicians must assess whether to continue, modify or immediately stop the study.

#### **VULNERABLE GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS**

19. Some groups and individuals are particularly vulnerable and may have an increased likelihood of being wronged or of incurring additional harm.

All vulnerable groups and individuals should receive specifically considered protection.

20. Medical research with a vulnerable group is only justified if the research is responsive to the health needs or priorities of this group and the research cannot be carried out in a non-vulnerable group. In addition, this group should stand to benefit from the knowledge, practices or interventions that result from the research.

#### **SCIENTIFIC REQUIREMENTS AND RESEARCH PROTOCOLS**

21. Medical research involving human subjects must conform to generally accepted scientific principles, be based on a thorough knowledge of the scientific literature, other relevant sources of information, and adequate laboratory and, as appropriate, animal experimentation. The welfare of animals used for research must be respected.

22. The design and performance of each research study involving human subjects must be clearly described and justified in a research protocol.

The protocol should contain a statement of the ethical considerations involved and should indicate how the principles in this Declaration have been addressed. The protocol should include information regarding funding, sponsors, institutional affiliations, potential conflicts of interest, incentives for subjects and information regarding provisions for treating and/or compensating subjects who are harmed as a consequence of participation in the research study.

In clinical trials, the protocol must also describe appropriate arrangements for post-trial provisions.

### RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEES

23. The research protocol must be submitted for consideration, comment, guidance and approval to the concerned research ethics committee before the study begins. This committee must be transparent in its functioning, must be independent of the researcher, the sponsor and any other undue influence and must be duly qualified. It must take into consideration the laws and regulations of the country or countries in which the research is to be performed as well as applicable international norms and standards but these must not be allowed to reduce or eliminate any of the protections for research subjects set forth in this Declaration.

The committee must have the right to monitor ongoing studies. The researcher must provide monitoring information to the committee, especially information about any serious adverse events. No amendment to the protocol may be made without consideration and approval by the committee. After the end of the study, the researchers must submit a final report to the committee containing a summary of the study's findings and conclusions.

### PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

24. Every precaution must be taken to protect the privacy of research subjects and the confidentiality of their personal information.

### INFORMED CONSENT

25. Participation by individuals capable of giving informed consent as subjects in medical research must be voluntary. Although it may be appropriate to consult family members or community leaders, no individual capable of giving informed consent may be enrolled in a research study unless he or she freely agrees.
26. In medical research involving human subjects capable of giving informed consent, each potential subject must be adequately informed of the aims, methods, sources of funding, any possible conflicts of interest, institutional affiliations of the researcher, the anticipated benefits and potential risks of the study and the discomfort it may entail, post-study provisions and any other relevant aspects of the study. The potential subject must be informed of the right to refuse to participate in the study or to withdraw consent to participate at any time without reprisal. Special attention should be given to the specific information needs of individual potential subjects as well as to the methods used to deliver the information.

After ensuring that the potential subject has understood the information, the physician or another appropriately qualified individual must then seek the potential subject's freely-given informed consent, preferably in writing. If the consent cannot be expressed in writing, the non-written consent must be formally documented and witnessed.

All medical research subjects should be given the option of being informed about the general outcome and results of the study.

27. When seeking informed consent for participation in a research study the physician must be particularly cautious if the potential subject is in a dependent relationship



with the physician or may consent under duress. In such situations the informed consent must be sought by an appropriately qualified individual who is completely independent of this relationship.

28. For a potential research subject who is incapable of giving informed consent, the physician must seek informed consent from the legally authorised representative. These individuals must not be included in a research study that has no likelihood of benefit for them unless it is intended to promote the health of the group represented by the potential subject, the research cannot instead be performed with persons capable of providing informed consent, and the research entails only minimal risk and minimal burden.
29. When a potential research subject who is deemed incapable of giving informed consent is able to give assent to decisions about participation in research, the physician must seek that assent in addition to the consent of the legally authorised representative. The potential subject's dissent should be respected.
30. Research involving subjects who are physically or mentally incapable of giving consent, for example, unconscious patients, may be done only if the physical or mental condition that prevents giving informed consent is a necessary characteristic of the research group. In such circumstances the physician must seek informed consent from the legally authorised representative. If no such representative is available and if the research cannot be delayed, the study may proceed without informed consent provided that the specific reasons for involving subjects with a condition that renders them unable to give informed consent have been stated in the research protocol and the study has been approved by a research ethics committee. Consent to remain in the research must be obtained as soon as possible from the subject or a legally authorised representative.
31. The physician must fully inform the patient which aspects of their care are related to the research. The refusal of a patient to participate in a study or the patient's decision to withdraw from the study must never adversely affect the patient-physician relationship.
32. For medical research using identifiable human material or data, such as research on material or data contained in biobanks or similar repositories, physicians must seek informed consent for its collection, storage and/or reuse. There may be exceptional situations where consent would be impossible or impracticable to obtain for such research. In such situations the research may be done only after consideration and approval of a research ethics committee.

#### **USE OF PLACEBO**

33. The benefits, risks, burdens and effectiveness of a new intervention must be tested against those of the best proven intervention(s), except in the following circumstances:

Where no proven intervention exists, the use of placebo, or no intervention, is acceptable; or

Where for compelling and scientifically sound methodological reasons the use of any intervention less effective than the best proven one, the use of placebo, or no intervention is necessary to determine the efficacy or safety of an intervention

and the patients who receive any intervention less effective than the best proven one, placebo, or no intervention will not be subject to additional risks of serious or irreversible harm as a result of not receiving the best proven intervention.

Extreme care must be taken to avoid abuse of this option.

### **POST-TRIAL PROVISIONS**

34. In advance of a clinical trial, sponsors, researchers and host country governments should make provisions for post-trial access for all participants who still need an intervention identified as beneficial in the trial. This information must also be disclosed to participants during the informed consent process.

### **RESEARCH REGISTRATION AND PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS**

35. Every research study involving human subjects must be registered in a publicly accessible database before recruitment of the first subject.
36. Researchers, authors, sponsors, editors and publishers all have ethical obligations with regard to the publication and dissemination of the results of research. Researchers have a duty to make publicly available the results of their research on human subjects and are accountable for the completeness and accuracy of their reports. All parties should adhere to accepted guidelines for ethical reporting. Negative and inconclusive as well as positive results must be published or otherwise made publicly available. Sources of funding, institutional affiliations and conflicts of interest must be declared in the publication. Reports of research not in accordance with the principles of this Declaration should not be accepted for publication.

### **UNPROVEN INTERVENTIONS IN CLINICAL PRACTICE**

37. In the treatment of an individual patient, where proven interventions do not exist or other known interventions have been ineffective, the physician, after seeking expert advice, with informed consent from the patient or a legally authorised representative, may use an unproven intervention if in the physician's judgement it offers hope of saving life, re-establishing health or alleviating suffering. This intervention should subsequently be made the object of research, designed to evaluate its safety and efficacy. In all cases, new information must be recorded and, where appropriate, made publicly available.

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## **WMA DECLARATION OF SYDNEY ON THE DETERMINATION OF DEATH AND THE RECOVERY OF ORGANS**

Adopted by the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Medical Assembly, Sydney, Australia, August 1968  
and amended by the 35<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Venice, Italy, October 1983  
and the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

Determination of death can be made on the basis of the irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem, or the irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions. This determination will be based on clinical judgment according to accepted criteria supplemented, if necessary, by standard diagnostic procedures and made by a physician.

Even without intervention, cell, organ and tissue activity in the body may continue temporarily after a determination of death. Cessation of all life at the cellular level is not a necessary criterion for determination of death.

The use of deceased donor organs for transplantation has made it important for physicians to be able to determine when mechanically-supported patients have died.

After death has occurred, it may be possible to maintain circulation to the organs and tissues of the body mechanically. This may be done to preserve organs and tissues for transplantation.

Prior to post-mortem transplantation, the determination that death has occurred shall be made by a physician who is in no way immediately involved in the transplantation procedure.

Following determination of death, all treatment and resuscitation attempts may be ceased and donor organs may be recovered, provided that prevailing requirements of consent and other relevant ethical and legal requirements have been fulfilled.

## **WMA DECLARATION ON THERAPEUTIC ABORTION**

Adopted by the 24<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Oslo, Norway, August 1970  
and amended by the 35<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Venice, Italy, October 1983  
and the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

1. The WMA requires the physician to maintain respect for human life.
2. Circumstances bringing the interests of a mother into conflict with the interests of her unborn child create a dilemma and raise the question as to whether or not the pregnancy should be deliberately terminated.
3. Diversity of responses to such situations is due in part to the diversity of attitudes towards the life of the unborn child. This is a matter of individual conviction and conscience that must be respected.
4. It is not the role of the medical profession to determine the attitudes and rules of any particular state or community in this matter, but it is our duty to attempt both to ensure the protection of our patients and to safeguard the rights of the physician within society.
5. Therefore, where the law allows therapeutic abortion to be performed, the procedure should be performed by a physician competent to do so in premises approved by the appropriate authority.
6. If the physician's convictions do not allow him or her to advise or perform an abortion, he or she may withdraw while ensuring the continuity of medical care by a qualified colleague.

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## WMA DECLARATION OF TOKYO

### **- GUIDELINES FOR PHYSICIANS CONCERNING TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT IN RELATION TO DETENTION AND IMPRISONMENT -**

Adopted by the 29<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Tokyo, Japan, October 1975  
and editorially revised by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France,  
May 2005  
and the 173<sup>rd</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2006

#### **PREAMBLE**

It is the privilege of the physician to practise medicine in the service of humanity, to preserve and restore bodily and mental health without distinction as to persons, to comfort and to ease the suffering of his or her patients. The utmost respect for human life is to be maintained even under threat, and no use made of any medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity.

For the purpose of this Declaration, torture is defined as the deliberate, systematic or wanton infliction of physical or mental suffering by one or more persons acting alone or on the orders of any authority, to force another person to yield information, to make a confession, or for any other reason.

#### **DECLARATION**

1. The physician shall not countenance, condone or participate in the practice of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading procedures, whatever the offense of which the victim of such procedures is suspected, accused or guilty, and whatever the victim's beliefs or motives, and in all situations, including armed conflict and civil strife.
2. The physician shall not provide any premises, instruments, substances or knowledge to facilitate the practice of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or to diminish the ability of the victim to resist such treatment.
3. When providing medical assistance to detainees or prisoners who are, or who could later be, under interrogation, physicians should be particularly careful to ensure the confidentiality of all personal medical information. A breach of the Geneva Conventions shall in any case be reported by the physician to relevant authorities.

The physician shall not use nor allow to be used, as far as he or she can, medical knowledge or skills, or health information specific to individuals, to facilitate or otherwise aid any interrogation, legal or illegal, of those individuals.

4. The physician shall not be present during any procedure during which torture or any other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment is used or threatened.
5. A physician must have complete clinical independence in deciding upon the care of a person for whom he or she is medically responsible. The physician's fundamental role is to alleviate the distress of his or her fellow human beings, and no motive, whether personal, collective or political, shall prevail against this higher purpose.
6. Where a prisoner refuses nourishment and is considered by the physician as capable of forming an unimpaired and rational judgment concerning the consequences of such a voluntary refusal of nourishment, he or she shall not be fed artificially. The decision as to the capacity of the prisoner to form such a judgment should be confirmed by at least one other independent physician. The consequences of the refusal of nourishment shall be explained by the physician to the prisoner.
7. The World Medical Association will support, and should encourage the international community, the National Medical Associations and fellow physicians to support, the physician and his or her family in the face of threats or reprisals resulting from a refusal to condone the use of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

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## **WMA DECLARATION OF LISBON ON THE RIGHTS OF THE PATIENT**

Adopted by the 34<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Lisbon, Portugal,  
September/October 1981

and amended by the 47<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bali, Indonesia, September 1995  
and editorially revised by the 171<sup>st</sup> WMA Council Session, Santiago, Chile, October 2005  
and reaffirmed by the 200<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Oslo, Norway, April 2015

### **PREAMBLE**

The relationship between physicians, their patients and broader society has undergone significant changes in recent times. While a physician should always act according to his/her conscience, and always in the best interests of the patient, equal effort must be made to guarantee patient autonomy and justice. The following Declaration represents some of the principal rights of the patient that the medical profession endorses and promotes. Physicians and other persons or bodies involved in the provision of health care have a joint responsibility to recognize and uphold these rights. Whenever legislation, government action or any other administration or institution denies patients these rights, physicians should pursue appropriate means to assure or to restore them.

### **PRINCIPLES**

1. Right to medical care of good quality
  - a. Every person is entitled without discrimination to appropriate medical care.
  - b. Every patient has the right to be cared for by a physician whom he/she knows to be free to make clinical and ethical judgements without any outside interference.
  - c. The patient shall always be treated in accordance with his/her best interests. The treatment applied shall be in accordance with generally approved medical principles.
  - d. Quality assurance should always be a part of health care. Physicians, in particular, should accept responsibility for being guardians of the quality of medical services.
  - e. In circumstances where a choice must be made between potential patients for a particular treatment that is in limited supply, all such patients are entitled to a fair selection procedure for that treatment. That choice must be based on medical criteria and made without discrimination.

- f. The patient has the right to continuity of health care. The physician has an obligation to cooperate in the coordination of medically indicated care with other health care providers treating the patient. The physician may not discontinue treatment of a patient as long as further treatment is medically indicated, without giving the patient reasonable assistance and sufficient opportunity to make alternative arrangements for care.
2. Right to freedom of choice
    - a. The patient has the right to choose freely and change his/her physician and hospital or health service institution, regardless of whether they are based in the private or public sector.
    - b. The patient has the right to ask for the opinion of another physician at any stage.
3. Right to self-determination
    - a. The patient has the right to self-determination, to make free decisions regarding himself/herself. The physician will inform the patient of the consequences of his/her decisions.
    - b. A mentally competent adult patient has the right to give or withhold consent to any diagnostic procedure or therapy. The patient has the right to the information necessary to make his/her decisions. The patient should understand clearly what is the purpose of any test or treatment, what the results would imply, and what would be the implications of withholding consent.
    - c. The patient has the right to refuse to participate in research or the teaching of medicine.
4. The unconscious patient
    - a. If the patient is unconscious or otherwise unable to express his/her will, informed consent must be obtained whenever possible, from a legally entitled representative.
    - b. If a legally entitled representative is not available, but a medical intervention is urgently needed, consent of the patient may be presumed, unless it is obvious and beyond any doubt on the basis of the patient's previous firm expression or conviction that he/she would refuse consent to the intervention in that situation.
    - c. However, physicians should always try to save the life of a patient unconscious due to a suicide attempt.
5. The legally incompetent patient
    - a. If a patient is a minor or otherwise legally incompetent, the consent of a legally entitled representative is required in some jurisdictions. Nevertheless the patient must be involved in the decision-making to the fullest extent allowed by his/her capacity.



- b. If the legally incompetent patient can make rational decisions, his/her decisions must be respected, and he/she has the right to forbid the disclosure of information to his/her legally entitled representative.
- c. If the patient's legally entitled representative, or a person authorized by the patient, forbids treatment which is, in the opinion of the physician, in the patient's best interest, the physician should challenge this decision in the relevant legal or other institution. In case of emergency, the physician will act in the patient's best interest.

#### 6. Procedures against the patient's will

Diagnostic procedures or treatment against the patient's will can be carried out only in exceptional cases, if specifically permitted by law and conforming to the principles of medical ethics.

#### 7. Right to information

- a. The patient has the right to receive information about himself/herself recorded in any of his/her medical records, and to be fully informed about his/her health status including the medical facts about his/her condition. However, confidential information in the patient's records about a third party should not be given to the patient without the consent of that third party.
- b. Exceptionally, information may be withheld from the patient when there is good reason to believe that this information would create a serious hazard to his/her life or health.
- c. Information should be given in a way appropriate to the patient's culture and in such a way that the patient can understand.
- d. The patient has the right not to be informed on his/her explicit request, unless required for the protection of another person's life.
- e. The patient has the right to choose who, if anyone, should be informed on his/her behalf.

#### 8. Right to confidentiality

- a. All identifiable information about a patient's health status, medical condition, diagnosis, prognosis and treatment and all other information of a personal kind must be kept confidential, even after death. Exceptionally, descendants may have a right of access to information that would inform them of their health risks.
- b. Confidential information can only be disclosed if the patient gives explicit consent or if expressly provided for in the law. Information can be disclosed to other health care providers only on a strictly "need to know" basis unless the patient has given explicit consent.

- c. All identifiable patient data must be protected. The protection of the data must be appropriate to the manner of its storage. Human substances from which identifiable data can be derived must be likewise protected.

9. Right to health education

Every person has the right to health education that will assist him/her in making informed choices about personal health and about the available health services. The education should include information about healthy lifestyles and about methods of prevention and early detection of illnesses. The personal responsibility of everybody for his/her own health should be stressed. Physicians have an obligation to participate actively in educational efforts.

10. Right to dignity

- a. The patient's dignity and right to privacy shall be respected at all times in medical care and teaching, as shall his/her culture and values.
- b. The patient is entitled to relief of his/her suffering according to the current state of knowledge.
- c. The patient is entitled to humane terminal care and to be provided with all available assistance in making dying as dignified and comfortable as possible.

11. Right to religious assistance

The patient has the right to receive or to decline spiritual and moral comfort including the help of a minister of his/her chosen religion.

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## **WMA DECLARATION ON PRINCIPLES OF HEALTH CARE FOR SPORTS MEDICINE**

Adopted by the 34<sup>th</sup> World Medical Association General Assembly, Lisbon, Portugal,  
September/October 1981

and revised by the 39<sup>th</sup> World Medical Association General Assembly, Madrid, Spain,  
October 1987

and the 45<sup>th</sup> World Medical Association General Assembly, Budapest, Hungary,  
October 1993

and the 51<sup>st</sup> World Medical Association General Assembly, Tel Aviv, Israel, October 1999  
and reaffirmed by the 185<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Evian-les-Bains, France, May 2010

Considering the involvement of physicians in sports medicine, the WMA recommends the following ethical guidelines for physicians in order to help meet the needs of athletes, recognizing special circumstances in which their medical care and health guidance is given.

Consequently,

1. The physician who cares for athletes has an ethical responsibility to recognize the special physical and mental demands placed upon them by their performance in sports activities.
2. When the sports participant is a child or an adolescent, the physician must give first consideration to the participant's growth and stage of development.
  1. The physician must ensure that the child's state of growth and development, as well as his or her general condition of health can absorb the rigors of the training and competition without jeopardizing the normal physical or mental development of the child or adolescent.
  2. The physician must oppose any sports or athletic activity that is not appropriate to the child's stage of growth and development or general condition of health. The physician must act in the best interest of the health of the child or adolescent, without regard to any other interest or pressure from any other source.
3. When the sports participant is a professional athlete and derives livelihood from that activity, the physician should pay due regard to the occupational medical aspects involved.
4. The physician should be aware that the use of doping practices<sup>1</sup> by a physician is a violation of the medical oath and the basic principles of the WMA's Declaration of

Geneva, which states: "My patient's health will always be my first consideration." The WMA considers the problem of doping to be a threat to the health of athletes and young people in general, as well as being in conflict with the principles of medical ethics. The physician must thus oppose and refuse to administer or condone any such means or method which is not in accordance with medical ethics, and/or which might be harmful to the athlete using it, especially:

1. Procedures which artificially modify blood constituents or biochemistry.
2. The use of drugs or other substances whatever their nature and route of administration, including central-nervous-system stimulants or depressants and procedures which artificially modify reflexes.
3. Pharmacological interventions that may induce alterations of will or general mental outlook.
4. Procedures to mask pain or other protective symptoms if used to enable the athlete to take part in events when lesions or signs are present which make his participation inadvisable.
5. Measures which artificially change features appropriate to age and sex.
6. Training and taking part in events when to do so would not be compatible with preservation of the individual's fitness, health or safety.
7. Measures aimed at an unnatural increase or maintenance of performance during competition. Doping to improve an athlete's performance is unethical.
5. The physician should inform the athlete, those responsible for him or her, and other interested parties, of the consequences of the procedures the physician is opposing, guard against their use, enlist the support of other physicians and other organizations with the same aim, protect the athlete against any pressures which might induce him or her to use these methods and help with supervision against these procedures.
6. The sports physician has the duty to give his or her objective opinion on the athlete's fitness or unfitness clearly and precisely, leaving no doubt as to his or her conclusions.
7. In competitive sports or professional sports events, it is the physician's duty to decide whether the athlete is medically fit to remain on the field or return to the game. This decision cannot be delegated to other professionals or to other persons. In the physician's absence these individuals must adhere strictly to the instructions he or she has given them, with priority always being given to the best interests of the athlete's health and safety, and not the outcome of the competition.
8. In order to carry out his or her ethical obligations the sports physician must see his or her authority fully recognized and upheld, particularly wherever it concerns the health, safety and legitimate interests of the athlete, none of which can be prejudiced

to favour the interests of any third party whatsoever. These principles and obligations should be supported by an agreement between the sports physician and the athletic organization involved, recognizing that the physician is obligated to uphold the ethical principles determined in national and international statements to which the medical profession has subscribed and by which it is bound.

9. The sports physician should endeavour to keep the patient's personal physician fully informed of facts relevant to his or her treatment. If necessary the sports physician should collaborate to ensure that the athlete does not exert himself or herself in ways detrimental to his or her health and does not use potentially harmful techniques to improve performance.
10. In sports medicine, as in all other branches of medicine, professional confidentiality must be observed. The right to privacy over medical attention the athlete has received must be protected, especially in the case of professional athletes.
11. The sports doctor must not be party to any contract which obliges him or her to reserve particular forms of therapy solely and exclusively for any one athlete or group of athletes.
12. It is desirable that sports physicians from foreign countries, when accompanying a team in another country, should enjoy the right to carry out their specific functions.
13. The participation of a sports physician is desirable when sports regulation are being drawn up.

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<sup>1</sup> cf, The Olympic Charter Against Doping in Sport and the Lausanne Declaration on Doping in Sport adopted by the World Committee on Doping in Sport (February 1999)

## **WMA DECLARATION OF VENICE ON TERMINAL ILLNESS**

Adopted by the 35<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Venice, Italy, October 1983  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **PREFACE**

1. When addressing the ethical issues associated with end-of-life care, questions regarding euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide inevitably arise. The World Medical Association condemns as unethical both euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. It should be understood that WMA policy on these issues is fully applicable in the context of this Statement on Terminal Illness.

### **PREAMBLE**

1. When a patient's medical diagnosis precludes the hope of health being restored or maintained, and the death of the patient is inevitable, the physician and the patient are often faced with a complex set of decisions regarding medical interventions. Advances in medical science have improved the ability of physicians to address many issues associated with end-of-life care. However, it is an area of medicine that historically has not received the attention it deserves. While the priority of research to cure disease should not be compromised, more attention must be paid to developing palliative treatments and improving the ability of physicians to assess and address the medical and psychological components of symptoms in terminal illness. The dying phase must be recognized and respected as an important part of a person's life. As public pressure increases in many countries to consider physician assisted suicide and euthanasia as acceptable options to end suffering in terminal patients, the ethical imperative to improve palliative treatment in the terminal phase of life comes into sharp focus.
2. The World Medical Association recognizes that attitudes and beliefs toward death and dying vary widely from culture to culture and among different religions. In addition, many palliative and life-sustaining measures require technologies and/or financial resources that are simply not available in many places. The approach to medical care of the terminally ill will be influenced significantly by these factors, and thus attempting to develop detailed guidelines on terminal care that can be universally applied is neither practical nor wise. Therefore, the World Medical Association articulates the following core principles to assist physicians and National Medical Associations with decision-making related to terminal care.

**PRINCIPLES**

1. The duty of physicians is to heal, where possible, to relieve suffering and to protect the best interests of their patients. There shall be no exception to this principle even in the case of incurable disease.
2. In the care of terminal patients, the primary responsibilities of the physician are to assist the patient in maintaining an optimal quality of life through controlling symptoms and addressing psychosocial needs, and to enable the patient to die with dignity and in comfort. Physicians should inform patients of the availability, benefits and other potential effects of palliative care.
3. The patient's right to autonomy in decision-making must be respected with regard to decisions in the terminal phase of life. This includes the right to refuse treatment and to request palliative measures to relieve suffering but which may have the additional effect of accelerating the dying process. However, physicians are ethically prohibited from actively assisting patients in suicide. This includes administering any treatments whose palliative benefits, in the opinion of the physician, do not justify the additional effects.
4. The physician must not employ any means that would provide no benefit for the patient.
5. Physicians should recognise the right of patients to develop written advance directives that describe their wishes regarding care in the event that they are unable to communicate and that designate a substitute decision-maker to make decisions that are not expressed in the advance directive. In particular, physicians should discuss the patient's wishes regarding the approach to life-sustaining interventions as well as palliative measures that might have the additional effect of accelerating death. Whenever possible, the patient's substitute decision-maker should be included in these conversations.
6. Physicians should endeavour to understand and address the psychosocial needs of their patients, especially as they relate to patients' physical symptoms. Physicians should try to ensure that psychological and spiritual resources are available to patients and their families to help them deal with the anxiety, fear and grief associated with terminal illness.
7. The clinical management of pain in terminal patients is of paramount importance in terms of alleviating suffering. Physicians and National Medical Associations should promote the dissemination and sharing of information regarding pain management to ensure that all physicians involved in terminal care have access to best practice guidelines and the most current treatments and methods available. Physicians should be able to pursue clinically appropriate aggressive pain management without undue fear of regulatory or legal repercussions.
8. National Medical Associations should encourage governments and research institutions to invest additional resources in developing treatments to improve end-of-life care. Medical school curricula should include the teaching of palliative medical care. Where it does not exist, the establishment of palliative medicine as a medical specialty should be considered.

9. National Medical Associations should advocate for the development of networks among institutions and organizations involved in palliative care in order to foster communication and collaboration.
10. Physicians may, when the patient cannot reverse the final process of cessation of vital functions, apply such artificial means as are necessary to keep organs active for transplantation provided that they act in accordance with the ethical guidelines established in the World Medical Association Declaration of Sydney on the Determination of Death and the Recovery of Organs.



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## **WMA DECLARATION ON EUTHANASIA**

Adopted by the 39<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Madrid, Spain, October 1987  
and reaffirmed by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2005  
and reaffirmed by the 200<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Oslo, Norway, April 2015

Euthanasia, that is the act of deliberately ending the life of a patient, even at the patient's own request or at the request of close relatives, is unethical. This does not prevent the physician from respecting the desire of a patient to allow the natural process of death to follow its course in the terminal phase of sickness.

## **WMA DECLARATION OF HONG KONG ON THE ABUSE OF THE ELDERLY**

Adopted by the 41<sup>st</sup> World Medical Assembly, Hong Kong, September 1989  
and editorially revised by the 126<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Jerusalem, Israel, May 1990  
and the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2005 and  
reaffirmed by the 200<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Oslo, Norway, April 2015

Elderly people may suffer pathological problems such as motor disturbances and psychic and orientation disorders. As a result of such problems, elderly patients may require assistance with their daily activities that can lead to a state of dependence. This may cause their families and the community to consider them to be a burden and to subsequently limit or deny care and services.

Abuse or neglect of the elderly can be manifested in a variety of ways: physical, psychological, financial and/or material, and medical. Variations in the definition of elder abuse present difficulties in comparing findings on the nature and causes of the problem. A number of preliminary hypotheses have been proposed on the etiology of elder abuse including: dependency on others to provide services; lack of close family ties; family violence; lack of financial resources; psychopathology of the abuser; lack of community support, and institutional factors such as low pay and poor working conditions that contribute to pessimistic attitudes of caretakers.

The phenomenon of elder abuse is becoming increasingly recognized by both medical facilities and social agencies. The first step in preventing elder abuse and neglect is to increase levels of awareness and knowledge among physicians and other health professionals. Once high-risk individuals and families have been identified, physicians can participate in the primary prevention of maltreatment by making referrals to appropriate community and social service centres. Physicians may also participate by providing support and information on high-risk situations directly to patients and their families. At the same time, physicians should employ care and sensitivity to preserve patient trust and confidentiality, particularly in the case of competent patients.

The World Medical Association therefore adopts the following general principles relating to abuse of the elderly.

### **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

1. The elderly have the same rights to care, welfare and respect as other human beings.
2. Physicians have a responsibility to help prevent the physical and psychological abuse of elderly patients.

3. Whether consulted by an aged person directly, a nursing home or the family, physicians should see that the patient receives the best possible care.
4. If physicians verify or suspect ill treatment, as defined in this statement, they should discuss the situation with those in charge, be it the nursing home or the family. If ill treatment is confirmed, or if death is considered to be suspicious, they should report the findings to the appropriate authorities.
5. To guarantee protection of the elderly in any environment there should be no restrictions on their right of free choice of a physician. National Medical Associations should strive to make certain that such free choice is preserved within the socio-medical system.

The World Medical Association also makes the following recommendations to physicians involved in treating the elderly, and urges all National Medical Associations to publicize this Declaration to their members and the public.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Physicians involved in treating the elderly should:

- make increased attempts to establish an atmosphere of trust with elderly patients in order to encourage them to seek medical care when necessary and to feel comfortable confiding in the physician;
- provide medical evaluation and treatment for injuries resulting from abuse and/or neglect;
- attempt to establish or maintain a therapeutic alliance with the family (often the physician is the only professional who maintains long-term contact with the patient and the family), while preserving to the greatest extent possible the confidentiality of the patient;
- report all suspected cases of elder abuse and/or neglect in accordance with local legislation;
- utilize a multidisciplinary team of caretakers from the medical, social service, mental health, and legal professions, whenever possible; and
- encourage the development and utilization of supportive community resources that provide in-home services, respite care, and stress reduction with high-risk families.

## WMA DECLARATION OF MALTA ON HUNGER STRIKERS

Adopted by the 43<sup>rd</sup> World Medical Assembly, St. Julians, Malta, November 1991  
and editorially revised by the 44<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Marbella, Spain, September 1992  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### PREAMBLE

1. Hunger strikes occur in various contexts but they mainly give rise to dilemmas in settings where people are detained (prisons, jails and immigration detention centres). They are often a form of protest by people who lack other ways of making their demands known. In refusing nutrition for a significant period, they usually hope to obtain certain goals by inflicting negative publicity on the authorities. Short-term or feigned food refusals rarely raise ethical problems. Genuine and prolonged fasting risks death or permanent damage for hunger strikers and can create a conflict of values for physicians. Hunger strikers usually do not wish to die but some may be prepared to do so to achieve their aims. Physicians need to ascertain the individual's true intention, especially in collective strikes or situations where peer pressure may be a factor. An ethical dilemma arises when hunger strikers who have apparently issued clear instructions not to be resuscitated reach a stage of cognitive impairment. The principle of beneficence urges physicians to resuscitate them but respect for individual autonomy restrains physicians from intervening when a valid and informed refusal has been made. An added difficulty arises in custodial settings because it is not always clear whether the hunger striker's advance instructions were made voluntarily and with appropriate information about the consequences. These guidelines and the background paper address such difficult situations.

### PRINCIPLES

1. Duty to act ethically. All physicians are bound by medical ethics in their professional contact with vulnerable people, even when not providing therapy. Whatever their role, physicians must try to prevent coercion or maltreatment of detainees and must protest if it occurs.
2. Respect for autonomy. Physicians should respect individuals' autonomy. This can involve difficult assessments as hunger strikers' true wishes may not be as clear as they appear. Any decisions lack moral force if made involuntarily by use of threats, peer pressure or coercion. Hunger strikers should not be forcibly given treatment they refuse. Forced feeding contrary to an informed and voluntary refusal is unjustifiable. Artificial feeding with the hunger striker's explicit or implied consent is ethically acceptable.

3. 'Benefit' and 'harm'. Physicians must exercise their skills and knowledge to benefit those they treat. This is the concept of 'beneficence', which is complemented by that of 'non-maleficence' or *primum non nocere*. These two concepts need to be in balance. 'Benefit' includes respecting individuals' wishes as well as promoting their welfare. Avoiding 'harm' means not only minimising damage to health but also not forcing treatment upon competent people nor coercing them to stop fasting. Beneficence does not necessarily involve prolonging life at all costs, irrespective of other values.
4. Balancing dual loyalties. Physicians attending hunger strikers can experience a conflict between their loyalty to the employing authority (such as prison management) and their loyalty to patients. Physicians with dual loyalties are bound by the same ethical principles as other physicians, that is to say that their primary obligation is to the individual patient.
5. Clinical independence. Physicians must remain objective in their assessments and not allow third parties to influence their medical judgement. They must not allow themselves to be pressured to breach ethical principles, such as intervening medically for non-clinical reasons.
6. Confidentiality. The duty of confidentiality is important in building trust but it is not absolute. It can be overridden if non-disclosure seriously harms others. As with other patients, hunger strikers' confidentiality should be respected unless they agree to disclosure or unless information sharing is necessary to prevent serious harm. If individuals agree, their relatives and legal advisers should be kept informed of the situation.
7. Gaining trust. Fostering trust between physicians and hunger strikers is often the key to achieving a resolution that both respects the rights of the hunger strikers and minimises harm to them. Gaining trust can create opportunities to resolve difficult situations. Trust is dependent upon physicians providing accurate advice and being frank with hunger strikers about the limitations of what they can and cannot do, including where they cannot guarantee confidentiality.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF HUNGER STRIKERS**

1. Physicians must assess individuals' mental capacity. This involves verifying that an individual intending to fast does not have a mental impairment that would seriously undermine the person's ability to make health care decisions. Individuals with seriously impaired mental capacity cannot be considered to be hunger strikers. They need to be given treatment for their mental health problems rather than allowed to fast in a manner that risks their health.
2. As early as possible, physicians should acquire a detailed and accurate medical history of the person who is intending to fast. The medical implications of any existing conditions should be explained to the individual. Physicians should verify that hunger strikers understand the potential health consequences of fasting and forewarn them in plain language of the disadvantages. Physicians should also explain how damage to health can be minimised or delayed by, for example, increasing fluid intake.

Since the person's decisions regarding a hunger strike can be momentous, ensuring full patient understanding of the medical consequences of fasting is critical. Consistent with best practices for informed consent in health care, the physician should ensure that the patient understands the information conveyed by asking the patient to repeat back what they understand.

3. A thorough examination of the hunger striker should be made at the start of the fast. Management of future symptoms, including those unconnected to the fast, should be discussed with hunger strikers. Also, the person's values and wishes regarding medical treatment in the event of a prolonged fast should be noted.
4. Sometimes hunger strikers accept an intravenous saline solution transfusion or other forms of medical treatment. A refusal to accept certain interventions must not prejudice any other aspect of the medical care, such as treatment of infections or of pain.
5. Physicians should talk to hunger strikers in privacy and out of earshot of all other people, including other detainees. Clear communication is essential and, where necessary, interpreters unconnected to the detaining authorities should be available and they too must respect confidentiality.
6. Physicians need to satisfy themselves that food or treatment refusal is the individual's voluntary choice. Hunger strikers should be protected from coercion. Physicians can often help to achieve this and should be aware that coercion may come from the peer group, the authorities or others, such as family members. Physicians or other health care personnel may not apply undue pressure of any sort on the hunger striker to suspend the strike. Treatment or care of the hunger striker must not be conditional upon suspension of the hunger strike.
7. If a physician is unable for reasons of conscience to abide by a hunger striker's refusal of treatment or artificial feeding, the physician should make this clear at the outset and refer the hunger striker to another physician who is willing to abide by the hunger striker's refusal.
8. Continuing communication between physician and hunger strikers is critical. Physicians should ascertain on a daily basis whether individuals wish to continue a hunger strike and what they want to be done when they are no longer able to communicate meaningfully. These findings must be appropriately recorded.
9. When a physician takes over the case, the hunger striker may have already lost mental capacity so that there is no opportunity to discuss the individual's wishes regarding medical intervention to preserve life. Consideration needs to be given to any advance instructions made by the hunger striker. Advance refusals of treatment demand respect if they reflect the voluntary wish of the individual when competent. In custodial settings, the possibility of advance instructions having been made under pressure needs to be considered. Where physicians have serious doubts about the individual's intention, any instructions must be treated with great caution. If well informed and voluntarily made, however, advance instructions can only generally be overridden if they become invalid because the situation in which the decision was made has changed radically since the individual lost competence.

10. If no discussion with the individual is possible and no advance instructions exist, physicians have to act in what they judge to be the person's best interests. This means considering the hunger strikers' previously expressed wishes, their personal and cultural values as well as their physical health. In the absence of any evidence of hunger strikers' former wishes, physicians should decide whether or not to provide feeding, without interference from third parties.
11. Physicians may consider it justifiable to go against advance instructions refusing treatment because, for example, the refusal is thought to have been made under duress. If, after resuscitation and having regained their mental faculties, hunger strikers continue to reiterate their intention to fast, that decision should be respected. It is ethical to allow a determined hunger striker to die in dignity rather than submit that person to repeated interventions against his or her will.
12. Artificial feeding can be ethically appropriate if competent hunger strikers agree to it. It can also be acceptable if incompetent individuals have left no unpressured advance instructions refusing it.
13. Forcible feeding is never ethically acceptable. Even if intended to benefit, feeding accompanied by threats, coercion, force or use of physical restraints is a form of inhuman and degrading treatment. Equally unacceptable is the forced feeding of some detainees in order to intimidate or coerce other hunger strikers to stop fasting.

## **WMA DECLARATION ON GUIDELINES FOR CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN HEALTH CARE**

Adopted by the 49<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Hamburg, Germany, November 1997  
and amended by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### **PREAMBLE**

The purpose of health care is to prevent, diagnose and treat illness and to maintain and to promote the health of the population. The goal of quality review in health care is continuous improvement of the quality of services provided for patients and the population, and of the ways and means of producing these services. The ultimate goal is to improve both individual patient outcomes and population health.

The obligation to continuously improve one's professional ability and to rigorously evaluate the methods one uses has long been a fundamental tenet of the ethical codes of physicians. According to these codes, a physician must always strive to maintain and increase his/her knowledge and skills. The physician shall recommend only examinations and treatments that are believed to be effective and appropriate according to the best available evidence-based medicine.

Physicians and health care institutions have an ethical and professional obligation to strive for continuous quality improvement of services and patient safety. These guidelines are intended to articulate the ethical grounds for these obligations and to strengthen quality review practices.

Ethical guidelines for health care quality improvement matter to all physicians, as well as to institutions providing health care services for patients, those providing continuous quality improvement services to assist physicians and organizations, health care payers and regulators, patients, and every other stakeholder in the health care system.

### **THE OBLIGATION TO ESTABLISH STANDARDS FOR GOOD QUALITY WORK**

Professionals, by definition, are responsible for specifying the standards that constitute good quality in their work and the processes needed for the evaluation of that quality. Health professionals, therefore, must define high quality health care and determine the best methods of measuring the quality of care delivered.



## **THE OBLIGATION TO COLLECT DATA**

In order to assess quality of care, it is necessary to obtain reliable data on the patients and populations served as well as on care processes and outcomes. Patient records, whether recorded on paper, digitally or in any other way, must be created written and preserved with care and, with attention to confidentiality requirements. Procedures, decisions and other matters connected with patients should be recorded in a format that will allow information for measuring specific standards to be available on a timely basis when needed.

## **THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION**

Health care professionals should have adequate opportunities to maintain and develop their knowledge and skills by participating in continuing medical education and/or continuing professional development. Clinical guidelines based on professional standards for high quality care should be created and made easily available to those requiring them. Health care training should include specific instruction in quality improvement techniques, including opportunities for hands-on practice in measuring and improving quality. Health care institutions should create quality improvement systems for their own use and to ensure that instructions concerning such systems are followed.

Good quality work requires resources. Every effort should be made to make sure that adequate time and economic means are available for quality work.

## **ATTENTION TO INAPPROPRIATE USE OF SERVICES**

Inappropriate use of health care services includes overuse, underuse and misuse. Quality measurement in health care should include a balanced set of measures in all three areas.

Overuse of services occurs when health care services are provided under circumstances in which the potential for harm exceeds the possible benefit. Physicians can improve quality by reducing overuse, thus sparing patients the unnecessary risk that results from inappropriate health services.

Underuse of services is the failure to provide health care services that would be likely to produce a favourable outcome for the patient. Physicians should strive to expand the use of beneficial health care services that are underused.

Misuse of services occurs when an incorrect diagnosis is made or when an appropriate service has been selected for a correct diagnosis but the patient does not receive the full potential benefit of the service because of a preventable adverse event. Misuse of services can be greatly reduced by using risk management and error prevention strategies.

## **MONITORING QUALITY: CLINICAL AUDITS**

Active participation in critical self-evaluation, usually through clinical audit programs, is a useful mechanism for healthcare professionals, including healthcare administrators and physicians, and the institutions in which they work, to improve the quality of their work.

External independent examination and accreditation of the institution can also be of use, when carried out appropriately and with due attention to potential unintended effects.

## **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT**

At the individual level, a physician should continuously update their knowledge and skills and subject their level of ability to critical self-appraisal.

In organizations, the quality of health care can be assessed by both internal and external methods.

Health care institutions should create internal quality improvement systems for their own use and ensure that instructions concerning such systems are followed. These systems should include continuous conducting of internal clinical peer review, review examination and treatment methods and their attendant results, tracking of the organization's ability to react to quality data, and monitoring of patient feedback.

External quality review initiatives, such as external peer review and audit, should be carried out regularly and with a frequency corresponding to the evolution of the field or when there is special reason for external assessment. Any review should take into account risk adjustment of the patient population under consideration.

Whether internal or external, if the results of any quality assessment carry significant opportunities for benefit or threats of harms for the organization or individual being assessed, special attention must be paid to potential unintended and dangerous consequences of such quality assessments. It is especially important to monitor the results of quality improvement measurement and intervention strategies over time, with attention to their effects on especially vulnerable patient populations.

Protocols to be used for quality review should be replicable and transparent. Appeals mechanisms should be built into the protocols.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF PATIENT RECORDS**

Patient records are an invaluable source of data for quality improvement. As with other uses of individually-identifiable patient based information, consent is usually required from the patient prior to use. If consent cannot reasonably be obtained, then all attempts should be made to ensure that medical records are anonymised or pseudonimised for use in quality improvement efforts. In every case, patient records used for quality improvement must only be accessible to those who need to see them for the purposes of quality improvement.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF PEER REVIEW**

For peer review to be most effective, all parties involved must participate and recognize its importance. It is recommended that informed voluntary consent be obtained from those to be reviewed. Within a healthcare team, the work of each physician must be able to be evaluated. Information regarding an individual physician's evaluation should not be published without the consent of the physician concerned. It is recommended that consent be obtained prior to publishing information regarding an individual physician's evaluation.

A provider of services may inform his/her patients about the results of quality review.

If reviews are made available to the public, careful monitoring must be undertaken to track the effects, intended and unintended, of such public reporting of performance data.

### **ETHICAL REVIEW OF QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES**

National codes of medical ethics and ethical principles and guidelines that relate to continuous quality improvement, audit and clinical review must be followed.

Quality improvement should be an ongoing and integral part of the operations of every health care organization. As such, the majority of quality improvement projects will not require specific review by an ethics committee. If there are doubts about specific issues or if a project poses more than minimal risk compared to the existing processes for care, then the project should be referred to an appropriate ethics committee or institutional review board. When such formal ethical review is needed, it should be undertaken by a committee with members who are knowledgeable about quality improvement techniques.

### **COMPETENCE AND IMPARTIALITY OF THE REVIEWER**

Those who conduct performance reviews must be competent in quality improvement techniques and in clinical audit as well as experienced in the clinical field relating to the review. Where medical care is being reviewed, the reviewer should be a physician whose knowledge and experience is accepted by those being reviewed.

The reviewer should be impartial and independent. Whilst he/she must be aware of the activities under review, he/she must be objective in the report and base conclusions on critical evaluation of observation and facts. Commercial or competitive matters should not be allowed to influence the content of the reviewer's report.

### **SEPARATION OF QUALITY REVIEWS AND SUPERVISION BY AUTHORITIES**

Quality improvement of services and of health care systems is a requirement for every physician and health care institution. It is not supervision of professional activities by authorities and it must be kept independent of this. The results of performance reviews or audits of physician activities should be used by supervising authorities only subject to a separate agreement between them and the physicians concerned unless national legislation mandates an alternative approach. These activities must be fully cognizant of the local legal framework and must not expose participating physicians to litigation.

## **WMA DECLARATION OF HAMBURG CONCERNING SUPPORT FOR MEDICAL DOCTORS REFUSING TO PARTICIPATE IN, OR TO CONDONE, THE USE OF TORTURE OR OTHER FORMS OF CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT**

Adopted by the 49<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Hamburg, Germany, November 1997  
and reaffirmed by the 176<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Berlin, Germany, May 2007

### **PREAMBLE**

1. On the basis of a number of international ethical declarations and guidelines subscribed to by the medical profession, medical doctors throughout the world are prohibited from countenancing, condoning or participating in the practice of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading procedures for any reason.
2. Primary among these declarations are the World Medical Association's International Code of Medical Ethics, Declaration of Geneva, Declaration of Tokyo, and Resolution on Physician Participation in Capital Punishment; the Standing Committee of European Doctors' Statement of Madrid; the Nordic Resolution Concerning Physician Involvement in Capital Punishment; and, the World Psychiatric Association's Declaration of Hawaii.
3. However, none of these declarations or statements addresses explicitly the issue of what protection should be extended to medical doctors if they are pressured, called upon, or ordered to take part in torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Nor do these declarations or statements express explicit support for, or the obligation to protect, doctors who encounter or become aware of such procedures.

### **RESOLUTION**

1. The World Medical Association (WMA) hereby reiterates and reaffirms the responsibility of the organised medical profession:
  - i. to encourage doctors to honour their commitment as physicians to serve humanity and to resist any pressure to act contrary to the ethical principles governing their dedication to this task;
  - ii. to support physicians experiencing difficulties as a result of their resistance to any such pressure or as a result of their attempts to speak out or to act against such inhuman procedures; and,

- iii. to extend its support and to encourage other international organisations, as well as the national member associations (NMAs) of the World Medical Association, to support physicians encountering difficulties as a result of their attempts to act in accordance with the highest ethical principles of the profession.
2. Furthermore, in view of the continued employment of such inhumane procedures in many countries throughout the world, and the documented incidents of pressure upon medical doctors to act in contravention to the ethical principles subscribed to by the profession, the WMA finds it necessary:
    - i. to protest internationally against any involvement of, or any pressure to involve, medical doctors in acts of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
    - ii. to support and protect, and to call upon its NMAs to support and protect, physicians who are resisting involvement in such inhuman procedures or who are working to treat and rehabilitate victims thereof, as well as to secure the right to uphold the highest ethical principles including medical confidentiality;
    - iii. to publicise information about and to support doctors reporting evidence of torture and to make known proven cases of attempts to involve physicians in such procedures; and,
    - iv. to encourage national medical associations to ask corresponding academic authorities to teach and investigate in all schools of medicine and hospitals the consequences of torture and its treatment, the rehabilitation of the survivors, the documentation of torture, and the professional protection described in this Declaration.

## WMA DECLARATION OF OTTAWA ON CHILD HEALTH

Adopted by the 50<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Ottawa, Canada, October 1998  
and amended by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### PREAMBLE

Science has now proven that to reach their potential, children need to grow up in a place where they can thrive - spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically and intellectually<sup>1</sup>. That place must have four fundamental elements:

- a safe and secure environment;
- the opportunity for optimal growth and development;
- health services when needed; and
- monitoring & research for evidence-based continual improvement into the future<sup>2</sup>.

Physicians know that the future of our world depends on our children: their education, their employability, their productivity, their innovation, and their love and care for one another and for this planet. Early childhood experiences strongly influence future development including basic learning, school success, economic participation, social citizenry, and health<sup>3</sup>. In most situations, parents and caregivers alone cannot provide strong nurturing environments without help from local, regional, national and international organizations<sup>1</sup>. Physicians therefore join with parents, and with world leaders to advocate for healthy children.

The principles of this Declaration apply to all children in the world from birth to 18 years of age, regardless of race, age, ethnicity, nationality, political affiliation, creed, language, gender, disease or disability, physical ability, mental ability, sexual orientation, cultural history, life experience or the social standing of the child or her/his parents or legal guardian. In all countries of the world, regardless of resources, meeting these principles should be a priority for parents, communities and governments. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (1989) sets out the wider rights of all children and young people, but those rights cannot exist without health.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. A place with a safe and secure environment includes:
  - a. Clean water, air and soil;
  - b. Protection from injury, exploitation, discrimination and from traditional practices prejudicial to the health of the child, and
  - c. Healthy families, homes and communities

2. A place where a child can have good health and development offers:
  - a. Prenatal and maternal care for the best possible health at birth
  - b. Nutrition for proper growth, development and long-term health
  - c. Early learning opportunities and high quality care at home and in the community
  - d. Opportunities and encouragement for physical activity
  - e. Affordable & accessible high quality primary & secondary education
  
3. A full range of health resources available to all means:
  - a. The best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration in the provision of health care;
  - b. Those caring for children shall have the special training and skills necessary to enable them to respond appropriately to the medical, physical, emotional and developmental needs of children & their families
  - c. Basic health care including health promotion, recommended immunization, drugs & dental health
  - d. Mental health care and prompt referral to intervention when problems identified
  - e. Priority access to drugs for life- or limb-threatening conditions for all mothers and children
  - f. Hospitalization only if the care and treatment required cannot be provided at home, in the community or on an outpatient basis
  - g. Access to specialty diagnostic and treatment services when needed
  - h. Rehabilitation services and supports within community
  - i. Pain management and care and prevention (or minimization) of suffering
  - j. Informed consent is necessary before initiating any diagnostic, therapeutic, rehabilitative, or research procedure on a child. In the majority of cases, the consent shall be obtained from the parent(s) or legal guardian, or in some cases, by extended family, although the wishes of a competent child should be taken into account before consent is given.
  
4. Research<sup>4</sup> & monitoring for continual improvement includes:
  - a. All infants will be officially registered within one month of birth
  - b. All children will be treated with dignity and respect
  - c. Quality care is ensured through on-going monitoring of services, including collection of data, and evaluation of outcomes
  - d. Children will share in the benefits from scientific research relevant to their needs
  - e. The privacy of a child patient will be respected

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<sup>1</sup> Irwin LG, Siddiqi A, Hertzman C. “Early Child Development: A Powerful Equalizer. Final Report”. World Health Organization Commission on the Social Determinants of Health June 2007

<sup>2</sup> WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health (Closing the Gap in a Generation) 2008

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Charter for Child and Youth Health

<sup>4</sup> Proposed WMA statement on ethical principles for medical research on child subjects

\* Please refer the background document for specific principles.

## **WMA DECLARATION OF EDINBURGH ON PRISON CONDITIONS AND THE SPREAD OF TUBERCULOSIS AND OTHER COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

Adopted by the 52<sup>nd</sup> World Medical Association General Assembly, Edinburgh, Scotland,  
October 2000

and revised by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

### **PREAMBLE**

Prisoners enjoy the same health care rights as all other people. This includes the right to humane treatment and appropriate medical care. The standards for the treatment of prisoners have been set down in a number of Declarations and Guidelines adopted by various bodies of the United Nations.

The relationship between physician and prisoner is governed by the same ethical principles as that between the physician and any other patient. There are specific tensions within the patient/physician relationship, which do not exist in other settings, in particular the relationship of the physician with his/her employer, the prison service, and the general attitude of society to prisoners.

There are also strong public health reasons for reinforcing the importance of these rules. The high incidence of tuberculosis amongst prisoners in a number of countries reinforces the need for considering public health as an important element when designing new prison regimens, and for reforming existing penal and prison systems.

Individuals facing imprisonment are often from the most marginalised sections of society, may have had limited access to health care before imprisonment, may suffer worse health than many other citizens and may enter prison with undiagnosed, undetected and untreated health problems.

Prisons can be breeding grounds for infection. Overcrowding, lengthy confinement within tightly enclosed, poorly lit, badly heated and consequently poorly ventilated and often humid spaces are all conditions frequently associated with imprisonment and all of which contribute to the spread of disease and ill-health. Where these factors are combined with poor hygiene, inadequate nutrition and limited access to adequate health care, prisons can represent a major public health challenge.

Keeping prisoners in conditions, which expose them to substantial medical risk, poses a humanitarian challenge. An infectious prisoner is a risk to other prisoners, prison personnel, relatives and other prison visitors and the wider community - not only when the prisoner is released, but also because prison bars do not keep Tuberculosis bacilli from spreading into the outside world. The most effective and efficient way of reducing disease



transmission is to improve the prison environment, by putting together an efficient medical service that is capable of detecting and treating the disease, and by targeting prison overcrowding as the most urgent action.

The increase in active Tuberculosis in prison populations and the development within some of these populations of resistant and especially "multi-drug" and "extremely-drug" resistant forms of TB, as recognised by the World Medical Association in its Statement on Drug Treatment of Tuberculosis, is reaching very high prevalence and incidence rates in prisons in some parts of the world.

Other conditions, such as Hepatitis C and HIV Disease, do not have as high a risk of person-to-person communicability as TB but pose transmission risks from blood to blood borne spread, or sharing and exchange of body fluids. Overcrowded prison conditions also promote the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Intravenous drug use will also contribute to the spread of HIV as well as the more contagious Hepatitis B and C. These need specific solutions that are not dealt with in this statement. However the principles set out below will also be helpful in reducing the risk from such infective agents.

#### **ACTIONS REQUIRED**

The World Medical Association considers it essential both for public health and humanitarian reasons that careful attention is paid to:

1. Protecting the rights of prisoners according to the various UN instruments relating to conditions of imprisonment. Prisoners should enjoy the same rights as other patients, as outlined in the WMA Declaration of Lisbon;
2. Not allowing the rights of prisoners to be ignored or invalidated because they have an infectious illness;
3. Ensuring that the conditions in which detainees and prisoners are kept, whether they are held during the investigation of a crime, whilst waiting for trial, or as punishment once sentenced, do not contribute to the development, worsening or transmission of disease.
4. Ensuring that persons being held while going through immigration procedures, are kept in conditions which do not encourage the spread of disease, although prisons should not normally be used to house such persons;
5. Ensuring the coordination of health services within and outside prisons to facilitate continuity of care and epidemiological monitoring of inmate patients when they are released;
6. Ensuring that prisoners are not isolated, or placed in solitary confinement, as a response to their infected status without adequate access to health care and the appropriate medical treatment of their infected status;
7. Ensuring that, upon admission to or transfer to a different prison, inmates' health status is reviewed within 24 hours of arrival to assure continuity of care;

8. Ensuring the provision of follow-up treatment for prisoners who, on their release, are still ill, particularly with TB or any other infectious disease. Because erratic treatments or interruptions of treatment may be particularly hazardous epidemiologically and to the individual, planning for and providing continuing care are essential elements of prison health care provision;
9. Recognising that the public health mechanisms, which may in the rarest and most exceptional cases involve the compulsory detention of individuals who pose a serious risk of infection to the wider community must be efficacious, necessary and justified, and proportional to the risks posed. Such steps should be exceptional and must follow careful and critical questioning of the need for such constraints and the absence of any effective alternative. In such circumstances detention should be for as short a time as possible and be as limited in restrictions as feasible. There must also be a system of independent appraisal and periodic review of any such measures, including a mechanism for appeal by the patients themselves. Wherever possible alternatives to such detention should be used;
10. This model should be used in considering all steps to prevent cross infection and to treat existing infected persons within the prison environment.
11. Physicians working in prisons have a duty to report to the health authorities and professional organisations of their country any deficiency in health care provided to the inmates and any situation involving high epidemiological risk. NMAs are obliged to attempt to protect those physicians against any possible reprisals.
12. Physicians working in prisons have a duty to follow national public health guidelines, where these are ethically appropriate, particularly concerning the mandatory reporting of infectious and communicable diseases.

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## ANNEX

International texts relating to medical care in prisons:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 4, 9, 10 and 11). Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 1948.

Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Rules 22-26). Approved by the United Nations Economic and Social Council on 31 July 1957.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 12). Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 1966. Entry into force: 3 January 1976.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 6, 7 and 10). Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 1966. Entry into force: 23 March 1976.

Principles of Medical Ethics Relevant to the Protection of Prisoners Against Torture (Principle 1). Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1982.

Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under Any Forms of Detention or Imprisonment (Principle 24). Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1988.

Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners (Article 9). Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December 1990.

United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty (Principles 50-54). Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December 1990.

WHO Guidelines on HIV Infection and AIDS in Prison. Issued in March 1993, Geneva (Document WHO/GPA/DIR/93.3).

## **WMA DECLARATION OF WASHINGTON ON BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS**

Adopted by the 53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington, DC, USA, October 2002  
and editorially revised by the 164<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France,  
May 2003

and reaffirmed by the 191<sup>st</sup> WMA Council Session, Prague, Czech Republic, April 2012

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

1. The World Medical Association recognizes the growing threat that biological weapons might be used to cause devastating epidemics that could spread internationally. All countries are potentially at risk. The release of organisms causing smallpox, plague, anthrax or other diseases could prove catastrophic in terms of the resulting illnesses and deaths compounded by the panic such outbreaks would generate. At the same time, there is a growing potential for production of new microbial agents, as expertise in biotechnology grows and methods for genetic manipulation of organisms become simpler. These developments are of special concern to medical and public health professionals because it is they who best know the potential human suffering caused by epidemic disease and it is they who will bear primary responsibility for dealing with the victims of biological weapons. Thus, the World Medical Association believes that medical associations and all who are concerned with health care bear a special responsibility to lead in educating the public and policy makers about the implications of biological weapons and to mobilize universal support for condemning research, development, or use of such weapons as morally and ethically unacceptable.
2. Unlike the use of nuclear, chemical, and conventional weapons, the consequences of a biological attack are likely to be insidious. Their impact might continue with secondary and tertiary transmission of the agent, weeks or months after the initial epidemic. The consequences of a successful biological attack, especially if the infection were readily communicable, could far exceed those of a chemical or even a nuclear event. Given the ease of travel and increasing globalization, an outbreak anywhere in the world could be a threat to all nations.
3. A great many severe, acute illnesses occurring over a short span of time would almost certainly overwhelm the capacities of most health systems in both the developing and industrialized world. Health services throughout the world are struggling to meet the demands created by HIV/AIDS and antimicrobial-resistant organisms, the problems created by civil strife, refugees and crowded, unsanitary urban environments as well as the increased health needs of aging populations. Coping over a short period of time with large numbers of desperately ill persons could overwhelm entire health systems.

4. Actions can be taken to diminish the risk of biological weapons as well as the potentially harmful consequences of serious epidemics whatever their origin. International collaboration is needed to build a universal consensus that condemns the development, production, or use of biological weapons. Programs of surveillance are needed in all countries for the early detection, identification, and response to serious epidemic disease; health education and training is needed for professionals, civic leaders, and the public alike; and collaborative programs of research are needed to improve disease diagnosis, prevention, and treatment.
5. The proliferation of technology and scientific progress in biochemistry, biotechnology, and the life sciences provides the opportunity to create novel pathogens and diseases and simplified production methods for bioweapons. The technology is relatively inexpensive and, because production is similar to that used in biological facilities such as vaccine manufacturing, it is easy to obtain. Capacity to produce and effectively disperse biological weapons exists globally, allowing extremists (acting collectively or individually) to threaten governments and endanger peoples around the world. Nonproliferation and arms control measures can diminish but cannot completely eliminate the threat of biological weapons. Thus, there is a need for the creation of and adherence to a globally accepted ethos that rejects the development and use of biological weapons.

## **B. STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH AND DISEASE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS**

1. A critical component in dealing with epidemic disease is a strong public health infrastructure. Investment in public health systems will enhance capacity to detect and to contain expeditiously, rare or unusual disease outbreaks, whether deliberately induced or naturally occurring. Core public health functions (disease surveillance and supporting laboratory services) are needed as a foundation for detection, investigation, and response to all epidemic threats. A more effective global surveillance program will improve response to naturally occurring infectious diseases and will permit earlier detection and characterization of new or emerging diseases.
2. It is especially important that physicians be alert to the occurrence of cases or clusters of unusual infectious diseases, to seek help from infectious disease specialists in diagnosis, and to report cases promptly to public health authorities. Because any physician may see only one or a few cases and may not recognize that an outbreak is occurring, cooperation between primary care physicians and public health authorities is especially important.
3. Public health officials, dealing with an epidemic, will require the cooperation of emergency management agencies, law enforcement officials, healthcare facilities, and a variety of community service organizations. For these different groups to work together effectively, advance planning will be important. In addition to developing surveillance activities for early detection and reporting, public health efforts should be directed toward educating primary caregivers and public health staff about potential agents that might be used, building laboratory capacity for rapid identification of biological agents, providing medical and hospital services as well as vaccines and drugs to control the epidemic.

### C. ENHANCEMENT OF MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

1. The first indication that a biological weapon may have been disseminated is likely to be the appearance of patients in the offices of practicing physicians, especially those in acute care settings. Physicians thus play a critical role in early detection of an outbreak and must be prepared to recognize and deal with diseases resulting from the use of biological weapons as well as other infectious disease agents and to promptly report suspicious illnesses and diseases to public health officials.
2. In the course of an epidemic, physicians will be directly involved with mass patient care, with mass immunization and antibiotic prophylaxis, with providing information to the public, and in a variety of hospital and community efforts to control the epidemic. Thus, physicians should participate with local and national health authorities to develop and implement disaster preparedness and response plans for intentional and natural infectious disease outbreaks.

### D. BIOWEAPONS RESEARCH AND MEDICAL ETHICS

1. Rapid advances in microbiology, molecular biology, and genetic engineering have created extraordinary opportunities for biomedical research and hold great promise for improving human health and the quality of life. Better and more rapid diagnostic tools, novel vaccines, and therapeutic drugs can be foreseen. At the same time, there is concern about the possible misuse of research for the development of more potent biological weapons and the spread of new infectious diseases. It may be difficult to distinguish legitimate biomedical research from research by unscrupulous scientists with the malign purpose of producing more effective biological weapons.
2. All who participate in biomedical research have a moral and ethical obligation to consider the implications of possible malicious use of their findings. Through deliberate or inadvertent means, genetic modification of microorganisms could create organisms that are more virulent, are antibiotic-resistant, or have greater stability in the environment. Genetic modification of microorganisms could alter their immunogenicity, allowing them to evade natural- and vaccine-induced immunity. Advances in genetic engineering and gene therapy may allow modification of the immune response system of the target population to increase or decrease susceptibility to a pathogen or disrupt the functioning of normal host genes.
3. Research specifically for the purposes of creating biological weapons is to be condemned. As scientists and humanitarians, physicians have a societal responsibility to decry scientific research for the development and use of biological weapons and to express abhorrence for the use of biotechnology and information technologies for potentially harmful purposes.
4. Physicians and medical organizations have important societal roles in demanding a global prohibition on biological weapons and stigmatizing their use, guarding against unethical and illicit research, and mitigating civilian harm from use of biological weapons.

## E. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the World Medical Association and National Medical Associations worldwide take an active role in promoting an international ethos condemning the development, production, or use of toxins and biological agents that have no justification for prophylactic, protective, or other peaceful purposes.
2. That the World Medical Association, National Medical Associations and health-care workers worldwide promote, with the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and other appropriate entities, the establishment of an international consortium of medical and public health leaders to monitor the threat of biological weapons, to identify actions likely to prevent bioweapons proliferation, and to develop a coordinated plan for monitoring the worldwide emergence of infectious diseases. This plan should address: (a) international monitoring and reporting systems so as to enhance the surveillance and control of infectious disease outbreaks throughout the world; (b) the development of an effective verification protocol under the UN Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention; (c) education of physicians and public health workers about emerging infectious diseases and potential biological weapons; (d) laboratory capacity to identify biological pathogens; (e) availability of appropriate vaccines and pharmaceuticals; and (f) financial, technical, and research needs to reduce the risk of use of biological weapons and other major infectious disease threats.
3. That the World Medical Association urge physicians to be alert to the occurrence of unexplained illnesses and deaths in the community and knowledgeable of disease surveillance and control capabilities for responding to unusual clusters of diseases, symptoms, or presentations.
4. That the World Medical Association encourage physicians, National Medical Associations and other medical societies to participate with local, national, and international health authorities in developing and implementing disaster preparedness and response protocols for acts of bioterrorism and natural infectious disease outbreaks. These protocols should be used as the basis for physician and public education.
5. That the World Medical Association urge all who participate in biomedical research to consider the implications and possible applications of their work and to weigh carefully in the balance the pursuit of scientific knowledge with their ethical responsibilities to society.



## **WMA DECLARATION ON ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING HEALTH DATABASES**

Adopted by the 53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington, DC, USA, October 2002

1. The right to privacy entitles people to exercise control over the use and disclosure of information about them as individuals. The privacy of a patient's personal health information is secured by the physician's duty of confidentiality.
2. Confidentiality is at the heart of medical practice and is essential for maintaining trust and integrity in the patient-physician relationship. Knowing that their privacy will be respected gives patients the freedom to share sensitive personal information with their physician.
3. These principles have been incorporated in WMA statements since the WMA was founded in 1947, in particular by:
  1. The Declaration of Lisbon, that states: "The patient's dignity and right to privacy shall be respected at all times in medical care and teaching";
  2. The Declaration of Geneva, that requires physicians to "preserve absolute confidentiality on all he knows about his patient even after the patient has died";
  3. The Declaration of Helsinki, that states:

"It is the duty of the physician in medical research to protect the life, health, privacy, and dignity of the human subject"

"Every precaution should be taken to respect the privacy of the [research] subject, the confidentiality of the patient's information and to minimize the impact of the study on the subject's physical and mental integrity and on the personality of the subject"

"In any research on human beings, each potential subject must be adequately informed of the aims, methods, sources of funding, any possible conflicts of interest, institutional affiliations of the researcher, the anticipated benefits and potential risks of the study and the discomfort it may entail. The subject should be informed of the right to abstain from participation in the study or to withdraw consent to participate at any time without reprisal. After ensuring that the subject has understood the information, the physician should then obtain the subject's freely-given informed consent, preferably in writing"



1. The primary purpose of collecting personal health information is the provision of care to the patient. Increasingly, this information is held in databases. The database might hold the patient's health record or specific information from it, for example in the case of disease registries.
2. Progress in medicine and in health care is contingent upon the conduct of quality assurance and risk management activities and health and medical research, including retrospective epidemiological studies, which use information concerning the health of individuals, communities and societies. Databases are valuable sources of information for these secondary uses of health information.
3. Care must be taken to ensure that secondary uses of information do not inhibit patients from confiding information for their own health care needs, exploit their vulnerability or inappropriately borrow on the trust that patients invest in their physicians.
4. For the purpose of this statement, the following definitions are used:
  1. 'Personal health information' is all information recorded with regard to the physical or mental health of an identifiable individual;
  2. A 'database' is a system to collect, describe, save, recover and/or use personal health information from more than one individual whether by manual or electronic means. This definition does not include information in the clinical record of any individual patient;
  3. 'De-identified data' are data in which the link between the patient and the information has been broken and cannot be recovered;
  4. 'Consent' is a person's voluntarily given permission for an action, based on a sound understanding of what the action involves and its likely consequences. In some jurisdictions, the law allows substituted consent to be given on behalf of minors, on behalf of adults who do not have the capacity to consent for themselves, or on behalf of deceased persons.

## **PRINCIPLES**

1. These principles apply to all new and existing health databases, including those run or managed by commercial organisations.

### **Access to information by patients**

2. Patients have the right to know what information physicians hold about them, including information held on health databases. In many jurisdictions, they have a right to a copy of their health records.
3. Patients should have the right to decide that their personal health information in a database (as defined in 7.2) be deleted.
4. In rare, limited circumstances, information may be withheld from a patient if it is likely that disclosure cause serious harm to the patient or another person. Physicians must be able to justify any decision to withhold information from a patient.

**Confidentiality**

5. All physicians are individually responsible and accountable for the confidentiality of the personal health information they hold. Physicians must also be satisfied that there are appropriate arrangements for the security of personal health information when it is stored, sent or received, including electronically.
6. In addition, medically qualified person(s) should be appointed to act as guardian of a health database, to have responsibility for monitoring and ensuring compliance with the principles of confidentiality and security.
7. Safeguards must be in place to ensure that there is no inappropriate or unauthorised use of or access to personal health information in databases, and to ensure the authenticity of the data. When data is transmitted, there must be arrangements in place to ensure that the transmission is secure.
8. Audit systems must keep a record of who has accessed personal health information and when. Patients should be able to review the audit record for their own information.

**Patients' consent**

9. Patients should be informed if their health information is to be stored on a database and of the purposes for which their information may be used.
10. Patients' consent is needed if the inclusion of their information on a database involves disclosure to a third party or would permit access by people other than those involved in the patients' care, unless there are exceptional circumstances as described in paragraph 11.
11. Under certain conditions, personal health information may be included on a database without consent, for example where this conforms with applicable national law that conforms to the requirements of this statement, or where ethical approval has been given by a specially appointed ethical review committee. In these exceptional cases, patients should be informed about the potential uses of their information, even if they have no right to object.
12. If patients object to their information being passed to others, their objections must be respected unless exceptional circumstances apply, for example where this is required by applicable national law that conforms to the requirements of this statement or necessary to prevent a risk of death or serious harm.
13. Authorization from the guardian of the health database is needed before information held on databases may be accessed by third parties. Procedures for granting authorization must comply with recognised codes of confidentiality.
14. Approval from a specially appointed ethical review committee must be obtained for all research using patient data, including for new research not envisaged at the time the data were collected. An important consideration for the committee in such cases will be whether patients should be contacted to obtain consent, or whether it is acceptable to use the information for the new purpose without returning to the patient for further consent. The committee's decisions must be in accordance with applicable national law and conform to the requirements of this statement.

15. Data accessed must be used only for the purposes for which authorization has been given.
16. People who collect, use, disclose or access health information must be subject to an enforceable duty to keep the information secure.

**De-identified data**

17. Wherever possible, data for secondary purposes should be de-identified. If this is not possible, however, the use of data where the patient's identity is protected by an alias or code should be used in preference to readily identifiable data.
18. The use of de-identified data does not usually raise issues of confidentiality. Data about people as individuals, in which they retain a legitimate interest, for example a case history or photograph, require protection.

**Data integrity**

19. Physicians are responsible for ensuring, as far as practicable, that the information they provide to, and hold on, databases is accurate and up-to-date.
20. Patients who have seen their information and believe there are inaccuracies in it have the right to suggest amendments and to have their comments appended to the information.

**Documentation**

21. There must be documentation to explain: what information is held and why; what consent has been obtained from the patients; who may access the data; why, how and when the data may be linked to other information; and the circumstances in which data may be made available to third parties.
22. Information to patients about a specific database should cover: consent to the storage and use of data; rights of access to the data; and rights to have inaccurate data amended.

**Management**

23. Procedures for addressing enquiries and complaints must be in place.
24. The person or persons who are accountable for policies, procedures, and to whom complaints or enquiries can be made must be identified.

**Policies**

25. National medical associations should cooperate with the relevant health authorities, ethical authorities and personal data authorities, at national and other appropriate administrative levels, to formulate health information policies based on the principles in this document.

## **WMA DECLARATION ON PATIENT SAFETY**

Adopted by the 53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington, DC, USA, October 2002  
and reaffirmed by the 191<sup>st</sup> WMA Council Session, Prague, Czech Republic, April 2012

### **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**

1. Physicians must ensure that patient safety is always considered during medical decision-making.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. To create such a systems approach, physicians must continuously absorb a wide range of advanced scientific knowledge and continuously strive to improve medical practice.
5. 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

1. Hence, the WMA recommends the following to national medical associations:
  1. National medical associations should promote policies on patient safety to all physicians in their countries;
  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;
  3. National medical associations should encourage the development of effective models to promote patient safety through continuing medical education/continuing professional development;
  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.

## **WMA DECLARATION ON MEDICAL ETHICS AND ADVANCED MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY**

Adopted by the 53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington, DC, USA, October 2002  
and revised by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

It is essential to balance the benefits and risks for persons inherent in the development and application of advanced medical technology. Maintaining this balance is entrusted to the judgment of the physician.

Therefore:

Medical technology should be used to promote health. Patient safety should be fully considered by the physician in the development and application of medical technology.

In order to foster physicians' ability to provide appropriate medical care and having sufficient knowledge of medical technology efforts must be made to ensure the provision of comprehensive medical education focusing on the safe and effective use and development of medical technology.

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## **WMA DECLARATION OF SEOUL ON PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY AND CLINICAL INDEPENDENCE**

Adopted by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

The World Medical Association, having explored the importance of professional autonomy and physician clinical independence, hereby adopts the following principles:

1. The central element of professional autonomy and clinical independence is the assurance that individual physicians have the freedom to exercise their professional judgment in the care and treatment of their patients without undue influence by outside parties or individuals.
2. Medicine is a highly complex art and science. Through lengthy training and experience, physicians become medical experts and healers. Whereas patients have the right to decide to a large extent which medical interventions they will undergo, they expect their physicians to be free to make clinically appropriate recommendations.
3. Although physicians recognize that they must take into account the structure of the health system and available resources, unreasonable restraints on clinical independence imposed by governments and administrators are not in the best interests of patients, not least because they can damage the trust which is an essential component of the patient-physician relationship.
4. Hospital administrators and third-party payers may consider physician professional autonomy to be incompatible with prudent management of health care costs. However, the restraints that administrators and third-party payers attempt to place on clinical independence may not be in the best interests of patients. Furthermore, restraints on the ability of physicians to refuse demands by patients or their families for inappropriate medical services are not in the best interests of either patients or society.
5. The World Medical Association reaffirms the importance of professional autonomy and clinical independence not only as an essential component of high quality medical care and therefore a benefit to the patient that must be preserved, but also as an essential principle of medical professionalism. The World Medical Association therefore rededicates itself to maintaining and assuring the continuation of professional autonomy and clinical independence in the care of patients.

## WMA DECLARATION OF DELHI ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Adopted by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### PREAMBLE

The purpose of this document is to provide a response by the WMA on behalf of its members to the challenges imposed on health and healthcare systems by climate change.

Although governments and international organizations have the main responsibility for creating regulations and legislation to mitigate the effects of climate change and to help their populations adapt to it, the World Medical Association, on behalf of its national medical association members and their physician members, feels an obligation to highlight the health consequences of climate change and to suggest solutions. The 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) contains a full chapter on human health impacts (AR4 Chapter 8 Human Health<sup>1</sup>), including a range of possibilities regarding the potential effects of climate change. The following introduction includes the most likely effects of climate change from the IPCC report.

### INTRODUCTION

The response of world leaders to the impact that humans are having on climate and the environment will permanently alter the livability of this planet.

1. The UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states “Even the minimum predicted shifts in climate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century are likely to be significant and disruptive”<sup>2</sup>.
  - 1.1. The minimum warming forecast for the next 100 years is more than twice the 0.6° C increase that has occurred since 1900.
  - 1.2. Extra-tropical storm tracks are projected to move toward the poles, with consequent changes in wind, precipitation, and temperature patterns.
  - 1.3. Sea levels have already risen by 10 to 20 cm over pre-industrial averages, and will continue to rise due to the time scales associated with climate processes and feedbacks.
  - 1.4. Projections point to continued snow cover contraction, and widespread increases in thaw depth over most permafrost regions, now including Antarctica.



- 1.5. A future of more severe storms and floods along the world's increasingly crowded coastlines is likely.
  - 1.6. Increases in the amounts of precipitation in high latitudes and precipitation decreases in most sub-tropical land regions are predicted.
  - 1.7. Regional / local effects may differ but a reduction in potential crop yields is expected in most tropical / sub-tropical regions – causing further disruptions in global food supply.
  - 1.8. Salt-water intrusion from rising sea levels will reduce the quality and quantity of freshwater supplies, and seawater will become more acidic from dissolved CO<sub>2</sub>.
  - 1.9. As many as 25% of mammals and 12% of birds may become extinct within the next few decades. Warmer conditions are altering the ecosystem and human development is blocking threatened species from migrating.
  - 1.10. Higher temperatures will expand the range of some vector-borne diseases, such as malaria, which already kills 1 million people annually, mostly children<sup>2</sup>.
2. The IPCC authors begin with a review of the evidence and provide the following information (confidence levels as determined by IPCC in brackets):
    - 2.1. Climate change currently contributes to the global burden of disease and premature deaths (very high confidence). At this early stage the effects are small but are projected to progressively increase in all countries and regions.
    - 2.2. Emerging evidence of climate change effects on human health shows that climate change has (confidence levels in brackets):
      - 2.2.1. Altered the distribution of some infectious disease vectors (medium);
      - 2.2.2. Altered the seasonal distribution of some allergenic pollen species (high);
      - 2.2.3. Increased heat wave related deaths (medium).
3. In their thorough review, the IPCC authors' project climate change related human health impacts as follows (confidence levels in brackets):
    - 3.1. Increased malnutrition and consequent disorders, including those relating to child growth and development (high).
    - 3.2. Increased numbers of people suffering from death, disease and injury from heat waves, floods, storms, fires and droughts (high).
    - 3.3. Continued change in the range of some infectious disease vectors (high).
    - 3.4. Mixed effects on malaria; in some places the geographical range will contract, elsewhere the geographical range will expand and the transmission season may be changed (very high).

- 3.5. Increased burden of diarrheal diseases (medium).
  - 3.6. Increased cardio-respiratory morbidity and mortality associated with ground-level ozone (high).
  - 3.7. Increased numbers of people at risk of dengue (low).
  - 3.8. Social and health inequalities due to possible desertification, natural disasters, changes in agriculture, feeding and water policy which will have consequences on both human health and human resources in health.
4. The authors note that climate change could bring some benefits to health, including fewer deaths from cold, although these will be outweighed by the negative effects of rising temperatures worldwide, especially in developing countries (high confidence).
  5. The WMA notes that climate change is likely to amplify inequalities in health and other existing problems within and between countries.
  6. Early research suggests that mitigation of the effects of climate change may have a link with prevention such that mitigation might have significant health benefits for both individuals and populations<sup>3</sup>.

## STATEMENT

Given the consequences of global climate change on the health of people throughout the world, the World Medical Association, on behalf of its national medical association members and their physician members supports and commits to the following actions:

### 1. ADVOCACY to Combat Global Warming

- 1.1. The World Medical Association and National Medical Associations urge national governments to recognize the serious consequences for health as a result of climate change and therefore to strive for an intergovernmental agreement in Copenhagen in December 2009 with the following components:
  - 1.1.1. specific goals for reductions of climate altering emissions (mitigation)
  - 1.1.2. a mechanism to minimize the harms and health inequalities that are globally associated with climate change (adaptation).
  - 1.1.3. because climate change will exaggerate health disparities, WMA recommends that resources transferred to developing countries for climate change must include designated funds to support the strengthening of health systems.
- 1.2. As a profession, physicians & their medical associations will encourage advocacy for environmental protection, reduction of green house gas production, sustainable development and green adaptation practices within their communities, countries/regions, especially for the right of safe water & sewage disposal for all.

- 1.3. As professionals, physicians are encouraged to act within their professional settings (clinics, hospitals, laboratories etc.) to reduce the environmental impact of medical activities, & to develop environmentally sustainable professional settings.
- 1.4. As individuals, physicians will be encouraged to act to minimize their impact on the environment, reduce their carbon footprint and encourage those around them to do so.

## **2. LEADERSHIP: Help people to mitigate climate damage & adapt to climate change**

- 2.1. Support the Millennium Development Goals and commit to work to attain them.
- 2.2. Support and implement the principles outlined in the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health report, Closing the Gap in a Generation and in the World Health Assembly Resolution on climate change and health and work with WHO and others to ensure implementation of the recommendations.
- 2.3. Work to create resilience within health systems to ensure that all health care providers are able to adapt and can fully utilize their capacity to provide care to those in need.
- 2.4. Urge local, national and international organizations focused on adaptation, mitigation, and development to involve physicians and the healthcare community to ensure that unanticipated health impacts of development are minimized, while opportunities for health promotion are maximized.
- 2.5. Work to improve the ability of patients to adapt to climate change and catastrophic weather events by:
  - 2.5.1. encouraging health behaviors that improve overall health;
  - 2.5.2. creating targeted programs designed to address specific exposures;
  - 2.5.3. providing health promotion information and education on self-management of the symptoms of climate-associated illness.

## **3. EDUCATION & CAPACITY BUILDING**

- 3.1. Build professional awareness of the importance of the environment and global climate change to personal, community and societal health, and recognize that universal equitable education improves health capacity for all.
- 3.2. Physicians have obligations for the health and health care of individual patients. Collectively, through their national medical associations, and through WMA they also have obligations and responsibilities for the health of all people.
- 3.3. Work with others to educate the general public about the important effects of climate change on health and the need to both mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects.

- 3.4. Add or strengthen routine health training on environmental health/medicine and public health for all students in health related disciplines.
- 3.5. The WMA and NMAs should develop concrete actionable plans/practical steps as tools for physicians to adopt in their practices; health authorities and governments should do the same for hospitals and other health facilities.
- 3.6. Incorporate tools such as a patient environmental impact assessment and encourage physicians to evaluate their patients and their families for risk from the environment and global climate change.
- 3.7. Advocate that governments undertake community climate change health impact assessments, widely disseminate the results, and incorporate the results into planning for mitigation and adaptation.
- 3.8. Encourage recruitment of physicians for work in public health and all roles in emergency planning & response to extreme climate change, including the training of other physicians.
- 3.9. Urge colleges and universities to develop locally appropriate continuing medical and public health education on the clinical signs, diagnosis and treatment of new diseases that are introduced into communities as a result of climate change, and on the management of long-term anxiety and depression that often accompany experiences of disasters.
- 3.10. Urge governments to provide training for climate-change-related emergency response to physicians, particularly those living in relatively isolated regions.
- 3.11. Work with policy makers on the development of concrete actions to be taken to prevent or reduce the health impact of climate-related emissions, in particular those initiatives, which will also improve the general health of the population. This would include initiatives to stop the privatization of water

#### **4. SURVEILLANCE AND RESEARCH**

- 4.1. Work with others, including governments, to address the gaps in research regarding climate change and health by undertaking studies to:
  - 4.1.1. describe the patterns of disease that are attributed to climate change, including the impacts of climate change on communities and households;
  - 4.1.2. quantify and model the burden of disease that will be caused by global climate change;
  - 4.1.3. describe the effects of poorly treated wastewater used for irrigation and
  - 4.1.4. describe the most vulnerable populations, the particular health impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations, & possible new protections for such populations.

- 4.2. Advocate for the collection of vital statistics and the removal of barriers to the registration of births & deaths, in recognition of the special vulnerability of some populations.
- 4.3. Report diseases that emerge in conjunction with global climate change, and participate in field investigations, as with outbreaks of infectious diseases.
- 4.4. Support and participate in the development or expansion of surveillance systems to include diseases caused by global climate change.
- 4.5. WMA will and encourages all NMAs to collaborate in the collection and sharing of local or regional health information within and between countries in order to encourage the adoption of best practices and proven strategies

**5. COLLABORATION: Prepare for climate emergencies**

- 5.1. Collaborate with governments, NGOs and other health professionals to develop knowledge about the best ways to mitigate climate change, including those adaptive and mitigation strategies that will result in improved health.
- 5.2. Encourage governments to incorporate national medical associations & physicians into country & community emergency planning & response.
- 5.3. Work to ensure integration of physicians into the plans of civil society, governments, public health authorities, international NGOs and WHO.
- 5.4. Encourage WHO and countries of the World Medical Assembly to review the International Health Regulations and Planning for Pandemic Influenza and obtain the perspective of clinicians in community practice to ensure that there are appropriate responses by practicing physicians to emergency alerts, and to make recommendations regarding the most appropriate education, and tools for physicians and other healthcare workers.
- 5.5. Call upon governments to strengthen public health systems in order to improve the capacity of communities to adapt to climate change.
- 5.6. Prepare physicians, physicians' offices, clinics, hospitals and other health care facilities for the infrastructure disruptions that accompany major emergencies, in particular by planning in advance the delivery of services during times of such disruptions.
- 5.7. Urge physicians, medical associations and governments to work collaboratively to develop systems for event alerts in order to ensure that health care systems and physicians are aware of climate-related events as they unfold, and receive timely accurate information regarding the management of emerging health events.

- 5.8. Call upon governments to plan for environmental refugees within their countries.
- 5.9. In collaboration with WHO, produce locally adapted fact sheets on climate change for national medical associations, physicians, and other health professionals.
- 5.10. WMA will work with others to identify funding for specific research programs on mitigation and adaptation related to health, and the sharing of information/research within and between countries and jurisdictions.

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<sup>1</sup> Confalonieri, U., B. Menne, R. Akhtar, K.L. Ebi, M. Hauengue, R.S. Kovats, B. Revich and A. Woodward, 2007: Human health. *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 391-431.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. <http://unfccc.int/2860.php> downloaded 1 September 2008

<sup>3</sup> In the context of this paper, Mitigation describes the actions to reduce human effects on the climate system: principally strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (analogous to primary prevention) while Adaptation is understood to refer to the adjustment in natural or human systems taken in response to actual or expected climate stimuli or their effects, and that moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities (analogous to secondary prevention). (See WHO EB122/4, Jan 08)

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## WMA DECLARATION OF MADRID ON PROFESSIONALLY-LED REGULATION

Adopted by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

The collective action by the medical profession seeking for the benefit of patients, in assuming responsibility for implementing a system of professionally-led regulation will enhance and assure the individual physician's right to treat patients without interference, based on his or her best clinical judgment. Therefore, the WMA urges the national medical associations and all physicians to take the following actions.

1. Physicians have been granted by society a high degree of professional autonomy and clinical independence, whereby they are able to make recommendations based on the best interests of their patients without undue outside influence.
2. As a corollary to the right of professional autonomy and clinical independence, the medical profession has a continuing responsibility to be self-regulating. Ultimate control and decision-making authority must rest with physicians, based on their specific medical training, knowledge, experience and expertise.
3. Physicians in each country are urged to establish, maintain and actively participate in a legitimate system of professionally-led regulation. This dedication is to ultimately assure full clinical independence in patient care decisions.
4. To avoid being influenced by the inherent potential conflicts of interest that will arise from assuming both representational and regulatory duties, National Medical Associations must do their utmost to promote and support the concept of professionally-led regulation amongst their membership and the public.
5. Any system of professionally-led regulation must ensure
  - a) the quality of the care provided to patients,
  - b) the competence of the physician providing that care and
  - c) the professional conduct of physician.To ensure the patient quality continuing care, physicians must participate actively in the process of Continuing Professional Development in order to update and maintain their clinical knowledge, skills and competence.
6. The professional conduct of physicians must always be within the bounds of the Code of Ethics governing physicians in each country. National Medical Associations must promote professional and ethical conduct among physicians for the benefit of their patients. Ethical violations must be promptly recognized and reported. The physicians who have erred must be appropriately disciplined and where possible be rehabilitated.

7. National Medical Associations are urged to assist each other in coping with new and developing problems, including potential inappropriate threats to professionally-led regulation. The ongoing exchange of information and experiences between National Medical Associations is essential for the benefit of patients.
8. An effective and responsible system of professionally-led regulation by the medical profession in each country must not be self serving or internally protective of the profession, and the process must be fair, reasonable and sufficiently transparent to ensure this. National Medical Associations should assist their members in understanding that self-regulation cannot only be perceived as being protective of physicians, but must maintain the safety, support and confidence of the general public as well as the honour of the profession itself.



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## **WMA DECLARATION OF MONTEVIDEO ON DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MEDICAL RESPONSE**

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

In the last decade, the attention of the world has been drawn to a number of severe events which seriously tested and overwhelmed the capacity of local healthcare and emergency medical response systems. Armed conflicts, terrorist attacks and natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and tsunamis in various parts of the world have not only affected the health of people living in these areas but have also drawn the support and response of the international community. Many National Medical Associations have sent groups to assist in such disaster situations.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CREDE), the frequency, magnitude, and toll of natural disasters and terrorism have increased throughout the world. In the previous century, about 3.5 million people were killed worldwide as a result of natural disasters; about 200 million were killed as a result of human-caused disasters (e.g., wars, terrorism, genocides). Each year, disasters cause hundreds of deaths and cost billions of dollars due to disruption of commerce and destruction of homes and critical infrastructure.

Population vulnerability (e.g., due to increased population density, urbanization, aging) has increased the risk of disasters and public health emergencies. Globalization, which connects countries through economic interdependencies, has led to increased international travel and commerce. Such activity has also led to increased population density in cities around the world and increased movement of people to coastal areas and other disaster-prone regions. Increases in international travel may speed the rate at which an emerging infectious disease or bioterrorism agent spreads across the globe. Climate change and terrorism have emerged as important global factors that can influence disaster trends and thus require continued monitoring and attention.

The emergence of infectious diseases, such as H1N1 influenza A and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and the recent arrival of West Nile virus and monkey pox in the Western hemisphere, reinforces the need for constant vigilance and planning to prepare for and respond to new and unexpected public health emergencies.

The growing likelihood of terrorist-related disasters affecting large civilian populations affects all nations. Concern continues about the security of the worldwide arsenal of nuclear, chemical, and biological agents as well as the recruitment of people capable of manufacturing or deploying them. The potentially catastrophic nature of a "successful" terrorist attack configures an event that may demand a disproportionate amount of resources and healthcare professionals preparedness. Natural disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes,

floods, and earthquakes, as well as industrial and transportation-related catastrophes, are far more common and can also severely stress existing medical, public health, and emergency response systems.

In light of recent world events, it is increasingly clear that all physicians need to become more proficient in the recognition, diagnosis, and treatment of mass casualties under an all-hazards approach to disaster management and response. They must be able to recognize the general features of disasters and public health emergencies, and be knowledgeable about how to report them and where to get more information should the need arise. Physicians are on the front lines when dealing with injury and disease—whether caused by microbes, environmental hazards, natural disasters, highway collisions, terrorism, or other calamities. Early detection and reporting are critical to minimize casualties through astute teamwork by public- and private-sector health and emergency response personnel.

The WMA, representing the doctors of the world, calls upon its members to advocate for the following:

- To promote a standard competency set to ensure consistency among disaster training programs for physicians across all specialties. Many NMAs have disaster courses and previous experiences in disaster response. These NMAs can share this knowledge and advocate for the integration of some standardized level of training for all physicians, regardless of specialty or nationality.
- To work with national and local governments to establish or update regional databases and geographic mapping of information on health system assets, capacities, capabilities, and logistics to assist medical response efforts, domestically and worldwide, when needed. This could include information on local response organizations, the condition of local hospitals and health system infrastructures, endemic and emerging diseases, and other important public health and clinical information to assist medical response in the event of a disaster. In addition, systems for communicating directly with physicians and other front line health care providers should be identified and strengthened.
- To work with national and local governments to ensure the developing and testing of disaster management plans for clinical care and public health including the ethical basis for delivering such plans.
- To encourage governments at national and local levels to work across normal departmental and other boundaries in developing the necessary planning.

The WMA could serve as a channel of communication for NMAs during such times of crisis, enabling them to coordinate activities and work together.

## **WMA DECLARATION ON END-OF-LIFE MEDICAL CARE**

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

### **INTRODUCTION**

All people have the right to high-quality, scientifically-based, and humane healthcare. Therefore, receiving appropriate end-of-life medical care must not be considered a privilege but a true right, independent of age or any other associated factors. The WMA reaffirms the principles articulated in the WMA Declaration on Terminal illness and the WMA Declaration on Euthanasia. These Declarations support and complement the Declaration on End of Life Medical Care.

Palliative care at the end of life is part of good medical care. The need for access to improved quality palliative care is great, especially in resource-poor countries. The objective of palliative care is to achieve the best possible quality of life through appropriate palliation of pain and other distressing physical symptoms, and attention to the social, psychological and spiritual needs of the patient.

Palliative care may be provided at home as well as in various levels of health care institutions.

The physician must adopt an attitude to suffering that is compassionate and humane, and act with empathy, respect and tact. Abandonment of the patient when he or she needs such care is unacceptable medical practice.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **1. Pain and symptom management**

- 1.1 It is essential to identify patients approaching the end of life as early as possible so that the physician can perform a detailed assessment of their needs. A care plan for the patient must always be developed; whenever possible, this care plan will be developed in direct consultation with the patient.

For some this process may begin months or a year before death is anticipated. It includes recognising and addressing the likelihood of pain and other distressing symptoms and providing for patients' social, psychological and spiritual needs in the time remaining to them. The primary aim is to maintain patients' dignity and their freedom from distressing symptoms. Care plans pay attention to keeping them as comfortable and in control as possible and recognise the importance of supporting the family and treating the body with respect after death.

- 1.2 Important advances in the relief of pain and other distressing symptoms have been made. The appropriate use of morphine, new analgesics, and other measures can suppress or relieve pain and other distressing symptoms in the majority of cases. The appropriate health authorities must make necessary medications accessible and available to physicians and their patients. Physician groups should develop guidelines on their appropriate use, including dose escalation and the possibility of unintended secondary effects.
- 1.3 In a very limited number of cases, generally in the very advanced stages of a physical illness, some symptoms may arise that are refractory to standard therapy. In such cases, palliative sedation to unconsciousness may be offered when life expectancy is a few days, as an extraordinary measure in response to suffering which the patient and clinician agree is intolerable. Palliative sedation must never be used to intentionally cause a patient's death or without the agreement of a patient who remains mentally competent. The degree and timing of palliative sedation must be proportionate to the situation. The dosage must be carefully calculated to relieve symptoms but should still be the lowest possible to achieve a benefit.

## **2. Communication and consent; ethics and values**

- 2.1 Information and communication among the patient, their family and members of the health care team is one of the fundamental pillars of quality care at the end of life. The patient should be encouraged to express his or her preferences regarding care, and his or her emotions and existential angst must be taken into consideration.
- 2.2 Ethically-appropriate care at the end of life should routinely promote patient autonomy and shared decision-making, and be respectful of the values of the patient and his or her family.
- 2.3 Physicians should directly discuss a patient's preferences with the patient and/or the patient's substitute health care decision maker, as appropriate. These discussions should be initiated early and routinely offered to all patients and should be revisited regularly to explore any changes patients may have in their wishes, especially as their clinical conditions change. Physicians should encourage their patients to formally document their goals, values and treatment preferences and to appoint a substitute health care decision maker with whom the patient can discuss in advance his or her values regarding health care and treatment. Patients who are in denial about the implications of their condition may not want to engage in such discussion at some stages of their illness, but should know that they can change their minds. Because documented advance directives are often not available in emergency situations, physicians should emphasize to patients the importance of discussing treatment preferences with individuals who are likely to act as substitute health care decision makers.
- 2.4 If a patient is capable of giving consent, care should be based on the patient's wishes as long as preferences can be justified medically, ethically and legally. Consent needs to be based on sufficient information and dialogue, and it is the physician's

obligation to make sure that the patient is adequately treated for pain and discomfort before consent is obtained in order to assure that unnecessary physical and mental suffering do not interfere with the decision-making process.

- 2.5 The patient's next-of-kin or family should be informed and involved in the decision-making process, provided the patient is not opposed to this. If the patient is unable to express consent and an advance directive is not available, the views of the health care substitute decision maker, appointed by the patient on care and treatment, must be considered.

### **3. Medical records and medico-legal aspects**

- 3.1 Physicians caring for a patient in the final stages of life must carefully document treatment decisions and the reasons for choosing particular procedures, including the patient's and family's wishes and consent, in the progress notes of the medical records. An adequate medical record is of the utmost importance for continuity and quality of medical care in general and palliative care in particular.
- 3.2 The physician must also take into account that these notes may serve a medico-legal purpose, e.g., in determining the patient's decision-making capacity.

### **4. Family members**

It is necessary to acknowledge the importance of the family and the emotional environment of the patient. The needs of the family and other close caregivers throughout the course of the illness must be recognized and attended to. The health care team should promote collaboration in the care of the patient and provide bereavement support, when required, after the patient's death. Children's and families' needs may require special attention and competence, both when children are patients and dependents.

### **5. Teamwork**

Palliative care is usually provided by multiprofessional and interdisciplinary teams of healthcare and non-healthcare professions. The physician must be the leader of the team, being responsible, amongst other obligations, for diagnosis and medical treatment. Continuity of care is very important. The team should do all it can to facilitate a patient's wish to die at home, if applicable and possible.

### **6. Physician training**

The increasing number of people who require palliative care and the increased availability of effective treatment options mean that end-of-life care issues should be an important part of undergraduate and postgraduate medical training.

### **7. Research and education**

More research is needed to improve palliative care. This includes, but is not limited to, general medical care, specific treatments, psychological implications and organization. The WMA will support efforts to better educate physicians in the skills necessary to increase the prevalence and quality of meaningful advance care planning.

## **CONCLUSION**

The care that a people give to dying patients, within available resources, is an indication of their degree of civilisation. As physicians representing the best humanitarian tradition, we should always commit ourselves to delivering the best possible end-of-life care.

The WMA recommends that all National Medical Associations develop a national policy on palliative care and palliative sedation based on the recommendations in this declaration.

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**WMA DECLARATION  
ON  
LEPROSY CONTROL AROUND THE WORLD AND  
ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION  
AGAINST PERSONS AFFECTED BY LEPROSY**

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

Leprosy is a widespread public health problem, with approximately 250,000 new cases diagnosed annually worldwide. It is a curable disease and after starting treatment, the chain of transmission is interrupted. Leprosy is a disease that have been inadequately addressed from the point of view of investments in research and medical treatment.

The World Medical Association recommends to all National Medical Associations to defend the right of the people affected with leprosy and members of their families, that they should be treated with dignity and free from any kind of prejudice or discrimination. Physicians, health professionals and civil society should be engaged in combating all forms of prejudice and discrimination. Research centers should acknowledge leprosy as a major public health problem, and continue to research this disease since there are still gaps in understanding its patho-physiological mechanisms. These gaps in knowledge may be overcome through the allocation of resources to new research, which will contribute to more efficient control worldwide. Medical schools, especially in countries with high prevalence of leprosy, should enhance its importance in the curriculum. The public, private, and civil sectors should unify their best efforts in order to disseminate information that would counteract prejudice towards leprosy and that acknowledges its curability.





## **WMA DECLARATION ON THE PROTECTION OF HEALTH CARE WORKERS IN SITUATION OF VIOLENCE**

Adopted by the 65<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014

### **PREAMBLE**

The right to health is a fundamental element of human rights which does not change in situations of conflict and violence. Access to medical assistance for the sick and wounded, whether they have been engaged in active combat or not, is guaranteed through various international agreements, including the Geneva Convention and the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials of the United Nations.

The primary obligation of physicians is always to their patients, and physicians have the same ethical responsibilities to preserve health and save life in situations of violence or armed conflicts as in peacetime. These are as set out in the WMA Regulations in Times of Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence.

It is essential to ensure the safety and personal security of healthcare workers in order to enable the provision of the highest standard of care to patients. If healthcare workers are not safe, they might not be able to provide care, and patients will suffer.

In situations of violence, the delivery of healthcare is frequently obstructed and the sick and wounded deprived of essential treatment through:

1. Medical workers being prevented from attending to the injured;
2. Interference by the state or others in positions of power through intimidation, detention or other legal measures;
3. Patients being denied access to medical facilities;
4. Targeted attacks upon medical facilities and medical transport;
5. Targeted attacks upon medical personnel, including kidnapping;
6. Non-targeted violent acts which result in the damage to or destruction of facilities or vehicles, or cause injury or death to medical personnel.

Such actions have serious humanitarian implications and violate international standards of medical neutrality as set out in the provisions of international human rights and humanitarian law and codes of medical ethics.

Attacks on the fundamental ethical principles of the medical profession, such as attempts to coerce medical professionals into providing details regarding those under their care, can undermine the confidence of patients and discourage injured people from seeking necessary treatment.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The WMA calls upon governments and all parties involved in situations of violence to:

1. Ensure the safety, independence and personal security of healthcare personnel at all times, including during armed conflicts and other situations of violence, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols;
2. Enable healthcare personnel to attend to injured and sick patients, regardless of their role in a conflict, and to carry out their medical duties freely, independently and in accordance with the principles of their profession without fear of punishment or intimidation;
3. Safe access to adequate medical facilities for the injured and others in need of medical aid should not be unduly impeded;
4. Protect medical facilities, medical transport and the people being treated in them and provide the safest possible working environment for healthcare workers and protect them from interference and attack;
5. Respect and promote the principles of international humanitarian and human rights law which safeguard medical neutrality in situations of conflict;
6. Establish reporting mechanisms to document violence against medical personnel and facilities as set out in the WMA Statement on the Protection and Integrity of Medical Personnel in Armed Conflicts and Other Situations of Violence.
7. Raise awareness of international norms on the protection of healthcare workers and cooperate with different actors to identify strategies to tackle threats to healthcare. The collaboration between the WMA and the International Committee of the Red Cross on the Health Care in Danger project provides one example of this.

## **WMA REGULATIONS IN TIMES OF ARMED CONFLICT AND OTHER SITUATIONS OF VIOLENCE**

Adopted by the 10<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Havana, Cuba, October 1956  
and edited by the 11<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Istanbul, Turkey, October 1957  
and revised by the 35<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Venice, Italy, October 1983  
and the 55<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Tokyo, Japan, October 2004  
and editorially revised by the 173<sup>rd</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France,  
May 2006  
and revised by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

### **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

Medical ethics in times of armed conflict is identical to medical ethics in times of peace, as stated in the International Code of Medical Ethics of the WMA. If, in performing their professional duty, physicians have conflicting loyalties, their primary obligation is to their patients; in all their professional activities, physicians should adhere to international conventions on human rights, international humanitarian law and WMA declarations on medical ethics.

The primary task of the medical profession is to preserve health and save life. Hence it is deemed unethical for physicians to:

- Give advice or perform prophylactic, diagnostic or therapeutic procedures that are not justifiable for the patient's health care;
- Weaken the physical or mental strength of a human being without therapeutic justification;
- Employ scientific knowledge to imperil health or destroy life;
- Employ personal health information to facilitate interrogation;
- Condone, facilitate or participate in the practice of torture or any form of cruel, in-human or degrading treatment.

During times of armed conflict and other situations of violence, standard ethical norms apply, not only in regard to treatment but also to all other interventions, such as research. Research involving experimentation on human subjects is strictly forbidden on all persons deprived of their liberty, especially civilian and military prisoners and the population of occupied countries.

The medical duty to treat people with humanity and respect applies to all patients. The physician must always give the necessary care impartially and without discrimination on the basis of age, disease or disability, creed, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, or social standing or any other similar criterion.

Governments, armed forces and others in positions of power should comply with the Geneva Conventions to ensure that physicians and other health care professionals can provide care to everyone in need in situations of armed conflict and other situations of violence. This obligation includes a requirement to protect health care personnel and facilities.

Whatever the context, medical confidentiality must be preserved by the physician. However, in armed conflict or other situations of violence, and in peacetime, there may be circumstances in which a patient poses a significant risk to other people and physicians will need to weigh their obligation to the patient against their obligation to other individuals threatened.

Privileges and facilities afforded to physicians and other health care professionals in times of armed conflict and other situations of violence must never be used other than for health care purposes.

Physicians have a clear duty to care for the sick and injured. Physicians should recognise the special vulnerability of some groups, including women and children. Provision of such care should not be impeded or regarded as any kind of offence. Physicians must never be prosecuted or punished for complying with any of their ethical obligations.

Physicians have a duty to press governments and other authorities for the provision of the infrastructure that is a prerequisite to health, including potable water, adequate food and shelter.

Where conflict appears to be imminent and inevitable, physicians should, as far as they are able, ensure that authorities are planning for the protection of the public health infrastructure and for any necessary repair in the immediate post-conflict period.

In emergencies, physicians are required to render immediate attention to the best of their ability. Whether civilian or combatant, the sick and wounded must receive promptly the care they need. No distinction shall be made between patients except those based upon clinical need.

Physicians must be granted access to patients, medical facilities and equipment and the protection needed to carry out their professional activities freely. Such access must include patients in detention centres and prisons. Necessary assistance, including unimpeded passage and complete professional independence, must be granted.

In fulfilling their duties and where they have the legal right, physicians and other health care professionals shall be identified and protected by internationally recognized symbols such as the Red Cross, Red Crescent or Red Crystal.

Hospitals and health care facilities situated in areas where there is either armed conflict or other situations of violence must be respected by all combatants and media personnel. Health care given to the sick and wounded, civilians or combatants, cannot be used for publicity or propaganda. The privacy of the sick, wounded and dead must always be respected. This includes visits from important political figures for media purposes and also when important political figures are among the wounded and the sick.

Physicians must be aware that, during armed conflict or other situations of violence, health care becomes increasingly susceptible to unscrupulous practice and the distribution of poor quality / counterfeit materials and medicines, and attempt to take action on such practices.

The WMA supports the collection and dissemination of data related to assaults on physicians, other health care personnel and medical facilities, by an international body. Such data are important to understand the nature of such attacks and to set up mechanisms to prevent them. Assaults against medical personnel must be investigated and those responsible must be brought to justice.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT: DUTIES OF PHYSICIANS WORKING IN ARMED CONFLICT AND OTHER SITUATIONS OF VIOLENCE**

Physicians must in all circumstances:

- Neither commit nor assist violations of international law (international humanitarian law or human rights law);
- Not abandon the wounded and sick;
- Not take part in any act of hostility;
- Remind authorities of their obligation to search for the wounded and sick and to ensure access to health care without unfair discrimination;
- Advocate and provide effective and impartial care to the wounded and sick (without reference to any ground of unfair discrimination, including whether they are the "enemy");
- Recognise that security of individuals, patients and institutions are a major constraint to ethical behaviour and not take undue risk in the discharge of their duties;
- Respect the individual wounded or sick person, his / her will, confidence and his / her dignity;
- Not take advantage of the situation and the vulnerability of the wounded and sick for personal financial gain;
- Not undertake any kind of experimentation on the wounded and sick without their real and valid consent and never where they are deprived of liberty;
- Give special consideration to the greater vulnerability of women and children in armed conflict and other situations of violence and to their specific health-care needs;
- Respect the right of a family to know the fate and whereabouts of a missing family member whether or not that person is dead or receiving health care;
- Provide health care for anyone taken prisoner;
- Advocate for regular visits to prisons and prisoners by physicians, if such a mechanism is not already in place;
- Denounce and act, where possible, to put an end to any unscrupulous practices or distribution of poor quality/counterfeit materials and medicines;
- Encourage authorities to recognise their obligations under international humanitarian law and other pertinent bodies of international law with respect to protection of health care personnel and infrastructure in armed conflict and other situations of violence;

- Be aware of the legal obligations to report to authorities the outbreak of any notifiable disease or trauma;
- Do anything within their power to prevent reprisals against the wounded and sick or health care;
- Recognise that there are other situations where health care might be compromised but in which there are dilemmas.

Physicians should to the degree possible:

- Refuse to obey an illegal or unethical order;
- Give careful consideration to any dual loyalties that the physician may be bound by and discuss these dual loyalties with colleagues and anyone in authority;
- As an exception to professional confidentiality, and in line with WMA Resolution on the Responsibility of Physicians in the Documentation and Denunciation of Acts of Torture or Cruel or Inhuman or Degrading Treatment and the Istanbul Protocol<sup>1</sup> denounce acts of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of which physicians are aware, where possible with the subject's consent, but in certain circumstances where the victim is unable to express him/herself freely, without explicit consent;
- Listen to and respect the opinions of colleagues;
- Reflect on and try to improve the standards of care appropriate to the situation;
- Report unethical behaviour of a colleague to the appropriate superior;
- Keep adequate health care records;
- Support sustainability of civilian health care disrupted by the context;
- Report to a commander or to other appropriate authorities if health care needs are not met;
- Give consideration to how health care personnel might shorten or mitigate the effects of the violence in question, for example by reacting to violations of international humanitarian law or human rights law.

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<sup>1</sup> Manual on Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, OHCHR, 1999

## WMA STATEMENT ON BOXING

Adopted by the 35<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Venice, Italy, October 1983  
and editorially revised by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France,  
May 2005

Boxing is a dangerous sport. Unlike most other sports, its basic intent is to produce bodily harm in the opponent. Boxing can result in death and produces an alarming incidence of chronic brain injury. For this reason, the World Medical Association recommends that boxing be banned.

Until that goal is achieved, the following recommendations should be implemented:

1. National Medical Associations (NMAs) should encourage the establishment of a national registry of boxers for all amateur and professional boxers, including "sparring mates", in their country. The proposed functions of the registry would be to record the results of all licensed bouts, including technical knockouts, knockouts, and other boxing injuries, and to compile injury and win/lose records for individual boxers.
2. NMAs should consider whether to plan and conduct conferences with interested members of the medical profession, medical representatives of various government boxing commissions, and representatives of organized professional and amateur boxing organizations to review criteria for the neurological and physical examination of boxers, to determine other comprehensive medical measures necessary for the prevention of brain injury in the sport, and to develop specific criteria for the discontinuance of a bout for medical reasons.
3. All boxing jurisdictions should ensure that the ring physician should be authorized to stop any bout in progress, at any time, to examine a contestant and, when indicated, to terminate a bout that might, in his/her opinion, result in serious injury for either contestant.
4. Boxing jurisdictions should conduct frequent medical training seminars for all ring personnel.
5. All boxing jurisdictions should ensure that no amateur or professional boxing bout is permitted unless:
  - a. the contest is held in an area where adequate neurosurgical facilities are immediately available for skilled emergency treatment of an injured boxer;

## Boxing

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- b. a portable resuscitator with oxygen equipment and appropriate endotracheal tubes are available at ringside; and
  - c. a comprehensive evacuation plan for the removal of any seriously injured boxer to hospital facilities is ready.
6. Boxing jurisdictions should be informed that unsupervised boxing competition between unlicensed boxers is a most dangerous practice that may result in serious injury or death to contestants, and should be condemned.
  7. All boxing jurisdictions should be urged to mandate the use of safety equipment such as plastic safety mats and padded cornerposts and to encourage continued development of safety equipment.
  8. All boxing jurisdictions should be urged to extend all safety measures to sparring partners.
  9. All boxing jurisdictions should be urged to upgrade, standardize, and strictly enforce medical evaluations for boxers.



## **WMA STATEMENT ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Adopted by the 36<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Singapore, October 1984  
and amended by the 41<sup>st</sup> World Medical Assembly, Hong Kong, September 1989  
42<sup>nd</sup> World Medical Assembly, Rancho Mirage, CA., USA, October 1990  
44<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Marbella, Spain, September 1992  
47<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bali, Indonesia, September 1995  
and the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

1. One of the most destructive manifestations of family violence and upheaval is child abuse and neglect. Prevention, early identification and comprehensive treatment of child abuse victims remain a challenge for the world medical community.
2. Definitions of child abuse vary from culture to culture. Unfortunately, cultural rationalizations for harmful behaviour toward children may be accepted, all too readily, as proof that the treatment accorded children is neither abusive nor harmful. For instance, the work contribution of children in the everyday lives of families and in society should be recognized and encouraged as long as it also contributes to the child's own development. In contrast to this, exploitation of children in the labour market may deprive them of their childhood and of educational opportunities and even endanger their present and future health. The WMA considers such exploitation of children a serious form of child abuse and neglect.
3. For purposes of this Statement, the various forms of child abuse include physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Child neglect represents a failure of a parent or other person legally responsible for a child's welfare to provide for the child's basic needs and an adequate level of care.
4. The World Medical Association recognizes that child maltreatment is a world health problem and recommends that National Medical Associations adopt the following guidelines for physicians:
5. Physicians have both a unique and special role in identifying and helping abused children and their troubled families.
6. Linkage to an experienced multidisciplinary team is strongly recommended for the physician. A team is likely to include such professionals as physicians, social workers, child and adult psychiatrists, developmental specialists, psychologists and attorneys. When participation on a team is not possible or available, the individual physician must consult individually with other medical, social, law enforcement and mental health personnel.

7. Primary care physicians (family practitioners, internists, paediatricians), emergency medicine specialists, surgeons, psychiatrists and other specialists who treat children must acquire knowledge and skills in the physical assessment of child abuse and neglect, the assessment of child development and parenting skills, the utilization of community resources, and the physician's legal responsibilities.
8. The medical evaluation of children who are suspected of having been abused should be performed by physicians skilled in both paediatrics and abuse evaluation. The medical evaluation needs to be tailored to the child's age, injuries, and condition, and may include but is not limited to blood testing, trauma radiographic survey, developmental and behavioural screening. Follow up radiographs are strongly urged in some children who present with serious, apparently abusive injuries.
9. The medical assessment and management of sexually abused children consists of a complete history and physical examination, as physical and sexual abuses often occur together; examination of the genitalia and anus; the collection and processing of evidence including photographs; and the treatment and/or prevention of pregnancy and venereal disease.
10. It is necessary for physicians to determine the nature and level of family functioning as it relates to child protection. It is essential for the physician to understand and be sensitive to how the quality of marital relationships, disciplinary styles, economic stresses, emotional problems and abuse of alcohol, drugs and other substances, and other forms of stress relate to child abuse.
11. The signs of abuse are often subtle, and the diagnosis may require comprehensive, careful interviews with the child, parents, caretakers, and siblings. Inconsistencies between the explanation(s) and characteristics of the injury(s) such as the severity, type and age, should lead to a concern for abuse.
12. In any child presenting to a medical facility, the emergent medical and mental health needs should be addressed first. If abuse is suspected, safety needs must be addressed prior to discharge from the facility. These measures may include but are not limited to:
  - a. reporting all suspected cases to child protective services;
  - b. hospitalizing any abused child needing protection during the initial evaluation period;
  - c. informing the parents of the diagnosis if it is safe to do so; and
  - d. reporting the child's injuries to child protective services.
13. If hospitalization is required, a prompt evaluation of the child's physical, emotional and developmental problems is necessary. This comprehensive assessment should be conducted by physicians with expertise or through a multidisciplinary team of experts with specialized training in child abuse.

14. If child abuse is suspected, the physician should discuss with the parents the fact that child maltreatment is in the differential diagnosis of their child's problem. During such a session, it is essential that the physician maintain objectivity and avoid accusatory or judgmental statements in interactions with the parents.
15. It is essential that the physician record the findings in the medical chart during the evaluation process. The medical record often provides critical evidence in court proceedings.
16. Physicians should participate at all levels of prevention by providing prenatal and postnatal family counselling, identifying problems in child rearing and parenting, and advising about family planning and birth control.
17. Public health measures such as home visits by nurses, anticipatory guidance by parents, well-infant and well-child examinations should be encouraged by physicians. Programs that improve the child's general health also tend to prevent child abuse and should be supported by physicians.
18. Physicians should recognize that child abuse and neglect is a complex problem and more than one type of treatment or service may be needed to help abused children and their families. The development of appropriate treatment requires contributions from many professions, including medicine, law, nursing, education, psychology and social work.
19. Physicians should promote the development of innovative programs that will advance medical knowledge and competence in the field of child abuse and neglect. Physicians should obtain education on child neglect and abuse during training as medical students.
20. In the interests of the child, patient confidentiality must be waived in cases of child abuse. The first duty of a doctor is to protect his or her patient if victimization is suspected. No matter what is the type of abuse (physical, mental, sexual), an official report must be made to the appropriate authorities.

**WMA STATEMENT  
ON  
FREEDOM TO ATTEND MEDICAL MEETINGS**

Adopted by the 36<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Singapore, October 1984

Professional independence and professional freedom are indispensable to physicians to enable them to give appropriate health care to their patients. Therefore, there should be no barriers, whether philosophical, religious, racial, political, geographic, physical or of any other nature to prevent physicians from participating in professional activities that will enable them to acquire the information, knowledge, skills and techniques required to provide appropriate health care to their patients.

In as much as the purpose of the WMA is to serve humanity by endeavoring to achieve the highest international standards in medical education, medical science, medical art and medical ethics, and health care for all people of the world, there should accordingly be no barriers which will prevent physicians from attending meetings of the WMA, or other medical meetings, wherever such meetings are convened.

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**WMA STATEMENT  
ON  
NON-DISCRIMINATION IN PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP  
AND ACTIVITIES OF PHYSICIANS**

Adopted by the 37<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Brussels, Belgium, October 1985  
and editorially revised by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France,  
May 2005 and reaffirmed by the 200<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Oslo, Norway, April 2015

The World Medical Association is in favour of equality of opportunity in medical association activities, medical education and training, employment, and all other medical professional endeavours regardless of race, colour, religion, creed, ethnic affiliation, national origin, sex, age or political affiliation.

The World Medical Association is unalterably opposed to the denial of membership privileges and responsibilities in National Medical Associations to any duly registered physician because of race, colour, religion, creed, ethnic affiliation, national origin, sex, age or political affiliation.

The World Medical Association calls upon the medical profession and all individual members of National Medical Associations to exert every effort to prevent any instance in which such equal rights, privileges or responsibilities are denied.



## **WMA STATEMENT ON ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE**

Adopted by the 40<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Vienna, Austria, September 1988  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **PREAMBLE**

1. The Constitution of the World Health Organization states that the "enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being...." Access to health care is a multi-dimensional concept that involves a balancing of factors within the practical constraints of a specific country's resources and capabilities. The factors include health human resources, financing, transportation, freedom of choice, public education, quality, and allocation of technology.

### **GUIDELINES**

#### **Health Human Resources**

1. National Medical Associations should join with other concerned groups from both the private and public sectors to address issues related to the supply and distribution of health human resources. Data should be collected to assess supply and distribution and determine the appropriate mix of health professionals and health workers that can effectively meet the needs of the population. Special efforts should be made to attract physicians and allied health care providers to underserved geographic areas through a variety of incentives and programs. Punitive or coercive models should not be employed. Looking ahead to long-term needs, incentives should also be created to attract medical school students who wish to work in regions where there are health human resource shortages.

#### **Financing**

2. A pluralistic financing system should be developed that contains elements of both public and private funding. The exact mix of financing may vary significantly from country to country. The system should be based on standards of uniform eligibility and benefits, and it should include adequate payment mechanisms for this purpose. These mechanisms should be clearly explained to the public so that all concerned understand the payment options available to them. Where appropriate, incentives should be provided for those in the private sector to provide care to patients who otherwise would not have access to it. No one who needs care should be denied it because of inability to pay. Society has an obligation to provide a reasonable subsidy for care of the needy, and physicians have an obligation to participate to a reasonable degree in such subsidized care. Governments have an obligation to ensure that such plans are administered fairly and objectively.

### Transportation

3. Society has an obligation to provide adequate access to medical facilities for patients who live in remote areas. Transportation should also be provided to isolated rural patients who require a sophisticated level of care that can be found only in metropolitan medical centres. Telemedicine can sometimes be an acceptable substitute for transportation of patients.

### Freedom of Choice

4. All health care delivery systems should provide each individual with the greatest possible personal freedom of choice in selecting a physician. To promote informed personal choice, adequate information concerning both private and public sector options should be made available to the public, employers and other payers of health care.

### Public Education

5. Educational programs that assist people in making informed choices about their personal health and about the appropriate uses of both self-care and professional care should be established. These programs should include information about the costs and benefits associated with alternative courses of treatment; the use of professional services that permit early detection and treatment or prevention of illnesses; personal responsibilities in preventing illnesses; and the effective use of the health care system. Patients should be given access to, and retain, copies of their own medical records.
6. In local communities, it is important that the public understand health care plans designed for their benefit and how these plans affect everyone concerned. Physicians have an obligation to actively participate in such educational efforts.

### Quality

7. Quality assurance mechanisms should be part of every system of health care delivery. Physicians, in particular, should accept a responsibility for being guardians for the quality of medical care and should not allow other considerations to jeopardize the quality of care provided.

### Allocation of Technology

8. Guidelines should be developed for the allocation of scarce health care technologies in order to meet the needs of all patients and health care practitioners and to ensure the fair and equitable allocation of technology and resources across the health care sector.

## CONCLUSION

1. Access is maximized when the following conditions exist:
  - a. Adequate medical care is available to every individual, regardless of ability to pay.
  - b. There is maximum freedom of choice of health care providers and payment systems to accommodate the diverse needs of the population.



- c. The entire population has easy access to adequate and comprehensive information on health care providers.
- d. There is adequate opportunity for active participation by all parties in healthcare systems design and administration.
- e. Physicians are provided with transparent and efficient ethical criteria for working in overcrowded health systems that endanger health care.
- f. Medical associations promote equal access to health care, both locally and nationally, through dialogue and common activities with health authorities.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON THE ROLE OF PHYSICIANS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

Adopted by the 40<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Vienna, Austria, September 1988  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The effective practice of medicine increasingly requires that physicians and their professional associations turn their attention to environmental issues that have a bearing on the health of individuals and populations.
2. More than ever, due to diminishing natural resources, these problems relate to the quality and protection of resources necessary to maintain health and indeed sustain life itself. In concrete terms, the key environmental issues are as follow:
  - a. The degradation of the environment, which must be halted as a matter of urgency so that resources essential to life and health - water and pure air - remain accessible to all.
  - b. The ongoing contamination of our reserves of fresh water with hydrocarbons and heavy metals, along with the contamination of ambient and indoor health by toxic agents, which have serious medical consequences, especially in the poorest segments of the globe. Moreover, the greenhouse effect with its concomitant proven rise in temperature should drive our discussions forward and prepare us for increasingly serious environmental and public health consequences.
  - c. The need to control the use of non-renewable resources such as topsoil, which should constantly be at the forefront of our minds, as should the importance of safeguarding this vital heritage so that it can be passed on to future generations.
  - d. The need to mobilise resources beyond national frontiers and to co-ordinate global solutions for the planet as a whole, so as to formulate a unified strategy to confront these worldwide medical and economic problems.
  - e. The foremost objective is to increase awareness of the vital balance between environmental resources on the one hand, and on the other, biological essentials for the health of everyone everywhere.
3. Our growing awareness of these issues today has, however, failed to prevent an increase in our societies' negative impact on the environment, e.g., melting of glaciers

and increasing desertification, nor has it halted the over-exploitation of natural resources, e.g. pollution of rivers and seas, air pollution, deforestation and diminishing arable land. In this context, the migration of people from disadvantaged or developing countries, together with the emergence of new diseases, exacerbates the lack of socio-economic policies in many parts of the world. From a medical point of view, growth of the population and irresponsible destruction of the environment are unacceptable, and medical organisations throughout the world should redouble their efforts, not only to speak out about these problems, but also to suggest solutions.

## PRINCIPLES

1. In their role as representatives of physicians, medical associations are duty bound to grapple with these environmental issues. They have a duty to produce analytical studies that include the identification of problems and current international regulations on environmental issues, as well as their impact on the field of health.
2. As physicians operate within the framework of ethics and medical deontology, the environmental regulations advocated should not seek to limit individual autonomy, but rather to enrich the quality of life for all and to perpetuate life-forms on the planet.
3. The WMA should therefore act as an international platform for research, education, and advocacy to help further sustain the environment and its potential to promote health.
4. Thus, when new environmental diseases or syndromes are identified, the WMA should help coordinate the scientific/medical discussions on the available data and their implications for human health. It should foster the development of consensus thinking within medicine, and help to stimulate preventive measures, accurate diagnosis and treatment of these emerging disorders.
5. The WMA should therefore provide a framework for the international co-ordination of medical associations, NGOs, research clinicians, international health organisations, decision-makers and funding providers, in their examination of the human health effects of environmental problems, their prevention, remediation and treatment for individuals and communities.

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## **WMA STATEMENT ON HEALTH HAZARDS OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS AND TOBACCO-DERIVED PRODUCTS**

Adopted by the 40<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Vienna, Austria, September 1988  
and amended by the 49<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Hamburg, Germany, November 1997  
and the 58<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Copenhagen, Denmark, October 2007  
and the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

### **PREAMBLE**

More than one in three adults worldwide (more than 1.1 billion people) smokes, 80 percent of whom live in low- and middle-income countries. Smoking and other forms of tobacco use affect every organ system in the body, and are major causes of cancer, heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, fetal damage, and many other conditions. Five million deaths occur worldwide each year due to tobacco use. If current smoking patterns continue, it will cause some 10 million deaths each year by 2020 and 70 percent of these will occur in developing countries. Tobacco use was responsible for 100 million deaths in the 20th century and will kill one billion people in the 21st century unless effective interventions are implemented. Furthermore, secondhand smoke - which contains more than 4000 chemicals, including more than 50 carcinogens and many other toxins - causes lung cancer, heart disease, and other illnesses in nonsmokers.

The global public health community, through the World Health Organization (WHO), has expressed increasing concern about the alarming trends in tobacco use and tobacco-attributable disease. As of 20 September 2007, 150 countries had ratified the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), whose provisions call for ratifying countries to take strong action against tobacco use by increasing tobacco taxation, banning tobacco advertising and promotion, prohibiting smoking in public places and worksites, implementing effective health warnings on tobacco packaging, improving access to tobacco cessation treatment services and medications, regulating the contents and emissions of tobacco products, and eliminating illegal trade in tobacco products.

Exposure to secondhand smoke occurs anywhere smoking is permitted: homes, workplaces, and other public places. According to the WHO, some 200,000 workers die each year due to exposure to smoke at work, while about 700 million children, around half the world's total, breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke, particularly in the home. Based on the evidence of three recent comprehensive reports (the International Agency for Research on Cancer's Monograph 83, Tobacco Smoke and Involuntary Smoking; the United States Surgeon General's Report on The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke; and the California Environmental Protection Agency's Proposed Identification

of Environmental Tobacco Smoke as a Toxic Air Contaminant), on May 29, 2007, the WHO called for a global ban on smoking at work and in enclosed public places.

The tobacco industry claims that it is committed to determining the scientific truth about the health effects of tobacco, both by conducting internal research and by funding external research through jointly funded industry programs. However, the industry has consistently denied, withheld, and suppressed information concerning the deleterious effects of tobacco smoking. For many years the industry claimed that there was no conclusive proof that smoking tobacco causes diseases such as cancer and heart disease. It has also claimed that nicotine is not addictive. These claims have been repeatedly refuted by the global medical profession, which because of this is also resolutely opposed to the massive advertising campaigns mounted by the industry and believes strongly that the medical associations themselves must provide a firm leadership role in the campaign against tobacco.

The tobacco industry and its subsidiaries have for many years supported research and the preparation of reports on various aspects of tobacco and health. By being involved in such activities, individual researchers and/or their organizations give the tobacco industry an appearance of credibility even in cases where the industry is not able to use the results directly in its marketing. Such involvement also raises major conflicts of interest with the goals of health promotion.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The WMA urges the national medical associations and all physicians to take the following actions to help reduce the health hazards related to tobacco use:

1. Adopt a policy position opposing smoking and the use of tobacco products, and publicize the policy so adopted.
2. Prohibit smoking, including use of smokeless tobacco, at all business, social, scientific, and ceremonial meetings of the National Medical Association, in line with the decision of the World Medical Association to impose a similar ban at all its own such meetings.
3. Develop, support, and participate in programs to educate the profession and the public about the health hazards of tobacco use (including addiction) and exposure to secondhand smoke. Programs aimed at convincing and helping smokers and smokeless tobacco users to cease the use of tobacco products and programs for non-smokers and non-users of smokeless tobacco products aimed at avoidance are both important.
4. Encourage individual physicians to be role models (by not using tobacco products) and spokespersons for the campaign to educate the public about the deleterious health effects of tobacco use and the benefits of tobacco-use cessation. Ask all medical schools, biomedical research institutions, hospitals, and other health care facilities to prohibit smoking, use of smokeless tobacco on their premises.

5. Introduce or strengthen educational programs for medical students and physicians to prepare them to identify and treat tobacco dependence in their patients.
6. Support widespread access to evidence-based treatment for tobacco dependence - including counseling and pharmacotherapy - through individual patient encounters, cessation classes, telephone quit-lines, web-based cessation services, and other appropriate means.
7. Develop or endorse a clinical practice guideline on the treatment of tobacco use and dependence.
8. Join the WMA in urging the World Health Organization to add tobacco cessation medications with established efficacy to the WHO's Model List of Essential Medicines.
9. Refrain from accepting any funding or educational materials from the tobacco industry, and to urge medical schools, research institutions, and individual researchers to do the same, in order to avoid giving any credibility to that industry.
10. Urge national governments to ratify and fully implement the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in order to protect public health.
11. Speak out against the shift in focus of tobacco marketing from developed to less developed nations and urge national governments to do the same.
12. Advocate the enactment and enforcement of laws that:
  - provide for comprehensive regulation of the manufacture, sale, distribution, and promotion of tobacco and tobacco-derived products, including the specific provisions listed below.
  - require written and pictorial warnings about health hazards to be printed on all packages in which tobacco products are sold and in all advertising and promotional materials for tobacco products. Such warnings should be prominent and should refer those interested in quitting to available telephone quit-lines, websites, or other sources of assistance.
  - prohibit smoking in all enclosed public places (including health care facilities, schools, and education facilities), workplaces (including restaurants, bars and nightclubs) and public transport. Mental health and chemical dependence treatment centers should also be smoke-free. Smoking in prisons should not be permitted.
  - ban all advertising and promotion of tobacco and tobacco-derived products.
  - encourage the development of plain packaging legislation
  - prohibit the sale, distribution, and accessibility of cigarettes, and other tobacco products to children and adolescents. Ban the production, distribution and sale of candy products that depict or resemble tobacco products.
  - prohibit smoking on all commercial airline flights within national borders and on all international commercial airline flights, and prohibit the sale of tax-free tobacco products at airports and all other locations.

- prohibit all government subsidies for tobacco and tobacco-derived products.
  - provide for research into the prevalence of tobacco use and the effects of tobacco products on the health status of the population.
  - prohibit the promotion, distribution, and sale of any new forms of tobacco products that are not currently available.
  - increase taxation of tobacco products, using the increased revenues for prevention programs, evidence-based cessation programs and services, and other health care measures.
  - curtail or eliminate illegal trade in tobacco products and the sale of smuggled tobacco products.
  - help tobacco farmers switch to alternative crops.
  - urge governments to exclude tobacco products from international trade agreements.
13. Recognize that tobacco use may lead to pediatric disease because of the harm done to children caused by tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure, the relationship of tobacco use by children and exposure to adult tobacco use, and the existence of effective interventions to reduce tobacco use. Special efforts should be made by physicians to:
- provide tobacco-free environments for children
  - target parents who smoke for tobacco cessation interventions
  - promote programs that contribute to the prevention and decrease of tobacco use by youth
  - control access to and marketing of tobacco products, and
  - make pediatric tobacco-control research a high priority
14. Refuse to invest in companies or firms producing or promoting the use or sale of tobacco.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON ANIMAL USE IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH**

Adopted by the 41<sup>st</sup> World Medical Assembly, Hong Kong, September 1989  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **PREAMBLE**

1. Biomedical research is essential to the health and well-being of our society. Advances in biomedical research have dramatically improved the quality and prolonged the duration of life throughout the world. However, the ability of the scientific community to continue its efforts to improve personal and public health is being threatened by a movement to eliminate the use of animals in biomedical research. This movement is spearheaded by groups of radical animal rights activists whose views are considered to be far outside mainstream public attitudes and whose tactics range from sophisticated lobbying, fund-raising, propaganda and misinformation campaigns to violent attacks on biomedical research facilities and individual scientists. These violent attacks are carried out by a relatively small number of activists compared with those who use peaceful means of protest, but they have profound and wide-ranging effects.
2. The magnitude of violent animal rights activities is staggering, and these activities take place in many different parts of the world. Various animal rights groups have claimed responsibility for the bombing of cars, institutions, stores, and the private homes of researchers.
3. Animal rights violence has had a chilling effect on the scientific community internationally. Scientists, research organizations, and universities have been intimidated into altering or even terminating important research efforts that depend on the use of animals. Laboratories have been forced to divert thousands of research dollars for the purchase of sophisticated security equipment. Young people who might otherwise pursue a career in biomedical research are turning their sights to alternative professions.
4. Despite the efforts of many groups striving to protect biomedical research from radical animal activism, the response to the animal rights movement has been fragmented, underfunded, and primarily defensive. Many groups within the biomedical community are hesitant to take a public stand about animal activism because of fear of reprisal. As a result, the research establishment has been backed into a defensive posture. Its motivations are questioned, and the need for using animals in research is repeatedly challenged.



5. While properly designed and executed research involving animals is necessary to enhance the medical care of all persons, we recognize also that humane treatment of research animals must be ensured. Appropriate training for all research personnel should be prescribed and adequate veterinary care should be available. Experiments must comply with any rules or regulations promulgated to govern humane handling, housing, care, treatment and transportation of animals.
6. International medical and scientific organizations must develop a stronger and more cohesive campaign to counter the growing threat to public health posed by animal activists. Leadership and coordination must be provided. In addition, there must be a clear understanding of the rights of animals who are part of medical research, and the obligations of those who undertake it.

The World Medical Association therefore affirms the following principles:

1. Animal use in biomedical research is essential for continued medical progress.
2. The WMA Declaration of Helsinki requires that biomedical research involving human subjects should be based, where appropriate, on animal experimentation, but also requires that the welfare of animals used for research be respected.
3. Humane treatment of animals used in biomedical research is essential and research facilities should be required to comply with all guiding principles for humane treatment. Education about these principles should be provided to all researchers in training.
4. Animals should only be used in biomedical research when it is clear that their use is required to achieve an important outcome, and where no other feasible method is available.
5. Duplication of animal experiments should not occur unless scientifically justified.
6. The use of animals for the futile testing of cosmetic products and their ingredients, alcohol and tobacco should not be supported.
7. Although rights to free speech should not be compromised, the anarchistic element among animal right activists should be condemned.
8. The use of threats, intimidation, violence, and personal harassment of scientists and their families should be condemned internationally.
9. A maximum coordinated effort from international law enforcement agencies should be sought to protect researchers and research facilities from activities of a terrorist nature.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON INJURY CONTROL**

Adopted by the 42<sup>nd</sup> World Medical Assembly, Rancho Mirage, CA., USA, October 1990  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

Injuries are the leading cause of death and disability in children and young adults. Injuries destroy the health, lives and livelihoods of millions of people each year. Yet many injuries are preventable. Injury control should be recognized as a public health priority requiring coordination among health, transportation and social service agencies in each country. Physician participation and leadership is necessary to assure the success of such injury control programmes.

The World Medical Association urges National Medical Associations to work with appropriate public and private agencies to develop and implement programmes to prevent and treat injuries. Included in the programmes must be efforts to improve medical treatment and rehabilitation of injured patients. Research and education on injury control must be increased, and international cooperation is a vital and necessary component of successful programmes.

National Medical Associations should recommend that the following basic elements be incorporated in their countries' programmes:

### **EPIDEMIOLOGY**

The initial activity of such programmes must be the acquisition of more adequate data on which to base priorities, interventions and research. An effective injury surveillance system should be implemented in each country to gather and integrate information. A consistent and accurate system for coding injuries must be implemented by hospitals and health agencies. There should also be uniform coding of injury severity.

### **PREVENTION**

Injury prevention requires education and training to teach and persuade people to alter their behaviour and thereby control their risk of injury. Laws and regulations based on scientifically sound methods of preventing injuries may be appropriate for effecting changes in behaviour (for example, the use of seatbelts and protective helmets). These laws must be strictly enforced in order to effectively influence behaviour changes. Improvements in product and environmental design of various products to provide automatic protection against injuries must be encouraged, as they will be the most effective means of preventing injuries. Implementing a reporting system to encourage learning from mistakes could also be beneficial in preventing future injuries.

**BIOMECHANICS**

Biomedical research on injury causation and prevention should be given priority. A better understanding of the biomechanics of injury and disability could enable the development of improved protection for humans. Regulations pertaining to product design must incorporate product safety standards developed from an improved understanding of the biomechanics of injury.

**TREATMENT**

Injury management at the scene of the occurrence must be enhanced by an effective system of communication with medical practitioners, to facilitate decision-making. Rapid and safe transportation to the hospital should be provided. An experienced team of trauma practitioners should be available at the hospital. There should also be adequate equipment and supplies available for the care of the injured patient, including immediate access to a blood bank. Education and training of medical practitioners in trauma care must be encouraged to assure optimal technique by an adequate number of physicians at all times.

**REHABILITATION**

Trauma victims need continuity of care emphasizing not only survival but also the identification and preservation of residual functions. Rehabilitation to restore biological, psychological and social functions must be undertaken in an effort to allow the injured person to achieve maximal personal autonomy and an independent lifestyle. Where feasible, community integration is a desirable goal for people chronically disabled by injury. Rehabilitation may also require changes in the patient's physical and social environment.

## WMA STATEMENT ON TRAFFIC INJURY

Adopted by the 42<sup>nd</sup> World Medical Assembly, Rancho Mirage, CA., USA, October 1990  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### PREAMBLE

1. Serious injuries and mortality in road collisions are a public health problem with consequences similar to those of major diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular disease. Worldwide, about 1.2 million persons are killed each year on the roads and an additional 20~50 million are injured. By 2020, road traffic injuries are expected to be the third largest contributor to the global burden of disease and injury.
2. In addition to the immeasurable personal and social price paid by the victims of road crashes and their relatives, traffic injury has a significant economic impact. The direct and economic cost of injury and disability resulting from traffic injuries, including emergency and rehabilitative health care, costs of disability, disability adjusted life years (DALYs) and other costs, amount to 1% of the GDP in poorer countries and 1.5~2% in wealthier countries. Much of this burden is borne by the health sector.
3. Road injuries continue to increase in many countries, particularly low and middle-income nations that currently account for 85% for all road traffic deaths, and are the second leading cause of death among youth worldwide.
4. Most traffic injuries could be prevented by better countermeasures. Combating traffic injury is the shared responsibility of many bodies, groups and individuals, including governments, NGOs, industry, international, national and community groups, public health professionals, engineers and law enforcement personnel.
5. Speed is widely recognized as the most important determinant of road safety, affecting the likelihood that a crash will occur and the severity of resulting injuries if a crash does occur. An average increase in speed of 1 km/h is associated with a 3% higher risk of a crash involving injury and a 5% higher risk of serious or fatal injury.
6. However, efforts to decrease road crashes and injury also require a "systems approach" that recognizes and addresses the many factors that combine to increase the risk of traffic accidents and resulting injury, including human, vehicle and road design variables.
7. Human, vehicular and environmental factors interact before, during and after a collision. Intervention at each of these stages will help reduce crashes and injury. Effective intervention requires public education as well as professional involvement in the fields of engineering, law enforcement and medical care.

8. Pre-collision intervention is aimed at preventing crashes and reducing risk factors. Examples include: preventing drivers from driving when fatigued (especially drivers of heavy vehicles), distracted (including prohibiting the use of hand-held cellular phones) or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and measures such as night curfews or graduated licensing for young drivers. Pre-collision intervention also includes setting vehicle design standards that ensure that vehicles are roadworthy and cannot be driven at excessive speeds. Other interventions include setting and enforcing appropriate speed limits, installing speed cameras, and optimizing road design and layout to prevent crashes.
9. A second level of intervention is aimed at preventing or reducing injury during the crash. Such interventions include: enforcing the use of seat belts and child restraints, requiring helmets for cyclists, manufacturing vehicles equipped with safety devices and crash-protective design, lowering and enforcing speed limits and removing heavy, rigid objects such as concrete or metal dividers, light posts and abutments from the sides of roads.
10. Post-crash intervention is aimed at maximizing life saving and injury reducing treatment and includes improved pre-hospital and emergency trauma care and rehabilitation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The WMA adopts the findings and key recommendations of the WHO Report on road traffic injury prevention (2004) and calls for their implementation by its member National Medical Associations and their governments and relevant bodies.
2. Physicians must view traffic injury as a public health problem and recognize their responsibility in fighting this global problem.
3. National Medical Associations and their member physicians should work to persuade governments and policy makers of the importance of this issue and should assist in adapting empirical and scientific information into workable policies.
4. National Medical Associations and physicians should be key players in public education, and should include road safety in health promotion activities.
5. Physicians should be involved in the collection and analysis of data regarding road crashes and concomitant injuries, including injury surveillance systems.
6. Physicians should work towards changing the public attitude toward road travel, including pressing for improved public transportation, bicycle paths and proper sidewalks to encourage less car use and the adoption of healthier options such as walking and cycling.
7. Physicians should be active in addressing the human factor and medical reasons for road crashes, including, but not limited to, the use of prescription drugs or medical conditions that may impair driving ability, and explore ways to prevent and reduce the severity of injuries.

8. Physicians should lobby for the implementation and enforcement of the measures listed above, which have been shown to decrease the risk and severity of vehicle crashes, and the evaluation of their impact.
9. National Medical Associations and their member physicians should encourage research and development of improved training systems and medical care at all stages, including effective communication and transport systems to locate and evacuate the victims, emergency medical care systems to provide life-saving first aid services, and expert trauma and rehabilitative care, and should lobby for increased resources to help provide these services.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON ADOLESCENT SUICIDE**

Adopted by the 43<sup>rd</sup> World Medical Assembly, Malta, November 1991  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

1. The past several decades have witnessed a dramatic change in causes of adolescent mortality. Previously, adolescents mostly died of natural causes, whereas they now more likely die from preventable causes. Part of this change has been a worldwide rise in adolescent suicide rates in both developed and developing countries. In the adolescent population, suicide is currently one of the leading causes of death. Suicides are probably under-reported due to cultural and religious stigma attached to self-destruction and to an unwillingness to recognize certain traumas, such as some automobile accidents, as self-inflicted.
2. Adolescent suicide is a tragedy that affects not only the individual but also the family, peers and larger community in which the adolescent lived. Suicide is often experienced as a personal failure by parents, friends and physicians who blame themselves for not detecting warning signs. It is also viewed as a failure by the community by serving as a vivid reminder that modern society often does not provide a nurturing, supportive and healthy environment in which children can grow and develop.
3. Factors contributing to adolescent suicide are varied and include: affective disorders, trauma, anxiety disorders, emotional isolation, self-esteem, excessive emotional stress (such as teasing and harassment), romantic fantasies, thrill-seeking, drug and alcohol abuse, the availability of firearms and other agents of self-destruction, and media reports of other adolescent suicides resulting in copycat acts. Most often suicide is the result of several factors acting together, rather than any one isolated factor. Youth within correctional facilities are at higher risk for suicide than the general population yet have fewer resources available to them. However, the lack of a consistent personal profile makes it difficult to identify those adolescents at risk for suicide.
4. The health care of adolescents is best achieved when physicians provide comprehensive services, including both medical and psychosocial evaluation and treatment. Continuous, comprehensive care provides the physician the opportunity to obtain the information necessary to detect adolescents at risk for suicide or other self-destructive behaviour. This service model also helps to build a socially supportive patient-physician relationship that may moderate adverse influences adolescents experience in their environment.

5. In working to prevent adolescent suicide, the World Medical Association recognizes the complex nature of adolescent bio-psycho-social development, the changing social world faced by adolescents, and the introduction of new, more lethal, agents of self-destruction. In response to these concerns, the World Medical Association recommends that National Medical Associations adopt the following guidelines for physicians. In doing so, we recognise that many other players - parents, governmental agencies, schools, communities, social services - also have important roles in this area.

### GUIDELINES

1. All physicians should receive, during medical school and postgraduate training, education in child psychiatry and adolescent bio-psycho-social development, including the risk factors for suicide.
2. Physicians should be trained to identify early signs and symptoms of physical, emotional, and social distress of adolescent patients and the signs and symptoms of psychiatric disorders that may contribute to suicide as well as other self-destructive behaviours, including depression, bipolar disorder, substance use disorders and a previous suicide attempt.
3. Physicians should be taught how and when to assess suicidal risk in their adolescent patients.
4. Physicians should be taught and keep up-to-date on the treatment and referral options appropriate for all levels of self-destructive behaviours of their adolescent patients. The physicians with the most significant training in adolescent suicide are child and adolescent psychiatrists, and the patient should be referred to one if available.
5. When caring for adolescents with any type of trauma, physicians should evaluate the possibility that the injuries might have been self-inflicted.
6. When caring for adolescents who demonstrate a deterioration in thinking, feeling or behaviour, the possibility of substance abuse and addiction should be raised and the threshold should be low for urine toxicology assessment.
7. Health care systems should facilitate the establishment of mental health consultation services aimed at preventing suicide, and should pay for the socio-medical care given to patients who have attempted suicide. Services should be tailored to the specific needs of adolescent patients.
8. Epidemiological studies on suicide, its risk factors and methods of prevention should be conducted.
9. When caring for adolescents with psychiatric disorders or risk factors for suicide, physicians should educate parents or guardians to watch for the signs of suicide and educate them as to the options for evaluation.



## **WMA STATEMENT ON ALCOHOL AND ROAD SAFETY**

Adopted by the 44<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Marbella, Spain, September 1992  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. On a worldwide scale, the anticipated growth in the number of vehicles in circulation (barely 1% per capita in China in 2001, 74% in the United States) has led the World Health Organisation (WHO) to forecast a considerable rise in the global death toll. Road crashes are set to become the 3rd greatest cause of death in the world by 2020, whereas in 1990 they were in 9th place. The WHO estimates that during this period the number of road deaths will fall by 30% in rich countries, while lower and middle income countries will see an increase of 20%.
2. Deaths and injuries resulting from road crashes along with collisions between vehicles and pedestrians are a major public health problem. In many countries where alcohol consumption is an integral part of daily life, driving while under the influence of alcohol has been shown to be the cause of around half of all the deaths and serious injuries in road crashes.
3. A change in the behaviour of road users with regard to alcohol consumption would appear to be the most promising approach to preventing traffic deaths and injuries. Measures forbidding driving while under the influence of alcohol will lead to a considerable improvement in road safety and an appreciable reduction in the number of dead and injured.
4. Driving a vehicle implies the acceptance of a certain number of risks. The careful driver will always be aware of the risks, while at the same time ensuring that the level of risk never rises to an unacceptable level. Alcohol alters a driver's subjective assessment of risk so that he or she drives more recklessly, while at the same time the ability to drive is impaired.
5. Irrespective of the amount of alcohol consumed, the maximum concentration of alcohol in the body is reached:
  - after half an hour when taken on an empty stomach;
  - after an hour when taken with a meal.

On the other hand, it takes the body a long time to eliminate alcohol. An individual in good health eliminates alcohol at a rate that reduces blood alcohol concentration by 0.1 to 0.15 gram/litre/hour.

6. At the present time, permitted blood alcohol levels vary from country to country. It would be desirable to introduce a uniform maximum permissible level of blood alcohol of 0.5 gram per litre, low enough to allow the average driver to retain the ability to assess risk.
7. The information dispensed by health professionals and physicians should be aimed at making every driver aware of these risks. When motorists have been thus informed, it is important that they make the decision whether or not to drive before consuming alcohol in sufficient quantities to alter their perception.
8. Alcohol is a psychotropic substance that acts on the central nervous system. In essence, alcohol abuse or drug dependency are addictive practices that can lead to neurological or psychiatric difficulties, which can in turn trigger a sudden alteration in brain function and thus endanger road safety. Certain drugs interact negatively with alcohol, and in particular some combinations are known to reduce alertness. When drugs, whether legal or illegal, are taken with alcohol, the effect of the latter is intensified. This mixture can trigger mental dysfunctions that are extremely dangerous for road users. Physicians should be educated and informed about these pharmacological facts.
9. When physicians and other health professionals issue fitness-to-drive certificates, they can use this opportunity to educate road users and pass on a message of prevention and personal responsibility. In certain countries, the significant public health problems caused by alcohol on the roads justify more coercive policies requiring the coordination of different initiatives. Physicians could also play a part in this, by complying with current legislation and by exercising the high level of vigilance required by the scale and seriousness of the road safety issue. In the event of a second offence, or of heavy dependency on alcohol indicating regular excessive drinking, the driver may be declared unfit to drive for a period of time sufficient to ensure that when he is again certified fit to drive, he will no longer be a threat to road safety.
10. In most countries, road crashes linked to alcohol consumption affect adolescents and young adults to a disproportionately high degree, and every available resource should be mobilised to reduce their consumption of alcohol. Physicians should also be involved in reducing the likelihood of impaired driving by participating in the detoxification and rehabilitation of drunk drivers. These initiatives should be based on a detailed analysis of the problem as it manifests itself within each country or culture. Generally speaking, however, alcoholism is a medical condition with concomitant psychological or social and interpersonal difficulties that affect the family, work or social environment.
11. In order to be effective, educational and preventive initiatives should:
  - a. Educate the population, especially young people, about the seriousness of the problem and the dangers of drinking and driving, with the aim of changing individual attitudes and behaviour in terms of driving and consuming alcohol and/or drugs;
  - b. Support this change in behaviour by implementing appropriate legal expectations and coercive measures, such as fines or the revocation of licenses;

- c. Identify alcoholic subjects, which requires setting up practical measures such as a questionnaire, psychological tests and random checks;
- d. Restrict the promotion of alcoholic beverages, including advertising and event sponsorship.

Additional measures should be examined and adopted as appropriate. For example:

- e. Development of strategies to assure safe transportation home in situations where alcohol consumption occurs;
- f. Experimenting with devices that prevent individuals with an unauthorised level of blood alcohol from starting the engine of or operating the vehicle;
- g. Wider use of breath alcohol tests (chemical or electronic);
- h. Adoption of a minimum legal age for alcohol purchase and consumption in each country; countries should also adopt policies that penalize the driver and withdraw the driver's license if the driver is under legal age and is convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The WMA urges National Medical Associations and individual physicians to continue promoting the following principles:
  - a. Road accidents linked to the consumption of alcohol are a major but avoidable public health problem. The authorities should allocate public health resources that are proportionate to the scale of the problem.
  - b. When preventive measures are introduced and followed through, a good understanding of age and social groupings involved is required, as well as a grasp of the social conditions which often lie at the root of their problems.
  - c. Where specific social groupings are concerned, overall response strategies should be set up that could include limiting the consumption of alcohol and asking those involved in selling alcoholic beverages to take on a share of responsibility for the consequences of selling such products. Education and policies should promote moderation and responsibility in the consumption of alcohol and seek to reduce the likelihood that someone will consume alcohol and drive afterwards. In particular, eliminating alcohol from the workplace and in situations where consumers must drive after drinking should be a goal of organizational policies. The promotion of non-alcoholic drinks is an important tool to facilitate these policies.
  - d. Road accidents linked to the consumption of alcohol can be considered as possible predictors of other addictive and violent behaviours. This should be taken into consideration in the medical treatment of the patient.

- e. Alcoholic subjects should be given access to rehabilitation services. When motorists are found to have excess alcohol in their blood (or their breath), other factors linked to their excessive drinking should be examined and included in a rehabilitation programme. These rehabilitation programmes should be publicly funded.
- f. Educating the population about alcohol should focus on making people aware of alcohol's negative influence on one's ability to drive and one's assessment of risk. The public should understand the risks and medical complications linked to drinking while under the influence of alcohol.
- g. The problem of alcohol consumption in adolescents and young adults and its relation to road safety should be addressed in the school curricula and in community preventive measures and policies so that a responsible attitude becomes the norm.
- h. As even small amounts of alcohol have a direct effect on the brain, with disturbances noted at levels as low as 0.3 gram per litre, physicians should argue the case for setting the blood alcohol level considered acceptable to drive a vehicle as low as possible and no higher than 0.5 gram per litre.
- i. Any motorist who has been in a road traffic accident must undergo a blood alcohol concentration test or a breath test.
- j. The practice of random driver testing for breath alcohol levels should become more widespread, and there should be further research into other ways to test urine, breath and saliva to identify impaired drivers and prevent subsequent operation of motor vehicles.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON NOISE POLLUTION**

Adopted by the 44<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Marbella, Spain, September 1992  
and amended by the 58<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Copenhagen, Denmark, October 2007

### **PREAMBLE**

Given growing environmental awareness and knowledge of the impact of noise on health, the psyche, performance and well-being, the fight against environmental noise is becoming increasingly important. The World Health Organization (WHO) describes noise as the principal environmental nuisance in industrial nations.

Noise affects people in various ways. Its effects relate to hearing, the vegetative nervous system, the psyche, spoken communication, sleep and performance. Since noise acts as a stressor, an increased burden on the body leads to higher energy consumption and greater wear. It is thus suspected that noise can primarily favour diseases in which stress plays a contributory role, such as cardiovascular diseases, which can then be manifested in the form of hypertension, myocardial infarction, angina pectoris, or even apoplexy.

The effects in the psychosocial field are likewise dramatic. The stress caused by environmental noise - particularly road traffic noise - is a central concern, not only in the industrial nations, but increasingly also in the developing countries.

Owing to the continuous and massive growth of traffic volumes, both on the roads and in the air, the stress caused by environmental noise has increased steadily in terms of both its duration and the area affected.

Damage to hearing caused by leisure-time noise is also of growing concern. The most common source of noise in this context is music, to which the ear is exposed by different audio media at different places (portable music players, stereo systems, discotheques, concerts). The risk of suffering hearing damage is underestimated by most people, or even consciously denied. The greatest issue (or aspect) lies in creating awareness of the problem in the high-risk group - which generally means young people. In this respect, the legislature is called upon to intervene and reduce the potential for damage by introducing sound level limiters in audio playback units and maximum permissible sound levels at music events, or by banning children's toys that are excessively loud or produce excessive noise levels.

In keeping with its socio-medical commitment, the World Medical Association is issuing a statement on the problem of noise pollution with the aim of making a contribution to the fight against environmental noise through more extensive information and more acute awareness.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The World Medical Association calls upon the National Medical Associations to:

1. Inform the public, especially persons affected by environmental noise, as well as policy and decision makers, of the dangers of noise pollution.
2. Call upon ministers of transport and urban planners to develop alternative concepts that are capable of countering the growing level of environmental noise pollution.
3. Advocate appropriate statutory regulations for combating environmental noise pollution.
4. Support enforcement of noise pollution legislation and monitor the effectiveness of control measures.
5. Inform young people of the risks associated with listening to excessively loud music, such as that which emanates, for example, from portable music players, use of stereo systems with earphones, audio systems in cars, and attendance at rock concerts and discotheques.
6. Prompt the educational authorities to inform pupils at an early stage regarding the effects of noise on people, how stress due to environmental noise can be counteracted, the role of the individual in contributing to noise pollution, and the risks associated with listening to excessively loud music.
7. Provide information about risks of damage to hearing that arise in the private sector as a result of working with power tools or operating excessively loud motor vehicles.
8. Emphasize to those individuals who are exposed to excessive levels of noise in the workplace the importance of protecting themselves against irreducible noise.
9. Call upon the persons responsible for occupational safety and health in businesses to take further action to reduce noise emission, in order to ensure protection of the health of employees at the workplace.

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**WMA STATEMENT  
ON  
PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE**

Adopted by the 44<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Marbella, Spain, September 1992  
and editorially revised by the 170<sup>th</sup> Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2005  
and reaffirmed by the 200<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Oslo, Norway, April 2015

Physician-assisted suicide, like euthanasia, is unethical and must be condemned by the medical profession. Where the assistance of the physician is intentionally and deliberately directed at enabling an individual to end his or her own life, the physician acts unethically. However the right to decline medical treatment is a basic right of the patient and the physician does not act unethically even if respecting such a wish results in the death of the patient.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON BODY SEARCHES OF PRISONERS**

Adopted by the 45<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Budapest, Hungary, October 1993  
and editorially revised by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France,  
May 2005

The prison systems in many countries mandate body cavity searches of prisoners. Such searches, which include rectal and pelvic examination, may be performed when an individual enters the prison population and thereafter whenever the individual is permitted to have personal contact with someone outside the prison population, or when there is a reason to believe a breach of security or of prison regulations has occurred. For example, when a prisoner is taken to Court for a hearing, or to the hospital for treatment, or to work outside the prison, the prisoner, upon returning to the institution, may be subjected to a body cavity search that will include all body orifices. The purpose of the search is primarily security and/or to prevent contraband, such as weapons or drugs, from entering the prison.

These searches are performed for security reasons and not for medical reasons. Nevertheless, they should not be done by anyone other than a person with appropriate medical training. This non-medical act may be performed by a physician to protect the prisoner from the harm that might result from a search by a non-medically trained examiner. In such a case the physician should explain this to the prisoner. The physician should furthermore explain to the prisoner that the usual conditions of medical confidentiality do not apply during this imposed procedure and that the results of the search will be revealed to the authorities. If a physician is duly mandated by an authority and agrees to perform a body cavity search on a prisoner, the authority should be duly informed that it is necessary for this procedure to be done in a humane manner.

If the search is conducted by a physician, it should not be done by the physician who will also subsequently provide medical care to the prisoner.

The physician's obligation to provide medical care to the prisoner should not be compromised by an obligation to participate in the prison's security system.

The World Medical Association urges all governments and public officials with responsibility for public safety to recognize that such invasive search procedures are serious assaults on a person's privacy and dignity, and they also carry some risk of physical and psychological injury. Therefore, the World Medical Association exhorts that, to the extent feasible without compromising public security,



- alternate methods be used for routine screening of prisoners, and body cavity searches be used only as a last resort;
- if a body cavity search must be conducted, the responsible public official must ensure that the search is conducted by personnel with sufficient medical knowledge and skills to safely perform the search;
- the same responsible authority ensure that the individual's privacy and dignity be guaranteed.

Finally, the World Medical Association urges all governments and responsible public officials to provide body searches that are performed by a qualified physician whenever warranted by the individual's physical condition. A specific request by a prisoner for a physician shall be respected, so far as possible.

The World Medical Association adopts this statement for the purpose of providing guidance for National Medical Associations as they develop ethical guidelines for their physician members.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION**

Adopted by the 45<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Budapest, Hungary, October 1993  
and editorially revised by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France,  
May 2005

### **PREAMBLE**

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a common practice in over thirty countries.

In many other countries the problem has arisen more recently due to the presence of ethnic groups from countries in which FGM is common practice, including immigrants and refugees who fled from hunger and war.

Because of its impact on the physical and mental health of women and children, FGM is a matter of concern to physicians. Physicians worldwide are confronted with the effects of this traditional practice. Sometimes they are asked to perform this mutilating procedure.

There are various forms of FGM. It can be a primary circumcision for young girls, usually between 5 and 12 years of age, or a secondary circumcision, e.g., after childbirth. The extent of a primary circumcision may vary: from an incision in the foreskin of the clitoris up to a pharaonic circumcision or infibulation removing the clitoris and labia minora and stitching up the labia majora so that only a minimal opening remains to allow for urine and menstrual blood.

Regardless of the extent of the circumcision, FGM affects the health of women and girls. Research evidence shows the grave permanent damage to health. Acute complications of FGM are: hemorrhage, infections, bleeding of adjacent organs, and excruciating pain. Long-term complications include severe scarring, chronic infections, urologic and obstetric complications, and psychological and social problems. FGM has serious consequences for sexuality and how it is experienced. There is a multiplicity of complications during childbirth including expulsion disturbances, formation of fistulae, ruptures and incontinence.

Even with the least drastic version of circumcision, complications and functional consequences can occur, including the loss of all capacity for orgasm.

There are various reasons to explain the existence and continuation of the practice of FGM: custom, tradition (preserving virginity of young girls and limiting the sexual expression of women) and social reasons. These reasons do not justify the considerable damages to health.

None of the major religions supports this practice. The current medical opinion is that FGM is detrimental to the physical and mental health of girls and women. FGM is seen by many as a form of oppression of women.

By and large there is a strong tendency to condemn FGM more overtly:

- There are active campaigns against the practice in Africa. Many African women leaders as well as African heads of state have issued strong statements against the practice.
- International agencies such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and UNICEF have recommended that specific measures be aimed at the eradication of FGM.
- Governments in several countries have developed legislation, such as prohibiting FGM in their criminal codes.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Taking into account the psychological needs and 'cultural identity' of the people involved, physicians should inform women, men and children about FGM and discourage them from performing or promoting FGM. Physicians should integrate health promotion and counselling against FGM into their work.
2. As a consequence, physicians should have adequate information and support for doing so. Educational programmes concerning FGM should be expanded and/or developed.
3. National Medical Associations should stimulate public and professional awareness of the damaging effects of FGM.
4. National Medical Associations should stimulate governmental action in preventing the practice of FGM.
5. National Medical Associations should cooperate in organising an appropriate preventive and legal strategy when a child is at risk of undergoing FGM.

### **CONCLUSION**

The World Medical Association condemns the practice of genital mutilation including the circumcision of women and girls and condemns the participation of physicians in such practices.

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## WMA STATEMENT ON PATIENT ADVOCACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Adopted by the 45<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Budapest, Hungary, October 1993  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### PREAMBLE

Medical practitioners have an ethical duty and a professional responsibility to act in the best interests of their patients without regard to age, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability or disability, race, religion, culture, beliefs, political affiliation, financial means or nationality.

This duty includes advocating for patients, both as a group (such as advocating on public health issues) and as individuals.

Occasionally, this duty may conflict with a physician's other legal, ethical and/or professional duties, creating social, professional and ethical dilemmas for the physician.

Potential conflicts with the physician's obligation of advocacy on behalf of his or her patient may arise in a number of contexts:

1. Conflict between the obligation of advocacy and confidentiality - A physician is ethically and often legally obligated to preserve in confidence a patient's personal health information and any information conveyed to the physician by the patient in the course of his or her professional duties. This may conflict with the physician's obligation to advocate for and protect patients where the patients may be incapable of doing so themselves.
2. Conflict between the best interest of the patient and employer or insurer dictates - Often there exists potential for conflict between a physician's duty to act in the best interest of his or her patients, and the dictates of the physician's employer or the insurance body, whose decision may be shaped by economic or administrative factors unrelated to the patient's health. Examples of such might be an insurer's instructions to prescribe a specific drug only, where the physician believes a different drug would better suit a particular patient, or an insurer's denial of coverage for treatment that a physician believes is necessary.
3. Conflict between the best interests of the individual patient and society - Although the physician's primary obligation is to his or her patient, the physician may, in certain circumstances, have responsibilities to a patient's family and/or to society as well. This may arise in cases of conflict between the patient and his or her family, in the case of minor or incapacitated patients, or in the context of limited resources.

4. Conflict between the patient's wishes and the physician's professional judgment or moral values - Patients are presumed to be the best arbiters of their best interests and, in general, a physician should advocate for and accede to the wishes of his or her patient. However, in certain instances such wishes may be contrary to the physician's professional judgment or personal values.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. The duty of confidentiality must be paramount except in cases where the physician is legally or ethically obligated to disclose such information in order to protect the welfare of the individual patient, third parties or society. In such cases, the physician must make a reasonable effort to notify the patient of the obligation to breach confidentiality, and explain the reasons for doing so, unless this is clearly inadvisable (such as where telling the patient would exacerbate a threat). In certain cases, such as genetic or HIV testing, physicians should discuss with their patients, prior to performing the test, instances in which confidentiality might need to be breached.  
A physician should breach confidentiality in order to protect the individual patient only in cases of minor or incompetent patients (such as certain cases of child or elder abuse) and only where alternative measures are not available. In all other cases, confidentiality may be breached only with the specific consent of the patient or his/her legal representative or where necessary for the treatment of the patient, such as in consultations between medical practitioners.  
Whenever confidentiality must be breached, it should be done so only to the extent necessary and only to the relevant party or authority.
2. In all cases where a physician's obligation to his or her patient conflicts with the administrative dictates of the employer or the insurer, a physician must strive to change the decision of the employing/insuring body. His or her ultimate obligation must be to the patient.  
Mechanisms should be in place to protect physicians who wish to challenge decisions of employers/insurers without jeopardizing their jobs, and to resolve disagreements between medical professionals and administrators with regard to allocation of resources.  
Such mechanisms should be embodied in medical practitioners' employment contracts. These employment contracts should acknowledge that medical practitioners' ethical obligations override purely contractual obligations related to employment.
3. A physician should be aware of and take into account economic and other factors before making a decision regarding treatment. Nonetheless, a physician has an obligation to advocate on behalf of his or her patient for access to the best available treatment.  
In all cases of conflict between a physician's obligation to the individual patient and the obligation to the patient's family or to society, the obligation to the individual patient should typically take precedence.

4. Competent patients have the right to determine, on the basis of their needs, values and preferences, what constitutes for them the best course of treatment in any given situation.

Unless it is an emergency situation, physicians should not be required to participate in any procedures that conflict with their personal values or professional judgment. In such non-emergency cases, the physician should explain to the patient his or her inability to carry out the patient's wishes, and the patient should be referred to another physician, if required.

## WMA STATEMENT ON MEDICAL ETHICS IN THE EVENT OF DISASTERS

Adopted by the 46<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Stockholm, Sweden, September 1994  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

1. The definition of a disaster for the purpose of this document focuses particularly on the medical aspects.  
A disaster is the sudden occurrence of a calamitous, usually violent, event resulting in substantial material damage, considerable displacement of people, a large number of victims and/or significant social disruption. This definition excludes situations arising from conflicts and wars, whether international or internal, which give rise to other problems in addition to those considered in this paper. From the medical standpoint, disaster situations are characterized by an acute and unforeseen imbalance between the capacity and resources of the medical profession and the needs of survivors who are injured whose health is threatened, over a given period of time.
2. Disasters, irrespective of cause, share several features:
  - a. their sudden and unexpected occurrence, demanding prompt action;
  - b. material or natural damage making access to the survivors difficult and/or dangerous;
  - c. adverse effects on health due to pollution, and the risks of epidemics, and emotional and psychological factors;
  - d. a context of insecurity requiring police or military measures to maintain order;
  - e. media coverage.

Disasters require multifaceted responses involving many different types of relief ranging from transportation and food supplies to medical services. Physicians are likely to be part of coordinated operations involving other responders such as law enforcement personnel. These operations require an effective and centralized authority to coordinate public and private efforts. Rescue workers and physicians are confronted with an exceptional situation in which their normal professional ethics must be brought to the situation to ensure that the treatment of disaster survivors conforms to basic ethical tenets and is not influenced by other motivations. Ethical rules defined and taught beforehand should complement the individual ethics of physicians.

Inadequate and/or disrupted medical resources on site and the large number of people injured in a short time present specific ethical challenges.

The World Medical Association therefore recommends the following ethical principles and procedures with regard to the physician's role in disaster situations.

### 3. TRIAGE

1. Triage is a medical action of prioritizing treatment and management based on a rapid diagnosis and prognosis for each patient. Triage must be carried out systematically, taking into account the medical needs, medical intervention capabilities and available resources. Vital acts of reanimation may have to be carried out at the same time as triage. Triage may pose an ethical problem owing to the limited treatment resources immediately available in relation to the large number of injured persons in varying states of health.
2. Ideally, triage should be entrusted to authorized, experienced physicians or to physician teams, assisted by a competent staff.
3. The physician should separate patients into categories and then treat them in the following order, subject to national guidelines:
  - a. patients who can be saved but whose lives are in immediate danger should be given treatment straight away or as a matter of priority within the next few hours;
  - b. patients whose lives are not in immediate danger and who are in need of urgent but not immediate medical care should be treated next;
  - c. injured persons requiring only minor treatment can be treated later or by relief workers;
  - d. psychologically traumatized individuals who do not require treatment for bodily harm but might need reassurance or sedation if acutely disturbed;
  - e. patients whose condition exceeds the available therapeutic resources, who suffer from extremely severe injuries such as irradiation or burns to such an extent and degree that they cannot be saved in the specific circumstances of time and place, or complex surgical cases requiring a particularly delicate operation which would take too long, thereby obliging the physician to make a choice between them and other patients. Such patients may be classified as "beyond emergency care".
  - f. Since cases may evolve and thus change category, it is essential that the situation be regularly reassessed by the official in charge of the triage.
4. The following statements apply to treatment beyond emergency care:
  - a. It is ethical for a physician not to persist, at all costs, in treating individuals "beyond emergency care", thereby wasting scarce resources needed elsewhere. The decision not to treat an injured person on account of priorities dictated by the disaster situation cannot be considered a failure to come to the assistance of a person in mortal danger. It is justified when it is intended to save the maximum number of individuals. However, the physician must show such patients compassion and respect for their dignity, for example by separating them from others and administering appropriate pain relief and sedatives.



- b. The physician must act according to the needs of patients and the resources available. He/she should attempt to set an order of priorities for treatment that will save the greatest number of lives and restrict morbidity to a minimum.

#### 4. RELATIONS WITH THE PATIENTS

1. In selecting the patients who may be saved, the physician should consider only their medical status, and should exclude any other consideration based on non-medical criteria.
2. Survivors of a disaster are entitled to the same respect as other patients, and the most appropriate treatment available should be administered with the patient's consent. However, it should be recognized that in a disaster response there may not be enough time for informed consent to be a realistic possibility.

#### 5. AFTERMATH OF DISASTER

1. In the post-disaster period the needs of survivors must be considered. Many may have lost family members and may be suffering psychological distress. The dignity of survivors and their families must be respected.
2. The physician must respect the customs, rites and religions of the patients and act in all impartiality.
3. If possible, the difficulties encountered and the identification of the patients should be reported for medical follow-up.

#### 6. MEDIA AND OTHER THIRD PARTIES

The physician has a duty to each patient to exercise discretion and ensure confidentiality when dealing with third parties, and to exercise caution and objectivity and act with dignity with respect to the emotional and political atmosphere surrounding disaster situations. This implies that physicians are empowered to restrict the entrance of reporters to the medical premises. Media relations should always be handled by appropriately trained personnel.

#### 7. DUTIES OF PARAMEDICAL PERSONNEL

The ethical principles that apply to physicians also apply to personnel under the physician's direction.

#### 8. TRAINING

The World Medical Association recommends that disaster medicine training be included in the curricula of university and post-graduate courses in medicine.

#### 9. RESPONSIBILITY

The World Medical Association calls upon governments and insurance companies to cover both civil liability and any personal damages to which physicians might be subject when working in disaster or emergency situations.

The WMA requests that governments:

- a. accept the presence of foreign physicians and, where demonstrably qualified, their participation, without discrimination on the basis of factors such as affiliation (e.g. Red Cross, Red Crescent, ICRC, and other qualified organizations), race, or religion.
- b. give priority to the rendering of medical services over visits of dignitaries.

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## **WMA STATEMENT ON ETHICAL ISSUES CONCERNING PATIENTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS**

Adopted by the 47<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bali, Indonesia, September 1995  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **PREAMBLE**

1. Historically, many societies have regarded patients with mental illness as a threat to those around them rather than as people in need of support and care. Therefore, in the absence of effective treatment, many patients with mental illness were confined to asylums for all or part of their lives. The aim of such confinement in these cases was to prevent behaviour that was self-destructive or aggressive toward others.
2. At the present time, progress in psychiatric therapy allows for better care of patients with mental illness. Efficacious drugs and other treatments can result in patient outcomes ranging from complete alleviation of symptoms to long remissions for patients whose conditions are more serious.
3. Patients with mental illness should be viewed, treated and granted the same access to care as any other medical patient. However, this is often not enough since patients with mental illnesses may not know when to seek treatment for somatic problems. Therefore, the physician should actively refer these patients to other physicians when necessary.
4. A physician has the same obligations toward patients with mental illness as toward any other patient.
5. The physician's primary role as healer of patients must not be undermined by serving as the agent of the greater society, except in instances of danger to the public.
6. Recognition must be given to the fact that a large proportion of patients with mental illness are treated by physicians who are not psychiatrists. The same ethical obligations and limitations would apply to these physicians.

### **ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

1. The discrimination associated with psychiatry and the mentally ill should be eliminated. This stigma often discourages people in need from seeking psychiatric help, thereby aggravating their situation and placing them at risk of emotional or physical harm.

2. The physician aspires for a therapeutic relationship founded on mutual trust. He/she should inform the patient of the nature of the patient's condition, standard therapeutic procedures (including possible alternatives and the risk of each), and the expected outcomes for the available therapeutic choices.
3. In the absence of legally adjudicated incompetence, psychiatric patients must be dealt with as though they are legally competent. The patient's judgment should be respected in areas where he/she is legally capable of making decisions, unless they present a risk of serious harm to themselves or others. A patient with mental illness who is incapable of legally exercising his/her autonomy should be treated like any other patient who is temporarily or permanently legally incompetent. If the patient lacks the capacity to make a decision as to his/her medical care, surrogate consent should be sought from an authorized representative in accordance with applicable law.
4. Involuntary hospitalization of psychiatric patients evokes ethical controversy. While laws regarding involuntary hospitalization and treatment vary worldwide, it is generally acknowledged that this treatment decision requires the following: (a) a severe mental disorder that prevents the individual from making his/her own treatment decisions; and/or (b) the likelihood that the patient may harm him/her self or others. Physicians should consider compulsory hospitalization to be exceptional and should utilize it only when it is medically necessary and for the shortest duration feasible under the circumstances.
5. Every physician should offer the patient the best available therapy to his/her knowledge, and should treat the patient with the solicitude and respect due all human beings. The physician practising in a psychiatric institution, the military or a prison can be faced with a conflict between his/her responsibilities to society and the responsibilities to the patient. The physician's primary loyalty and duty must be to the patient's best interest. The physician should ensure that the patient is made aware of the conflict in order to minimize feelings of betrayal, and should offer the patient the opportunity to understand measures mandated by legal authority.
6. The confidentiality and privacy of all patients should be safeguarded. When required by law, the physician should disclose only the required relevant material and should disclose such material only to the entity having legal authority to make such a request or demand. Data banks that allow access to or transfer of information from one authority to another may be used provided that medical confidentiality is respected and such access or transfer is fully compliant with applicable law.
7. A physician must never use his/her professional position to violate the dignity or human rights of any individual or group and should never allow his/her personal desires, needs, feelings, prejudices or beliefs to interfere with the treatment. Neither should a physician take advantage of his/her professional position or the vulnerability of a patient to abuse his/her authority.

### RECOMMENDATION

1. National Medical Associations should publicize this Statement and use it as a basis for affirming the ethical foundations for treatment of patients with mental illness.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON PHYSICIANS AND PUBLIC HEALTH**

Adopted by the 47<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bali, Indonesia, September 1995  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

1. Physicians and their professional associations have an ethical and professional responsibility to act in the best interests of patients at all times. This involves collaboration with public health agencies to integrate medical care of individual patients with a broader promotion of the health of the public.
2. The health of a community or population is determined by several factors that go beyond traditionally understood causes of disease. Classically defined determinants of health, aside from the genetic and biological constitution of individuals, include factors that affect behavioural lifestyle choices, factors that affect the physical, psychosocial and economic environments in which individuals live, and factors that affect the health services available to people. Public health traditionally involves monitoring, assessing and planning a variety of programs and activities targeted to the identified needs of the population, and the public health sector should have the capacity to carry out those functions effectively to optimise community health. The key functions of public health agencies are:
  - a. Health promotion:
    1. Working with health care providers to inform and enable the general public to take an active role in preventing and controlling disease, adopting healthful lifestyles, and using medical services appropriately;
    2. Assuring that conditions contributing to good health, including high-quality medical services, safe water supplies, good nutrition, an unpolluted atmosphere, and opportunities for exercise and recreation are accessible for the entire population;
    3. Working with the responsible public authorities to create healthy public policy and supportive environments in which healthy behavioural choices are the easy choices, and to develop human and social capital.
  - b. Prevention: assuring access to screening and other preventive services and curative care to the entire population.

- c. Protection: monitoring and protecting the health of communities against communicable diseases and exposure to toxic environmental pollutants, occupational hazards, harmful products, and poor quality health services. This function includes the need to set priorities, establish essential programs, obtain requisite resources and assure the availability of necessary public health laboratory services.
  - d. Surveillance: identifying outbreaks of infectious disease and patterns of chronic disease and injury and establishing appropriate control or prevention programs;
  - e. Population Health Assessment: assessing community health needs and marshaling the resources for responding to them, and developing health policy in response to specific community and national health needs.
3. The specific programs and activities carried out in each jurisdiction will depend on the problems and needs identified, the organization of the health care delivery system, the types and scope of the partnerships developed and the resources available to address the identified needs.
  4. Public health agencies benefit greatly from the support and close cooperation of physicians and their professional associations. The health of a community or a nation is measured by the health of all its residents, and the preventable health or medical problems that affect an individual person affect the health and resources of the community. The effectiveness of many public health programs, therefore, depends on the active collaboration of physicians and their professional associations with public health agencies and other governmental and nongovernmental agencies.
  5. The medical sector and the public health sector should effectively cooperate on the dissemination of public health information and education programs that promote healthful lifestyles and reduce preventable risks to health, including those from the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs; sexual activities that increase the risk of HIV transmission and sexually transmitted diseases; poor diet and physical inactivity; and inadequate childhood immunization levels. In many countries, health education is one way to reduce infant morbidity and mortality by promoting breast-feeding and providing nutrition education to parents together with providing supportive conditions (at work and in the community).
  6. Other types of activities, such as disease surveillance, investigation, and control are primarily the formal responsibility of public health agencies. These activities cannot be conducted effectively, however, without the active cooperation and support of physicians at the community level who are aware of individual and community illness patterns and can notify health authorities promptly of problems that might require further investigation and action. For example, physicians can help identify populations at high risk for particular diseases, such as tuberculosis, and report cases of communicable diseases such as measles, whooping cough, or infectious causes of diarrhoea, as well as cases of exposure to lead or other toxic chemicals and substances in the community or work place. A spirit of collaboration could be greatly enhanced if public health agencies respond adequately and appropriately to the information provided by physicians and others.

7. Regardless of the effectiveness of existing public health programs in a jurisdiction, professional medical associations should be aware of unmet health needs in their communities and nations and advocate for activities, programs, and resources to meet those needs. These efforts might be in areas of public education for health promotion and disease prevention; monitoring and controlling environmental hazards; identifying and publicizing adverse health effects resulting from social problems, such as interpersonal violence or social practices that affect health; or identifying and advocating for services such as improvements in emergency treatment preparedness.
8. In areas or jurisdictions in which basic public health services are not being provided adequately, medical associations must work with other health agencies and groups to establish priorities for advocacy and action. For example, in a country or area with limited resources in which potable water and sewage facilities are not available to most residents, these needs should be given priority over medical technologies that would provide service to only a small portion of the population.
9. Some health-related issues are extremely complex and involve multiple levels of response. For example, those diagnosed with high blood lead levels need not only appropriate medical treatment, but the source of contamination must also be determined, and measures taken to eliminate the danger. At times policies that promote public health create concern because of their potential economic impact. For example, strong opposition to the potential economic impact of tobacco control policies could come from regions or groups that derive significant revenue from growing or processing tobacco. However, economic concerns should not deter a strong public health advocacy program against the use of tobacco products. The promotion of tobacco products should be rigorously opposed, and every effort should be made to reduce tobacco consumption in both developed and developing countries.
10. Physicians and their associations should collaborate with political authorities and other organizations to encourage the media to send positive messages for health education regarding diet, drug use, sexually transmitted diseases, cardiovascular risk, etc.
11. Medical associations should ask their members to educate their patients on the availability of public health services.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON RESISTANCE TO ANTIMICROBIAL DRUGS**

Adopted by the 48<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Somerset West, South Africa, October 1996  
and amended by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

### **PREAMBLE**

The global increase in resistance to antimicrobial drugs, including the emergence of bacterial strains resistant to all available antibacterial agents, has created a multi-faceted public health problem of crisis proportions with significant economic and human implications. The development of resistant microorganisms is a problem whenever antimicrobial agents are used. The increase in high-risk populations who frequently require antimicrobial therapy, including immunocompromised patients, those undergoing invasive medical interventions, those with implanted medical devices and patients with chronic debilitating diseases, has amplified the problem. The fact that certain infectious diseases have been linked to the development of chronic disease and cancer adds another dimension to the problem.

A renewed effort to increase awareness of antimicrobial resistance is needed in order to contain and slow its development. International cooperation is essential in accomplishing this objective, including global, national, and local components. In particular, implementation of national and global efforts to contain the development and spread of antimicrobial resistance is vital; policy statements without international will to accomplish results are not enough. Given the dynamics of antimicrobial resistance, the need for continuing development of new antimicrobials by the pharmaceutical industry can be anticipated.

Substantial misuse and overuse of antimicrobial agents have exacerbated the problem by adding selection pressures to microbial populations that favor mutation to antibiotic resistance. These include inappropriate prescribing of antibacterial prophylactics and/or treatment of bacterial infections by physicians and poor compliance with antimicrobial regimens by patients. Thus, there is a need for enhanced training and education to improve the appropriate clinical use of antimicrobials and prevent the development of resistance. There is a need at every level to educate the public about the appropriate use of antimicrobials and the problem of antimicrobial resistance.

The availability of antimicrobial agents without a prescription in many developing countries is escalating antibiotic resistance, and this practice must be discontinued. The increasing prevalence of counterfeit medications is another critical and expanding risk factor. Successfully addressing this problem will require substantial cooperation among nations and the development and use of better technologies to verify the authenticity of pharmaceutical products and assure the security of deployment from point of manufacture to the point of need. Similarly, the inappropriate use of antibiotics in veterinary medicine and livestock production in many countries needs to be controlled.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Global

Individual governments should work to create cross-sectional national task forces to collect national data on the use of antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance and to prioritize regulation, intervention, and other measures to reduce antimicrobial resistance.

The World Medical Association and its member national medical associations should advocate for:

- Individual governments to cooperate with the World Health Organization (WHO) to enhance the effectiveness of the WHO's global network of antimicrobial resistance surveillance. This will foster the collection, quality and sharing of data; the monitoring of progress in combating antimicrobial resistance; the establishment of appropriate formularies; and scientific support for interventions.
- The WHO to examine the role of international travel and trade agreements on the development of antimicrobial resistance.
- The widespread application of verifiable technology to ensure the authenticity of pharmaceutical products.

The World Medical Association and its national medical associations should encourage their governments to:

- Fund more basic and applied research directed toward the development of innovative antimicrobial agents and vaccines, and on the appropriate and safe use of such therapeutic tools.
- Create incentives for the pharmaceutical industry to pursue research and development programs leading to the availability of innovative antimicrobial agents, vaccines, and rapid diagnostic methods.

### National

National medical associations should:

- urge their governments to require that antimicrobial agents be available only through a prescription provided by licensed and qualified health care and/or veterinary professionals.
- urge their governments to initiate a national media campaign explaining to the public the harmful consequences of overuse and misuse of antibiotics.
- actively pursue the development of a national surveillance system for antimicrobial resistance that will provide physicians with the information necessary to deliver timely, evidence-based, high-quality care. Data from this system should be linked with, or at minimum, fed into, the WHO's global network of antimicrobial resistance surveillance.
- create guidelines on the appropriate use of antibiotics for common medical conditions, such as respiratory infections, tonsillitis, pneumonia and urinary tract infection; pursue the development of a national surveillance system for sales of antimicrobials.

- encourage medical schools and continuing medical education programs to renew their efforts to educate physicians about the appropriate use of antimicrobial agents and appropriate infection control practices, including antibiotic use in the out-patient setting.
- in collaboration with veterinary authorities, encourage their governments to restrict the use of antimicrobial agents as feed additives for animals strictly to those antimicrobials that do not have a human public health impact.

### Local

Physicians should:

- assume leadership roles in their local hospitals, clinics, and communities regarding appropriate antiseptic habits, antimicrobial agent usage, and antimicrobial resistance prevention and control programs. This applies especially to those trained in infectious diseases and clinical microbiology.
- raise awareness amongst their patients about antimicrobial therapy, its risks and benefits, the importance of compliance with the prescribed regimen, optimal hygienic practices, and the problem of antimicrobial drug resistance.
- wherever possible, explore strategies for reducing the use of antibiotics that do not compromise the quality of patient care, such as "wait-and-see" prescriptions for the treatment of acute otitis media.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON FAMILY VIOLENCE**

Adopted by the 48<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Somerset West, South Africa, October 1996  
editorially revised by the 174<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Pilanesberg, South Africa,  
October 2006  
and amended by the 61<sup>st</sup> WMA General Assembly, Vancouver, Canada, October 2010

### **PREAMBLE**

Recalling the World Medical Association Declaration of Hong Kong on the Abuse of the Elderly and the World Medical Association Statement on Child Abuse and Neglect, and profoundly concerned with violence as a public health issue, the World Medical Association calls upon National Medical Associations to intensify and broaden their efforts to address the universal problem of family violence.

Family violence is a term applied to physical and/or emotional mistreatment of a person by someone in an intimate relationship with the victim. The term includes domestic violence (sometimes referred to as partner, spouse, or wife battering), child physical abuse and neglect, child sexual abuse, maltreatment of older people, and many cases of sexual assault. Family violence can be found in every country in the world, cutting across gender and all racial, ethnic, religious and socio-economic lines. Although case definitions vary from culture to culture, family violence represents a major public health problem by virtue of the many deaths, injuries, and adverse psychological consequences that it causes. The physical and emotional harm may represent chronic or even lifetime disabilities for many victims. Family violence is associated with increased risk of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and self-injurious behaviour, including suicide. Victims often become perpetrators or become involved in violent relationships later on. Although the focus of this document is the welfare of the victim, the needs of the perpetrator should not be overlooked.

Although the causes of family violence are complex, a number of contributing factors are known. These include poverty, unemployment, other exogenous stresses, attitudes of acceptance of violence for dispute resolution, substance abuse (particularly alcohol), rigid gender roles, poor parenting skills, ambiguous family roles, unrealistic expectations of other family members, interpersonal conflicts within the family, actual or perceived physical or psychological vulnerability of victims by perpetrators, perpetrator pre-occupation with power and control, and familial social isolation, among others.

### **POSITION**

There is a growing awareness of the need to think about and take action against family

violence in a unified way, rather than focusing on the particular type of victim or community affected. In many families where partner battering occurs, for example, there may be abuse of children and/or of older people as well, often carried out by a single perpetrator. In addition, there is substantial evidence that children who are victimized or who witness violence against others in the family are later at increased risk as adolescents or adults of being re-victimized and/or becoming perpetrators of violence themselves. Finally, more recent data suggest that victims of family violence are more likely to become perpetrators of violence against non-intimates as well. All of this suggests that each instance of family violence may have implications not only for further family violence, but also for the broader spread of violence throughout a society.

Physicians and NMAs should oppose violent practices such as dowry killings and honour killings.

Physicians and NMAs should oppose the practice of child marriage.

Physicians have important roles to play in the prevention and treatment of family violence. Of course they will manage injuries, illnesses, and psychiatric problems deriving from the abuse. The therapeutic relationships physicians have with patients may allow victims to confide in them about current or past victimization. Physicians should inquire about violence routinely, as well as when they see particular clinical presentations that may be associated with abuse. They can help patients to find methods of achieving safety and access to community resources that will allow protection and/or intervention in the abusive relationship. They can educate patients about the progression and adverse consequences of family violence, stress management and availability of relevant mental health treatment, and parenting skills as ways of preventing the violence before it occurs. Finally, physicians as citizens and as community leaders and medical experts can become involved in local and national activities designed to decrease family violence.

Physicians recognise that victims of violence may find it difficult to trust their physician at first. Physicians must be prepared to develop a trusting relationship with their patient over time until s/he is ready to accept advice, help and intervention.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The World Medical Association recommends that National Medical Associations adopt the following guidelines for physicians:

- All physicians should receive adequate training in the medical, sociological, psychological and preventive aspects of all types of family violence. This would include medical school training in the general principles, specialty-specific information during postgraduate training, and continuing medical education about family violence. Trainees must receive adequate instruction in the role of gender, power and other issues of family dynamics in contributing to family violence. The training should also include adequate collecting of evidence, documentation and reporting in cases of abuse.
- Physicians should know how to take an appropriate and culturally sensitive history of current and past victimization.

- Physicians should routinely consider and be sensitive to signs indicating the need for further evaluations about current or past victimization as part of their general health screen or in response to suggestive clinical findings.
- Physicians should be encouraged to provide pocket cards, booklets, videotapes, and/or other educational materials in reception rooms and emergency departments to offer patients general information about family violence as well as to inform them about local help and services.
- Physicians should be aware of social, community and other services of use to victims of violence, and refer to and use these routinely.
- Physicians have the obligation to consider reporting to appropriate protection services suspected violence against children and other family members without legal capacity.
- Physicians should be acutely aware of the need for maintaining confidentiality in cases of family violence.
- Physicians should be encouraged to participate in coordinated community activities that seek to reduce the amount and impact of family violence.
- Physicians should be encouraged to develop non-judgemental attitudes toward those involved in family violence so their ability to influence victims, survivors and perpetrators is enhanced. For example, the behaviour should be judged but not the person.
- National Medical Associations should encourage and facilitate coordination of action against family violence between and among components of the health care system, criminal justice systems, law enforcement authorities, family and juvenile courts, and victims' services organizations. They should also support public awareness and community education.
- National Medical Associations should encourage and facilitate research to understand the prevalence, risk factors, outcomes and optimal care for victims of family violence.

**WMA STATEMENT  
ON  
PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR STANDARDS OF MEDICAL CARE**

Adopted by the 48<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Somerset West, South Africa, October 1996  
and editorially revised by the 174<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Pilanesberg, South Africa,  
October 2006

**Recognising that:**

1. The physician has an obligation to provide his or her patients with competent medical service and to report to the appropriate authorities those physicians who practice unethically and incompetently or who engage in fraud or deception (International Code of Medical Ethics); and
2. The physician should be free to make clinical and ethical judgements without inappropriate outside interference; and
3. Ethics committees, credentials committees and other forms of peer review have been long established, recognised and accepted by organised medicine to scrutinise physicians' professional conduct and, where appropriate, impose reasonable restrictions on the absolute professional freedom of physicians; and

**Reaffirming that:**

1. Professional autonomy and the duty to engage in vigilant self-regulation are essential requirements for high quality care and therefore are patient benefits that must be preserved;
2. And, as a corollary, the medical profession has a continuing responsibility to support, participate in, and accept appropriate peer review activity that is conducted in good faith;

**POSITION**

1. A physician's professional service should be considered distinct from commercial goods and services, not least because a physician is bound by specific ethical duties, which include the dedication to provide competent medical practice (International Code of Medical Ethics).

2. Whatever judicial or regulatory process a country has established, any judgement on a physician's professional conduct or performance must incorporate evaluation by the physician's professional peers who, by their training and experience, understand the complexity of the medical issues involved.
3. Any procedure for considering complaints from patients which fails to be based upon good faith evaluation of the physician's actions or omissions by the physician's peers is unacceptable. Such a procedure would undermine the overall quality of medical care provided to all patients.

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

Adopted by the 48<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Somerset West, South Africa, October 1996  
and amended by the 58<sup>th</sup> 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 impaired health, when families are unable to provide for all their children. Social functioning 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 women'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 universal 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.



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## **WMA STATEMENT ON WEAPONS OF WARFARE AND THEIR RELATION TO LIFE AND HEALTH**

Adopted by the 48<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Somerset West, South Africa, October 1996  
and editorially revised by the 174<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Pilanesberg, South Africa,  
October 2006

### **PREAMBLE**

1. When nations enter into warfare or into weapons development, they do not usually consider the effects of the use of weapons on the health of individual non-combatants and on public health in general, either in the short or in the longer term.
2. Nevertheless the medical profession is required to deal with both the immediate and long term health effects of warfare, and in particular with the effects of different forms of weapons.
3. The potential for scientific and medical knowledge to contribute to the development of new weapons systems, targeted against specific individuals, specific populations or against body systems, is considerable. This includes the development of weapons designed to target anatomical or physiological systems, including vision, or which use knowledge of human genetic similarities and differences to target weapons.
4. There are no current and commonly used criteria to measure weapons effects on health. International Humanitarian Law states that weapons that cause injuries which would constitute "unnecessary suffering or superfluous injury" are illegal. These terms are not defined and require interpretation against objective criteria for the law to be effective.
5. Physicians can aid in developing criteria for weapons that cause injury or suffering so extreme as to invoke the terms of International Humanitarian Law.
6. Such criteria could aid lawyers in the use of International Humanitarian Law, allow assessment of the legality of new weapons currently in development against an agreed, objective system of assessment of their medical effects, and identify breaches of the Law once it is developed.
7. Physician involvement in the delineation of such objective criteria is essential if it is to become part of the legal process. However, it should be recognised that physicians are opposed to any use of weapons against human beings.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The WMA believes that the development, manufacture and sale of weapons for use against human beings are abhorrent. To support the prevention and reduction of weapons injuries the WMA:
  - a. Supports international efforts to define objective criteria to measure the effects of current and future weapons, which could be used to stop the development, manufacture, sale and use of those weapons;
  - b. Calls on National Medical Associations to urge national governments to cooperate with the collection of such data as are necessary for establishing objective criteria;
  - c. Calls on National Medical Associations to support and encourage research into the global public health effects of weapons use, and to publicise the results of that research both nationally and internationally to ensure that both the public and governments are aware of the long term health consequences of weapons use on non-combatant individuals and populations.

## **WMA PROPOSAL FOR A UNITED NATIONS RAPPOREUR ON THE INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

Adopted by the 49<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Hamburg, Germany, November 1997  
and reaffirmed by the 176<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Berlin, Germany, May 2007

The British Medical Association (BMA) requests that the World Medical Association (WMA) supports a proposal, put forward by a network of medical organizations\* concerned with human rights issues, for the establishment of a new UN post of rapporteur on the independence and integrity of health professionals.

It is envisaged that the role of the rapporteur will supplement the work already done by a series of existing UN rapporteurs on issues such as torture, arbitrary execution, violence against women, etc. The new rapporteur would be charged with the task of monitoring that doctors are allowed to move freely and that patients have access to medical treatment, without discrimination as to nationality or ethnic origin, in war zones or in situations of political tension. The role of the proposed rapporteur is detailed on pages two, three and four of this submission.

The original proposal was drawn up by a lawyer, Cees Flinterman, who is a professor of constitutional and international law at the University of Limburg, Maastricht, in The Netherlands. It has the support of a range of doctors' organizations listed below\*, whose interests are in protection of human rights and protection of doctors who act impartially in conflict situations. This group will be consulting widely and acting with the help of the International Commission of Jurists to interest the United Nations in this proposal.

The Council of the BMA supported this proposal after debate in 1996. It would lend considerable weight to the campaign if the WMA would also support this concept whose fundamental aim is to protect doctors and their patients in war situations and other cases where medical independence may come under threat from political or military factions.

### **PROPOSAL FOR A RAPPOREUR ON THE INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

#### **Goals**

accepting that in many situations of political conflict (such as civil or international war) or political tension (such as during suspension of civil rights in a government-declared state of emergency), health professionals are often the first people outside military or government circles to have detailed knowledge of human rights violations, including violations of the right of populations to access medical treatment, a network of physicians is anxious that a range of national and international reporting mechanisms be established to achieve the following goals:

1. To monitor the role of health professionals working in situations where either their rights to give, or the rights of their patients to receive, treatment are threatened;
2. To make appeals for the protection of health professionals when they are in danger solely because of their professional or human rights activities;
3. To defend patients who are in danger of suffering human rights violations solely because of seeking medical treatment;
4. To encourage reporting of human rights violations by health professionals;
5. To analyse information about health professionals voluntarily adopting discriminatory practices. The group consider that existing UN reporting mechanisms need expansion. Key among proposals for new mechanisms is the development of a new UN rapporteur's post which would link together relevant information emerging from other existing UN mechanisms and also suggest where other useful local and national reporting networks could be developed in the long-term. Therefore, on the basis of materials prepared by the Law Department at the University of Limburg, Maastricht and circulated by the Dutch medical group, the Johannes Wier Foundation, the group is campaigning for a new post of UN Rapporteur of the Independence and Integrity of Health Professionals.

### Defining the Role

The potential role of a UN Rapporteur need not be exhaustively defined in advance since the experience of the individual and the practical applicability of the goals must have an influence.

It should include the following:

- Receive, evaluate, investigate and report allegations of repression directed at health professionals or intended to prevent individuals receiving medical care. The rapporteur should be a clearing house for reports from individuals, groups of doctors, NGOs etc. and as well as simply receiving information, should pro-actively seek our information, including on-site visits.
- To build upon existing principles as found in humanitarian law and the codes of medical ethics applicable in armed conflicts to develop specific guidelines on the subject of medical impartiality in relation to the treatment of patients in situations of political or armed conflict.  
The World Medical Association and national medical association should be encouraged to disseminate such information to health professionals during their training. Arising also from such guidance should be the institution of mechanisms to help health professionals protect themselves in situations where human rights are at risk.
- The rapporteur should also have a consultative role, seeking the views of international and national professional associations, human rights bodies and humanitarian organizations with regards to the protection of health professionals and the defence of the right to treat patients impartially.
- The rapporteur should investigate reports of health professionals voluntarily transgressing guidelines about impartiality and non-discrimination.

### Issues within the Remit

- The fundamental concern is to protect the nature of the doctor-patient relationship from unjustified external interference although it will also include voluntary transgressing of impartiality by health professionals. The rapporteur's role will be to ensure the independence, integrity and impartiality of health professionals.

Ensuring these aims requires analysis of whether:

- the treatment decisions of health professionals can be carried out without coming into conflict with improper pressure from authorities;
- the physical integrity and ability of health professionals to act in accordance with their professional principles are both protected;
- health professionals are able to provide treatment on the basis of patient need;
- people in need of medical treatment are able to access it safely;
- health professionals are ensured their freedom of movement, in the capacity as medical care providers, and be able to have access to people in need of medical services.

Monitoring the degree to which external pressures influence negatively the provision of medical treatment will be within the remit of the rapporteur.

- The remit will be global.
- For lack of a reporting mechanism, health professionals are often disempowered from taking action on violations of patient rights. One of the issues of the rapporteur to monitor would be the introduction of national or local legislation, civil or military regulations or other rules prohibiting or limiting the provision of medical or nursing care to certain categories of patient.
- It will be within the remit of the rapporteur to bring the evidence or reports of violations of medical impartiality, including those in health professionals cooperating voluntarily, to responsible bodies in the medical field and to the governments concerned.
- Blanket restrictions on the medical or nursing services to be provided to members of vulnerable groups, such as refugees, asylum seekers, prisoners, minority ethnic groups, should be among the issues monitored by the rapporteur. The rapporteur should contribute to the empowerment of the health professionals to resist collectively the erosion of such patients' rights.
- Threats, intimidation or pressures on health professionals to discriminate against patients on the basis solely of non-medical related considerations such as ethics, religious or racial affiliation should be investigated even if the threats do not materialize into action.
- Reports of health professionals being harassed or detained simply because of their profession or because of the exercise of professional skills will be investigated by the rapporteur. Similarly repressive measures designed to prevent health professionals reporting infringements of medical integrity will be investigated. Measures to encourage health professionals actively to document and report such violations should be put forward by the rapporteur in consultation with other bodies.
- Reports of patients being impeded or discouraged from gaining access to the available medical treatment will be investigated.

### Issues Outside the Remit

Just as important as defining what is within the rapporteur's remit is the matter of clarifying those issues which fall outside it. We anticipate that this too will become clearer as practice and experience develop. In the meantime, however, we suggest that:

- health professionals in every country should be educated about the ethical responsibilities they owe to patients and potential patients. Whereas such education is not within the remit of the rapporteur, acting as a resource for advice about medical impartiality would be within the rapporteur's remit. In the long term this function should ideally be dealt with by delegation through medical schools, professional bodies and voluntary national networks;
- while government measures to regulate aspects of care, (such as the equitable distribution of medical resources or the prioritizing of treatment on basis of need) would not generally be a matter for monitoring for the rapporteur, extreme measures likely to result in the disenfranchising of groups of patients from medical or nursing services would be monitored and investigated;
- governments' indiscriminate failure to provide health promotion or treatment to many or all sectors of the community does not fall within the remit of the rapporteur;
- since a principal concern is to ensure access to medical treatment by patients who need and want it, the voluntary decision of some individuals or patient groups to exclude themselves (for example on religious or cultural grounds) from orthodox medicine does not fall within the remit of the rapporteur.

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\* organizations participating in the network include: Amnesty International; British Medical Association; Centre for Enquiry into Health & Allied Themes (Bombay); Graza Community Mental Health; International Committee of the Red Cross; Physicians for Human Rights (in Denmark, Israel, South Africa, the UK, & the USA); Turkish Medical Association; and, the Johannes Weir Foundation.

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**WMA STATEMENT  
ON  
THE LICENSING OF PHYSICIANS FLEEING PROSECUTION  
FOR SERIOUS CRIMINAL OFFENCES**

Adopted by the 49<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Hamburg, Germany, November 1997  
and reaffirmed by the 176<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Berlin, Germany, May 2007

**PREAMBLE**

Physicians are bound by medical ethics to work for the good of their patients. Involvement by a physician in torture, war crimes or crimes against humanity is contrary to medical ethics, human rights and international law. A physician who perpetrates such crimes is unfit to practice medicine.

**DEFINITION**

Physicians seeking to work in any country are subject to the licensing arrangements of that country. The duty to demonstrate suitability to practice lies with the person seeking registration. Licensing bodies in some countries are distinct from the national medical association.

Physicians who lose their licenses in one country after being found guilty by their licensing authority of serious professional misconduct, or following a criminal conviction, will usually be unsuccessful if they apply to practise in a second country. This is because most licensing authorities require not only proof of qualification but also proof that an applicant who is an immigrant continues to be in good professional standing in his or her country of origin.

Yet physicians who have been accused by international agencies of torture, war crimes or crimes against humanity have sometimes been able to escape from the country in which these crimes were committed and to obtain registration to practice medicine from the licensing authority in another country. This is clearly contrary to the public interest and is damaging to the reputation of physicians.

**RECOMMENDATION**

National medical associations should use their own licensing powers to ensure that physicians against whom serious allegations of participation in torture, war crimes or crimes against humanity have been made are not able to obtain licences to practice until they have satisfactorily answered these allegations. National medical associations that do

not have licensing powers should inform the appropriate licensing authorities of information they receive regarding physicians against whom serious allegations of participation in torture, war crimes or crimes against humanity have been made, and should encourage the licensing authorities to take appropriate actions to ensure that such physicians have satisfactorily answered these allegations before granting them licenses to practice. Where evidence of involvement in abuses is compelling, national member associations or licensing authorities should draw such evidence to the attention of the appropriate authorities.



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## **WMA STATEMENT ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

Adopted by the 50<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Ottawa, Canada, October 1998  
and amended by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

The WMA Declarations of Geneva, of Helsinki and of Tokyo make clear the duties and responsibilities of the medical profession to preserve and safeguard the health of the patient and to consecrate itself to the service of humanity. The WMA considers that it has a duty to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Therefore the WMA:

- condemns the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, deployment, threat and use of nuclear weapons;
- requests all governments to refrain from the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, deployment, threat and use of nuclear weapons and to work in good faith towards the elimination of nuclear weapons; and
- requests all National Medical Associations to join the WMA in supporting this Declaration and to urge their respective governments to work towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

**WMA STATEMENT  
ON  
MEDICAL CARE FOR REFUGEES, INCLUDING ASYLUM SEEKERS,  
REFUSED ASYLUM SEEKERS AND UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS,  
AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS**

Adopted by the 50<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Ottawa, Canada, October 1998  
reaffirmed by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008  
and amended by the 61<sup>st</sup> WMA General Assembly, Vancouver, Canada, October 2010

**PREAMBLE**

International and civil conflicts as well as poverty and hunger result in large numbers of refugees, including asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in all regions. These persons are among the most vulnerable in society.

International codes of human rights and medical ethics, including the WMA Declaration of Lisbon on the Rights of the Patient, declare that all people are entitled without discrimination to appropriate medical care. However, national legislation varies and is often not in accordance with this important principle.

**STATEMENT**

Physicians have a duty to provide appropriate medical care regardless of the civil or political status of the patient, and governments should not deny patients the right to receive such care, nor should they interfere with physicians' obligation to administer treatment on the basis of clinical need alone.

Physicians cannot be compelled to participate in any punitive or judicial action involving refugees, including asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, or IDPs or to administer any non-medically justified diagnostic measure or treatment, such as sedatives to facilitate easy deportation from the country or relocation.

Physicians must be allowed adequate time and sufficient resources to assess the physical and psychological condition of refugees who are seeking asylum.

National Medical Associations and physicians should actively support and promote the right of all people to receive medical care on the basis of clinical need alone and speak out against legislation and practices that are in opposition to this fundamental right.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON PATENTING MEDICAL PROCEDURES**

Adopted by the 51<sup>st</sup> World Medical Assembly, Tel Aviv, Israel, October 1999  
and amended by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### **PREAMBLE**

Under the law of some jurisdictions medical procedures are patentable. Patents on medical procedures are often called medical procedure patents. A medical procedure patent or patent claim is one that only confers rights over procedural steps and does not confer rights over any new devices.

Over 80 countries prohibit medical procedure patents. The practice of excluding medical procedures from patentability is consistent with the Uruguay Round of Amendments to the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of International Property Rights (GATT-TRIPs), which states: "Members may also exclude from patentability: (a) diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical methods for the treatment of humans or animals" (Article 27).

The purpose of patents is to encourage private investment in research and development. However, physicians, particularly those who work in research institutions, already have incentives to innovate and improve their skills. These incentives include professional reputation, professional advancement, and ethical and legal obligations to provide competent medical care (International Code of Medical Ethics, 17.A). Physicians are already paid for these activities, and public funding is sometimes available for medical research. The argument that patents are necessary to spur invention of medical procedures, and that without procedure there would be fewer beneficial medical procedures for patients, is not particularly persuasive when these other incentives and financing mechanisms are available.

Another argument is that patents are necessary, not so much for invention but for product development. This argument also is not persuasive in the case of medical procedure patents. Unlike device development, which requires investment in engineers, production processes, and factories, development of medical procedures consists of physicians attaining and perfecting manual and intellectual skills. As discussed above, physicians already have both obligations to engage in these professional activities as well as rewards for doing so.

Whether or not it is ethical to patent medical devices does not bear directly on whether it is ethical for physicians to patent medical procedures. Devices are manufactured and disseminated by companies, whereas medical procedures are "produced and disseminated" by physicians. Physicians have ethical or legal obligations to patients and professional oblige-

tions towards each other, which companies do not have. Having particular ethical obligations is part of what defines medicine as a profession.

There is no a priori reason to believe that those holding medical procedure patents would make patented medical procedures widely available. Patentees might attempt to maximize their profits by making the procedure widely available through nonexclusive licensing with low fees. Alternatively, they might attempt to maximize profits by limiting availability of the procedure and charging higher prices to those for whom the procedure is extremely important and who have the means to pay.

Competition between organizations providing health care could provide incentives for some organizations to negotiate exclusive licenses, or licenses which sharply limit who else could practice the procedure. Such a license might provide the organization with an advantage in attracting patients, if the organization could advertise that it was the only organization in a region which could provide a particularly desirable service. Thus, at least some of the time patentees will probably limit access to patented medical procedures.

Medical procedure patents may negatively affect patient care. If medical procedure patents are obtained, then patients' access to necessary medical treatments might diminish and thereby undermine the quality of medical care. Access could diminish for the following reasons:

- the cost of medical practice would likely increase because of licensing and royalty fees, and because the cost of physicians' insurance would likely increase to cover patent litigation expenses.
- some physicians capable of performing the patented procedure might not obtain licenses to perform it. The number of licensed physicians might be restricted because certain physicians cannot or will not pay the licensing fees or royalties, or because the patentee refuses to make the license widely available. Limiting the number of licenses would, in some circumstances, limit patients' choice of physicians.
- The presence of patents may prevent physicians from undertaking even those procedures which do not infringe. It may also deter a physician from introducing new or modified procedures into his or her practice. Devices can be labelled if they are patented, but procedures cannot, and therefore it is not immediately obvious whether what one is doing infringes somebody else's medical procedure patent. However, lack of knowledge is no defence against patent infringement, so if a physician is uncertain he or she may simply refrain from performing the procedure.

Enforcement of medical procedure patents can also result in invasion of patients' privacy or in the undermining of physicians' ethical obligation to maintain the confidentiality of patients' medical information. Where physicians practice in small groups or as sole practitioners, the most expedient methods for a patentee to identify instances of infringement might be to look through patients' medical records or to interview patients. Removing obvious identifiers for the record review would not guarantee confidentiality, because identity can often be "reconstructed" with very few pieces of information. This would be particularly true in small towns or small practices.

Physicians have ethical obligations both to teach skills and techniques to their colleagues, and to continuously learn and update their own skills. Medical procedure patents can undermine these obligations. Once a patent has issued on a procedure, the procedure would be fully disclosed (this is one requirement for obtaining a patent); however, those without licenses would not be able to practice it. Limiting who can practice the procedure undermines the spirit of the ethical mandate to teach and disseminate knowledge. It also undermines the obligation to update one's skills, because it does not do much good to acquire skills which cannot be used legally.

The obligation to teach and impart skills may also be impaired if the possibility of patents causes physicians to delay publishing new results or presenting them at conferences. Physicians may be inclined to keep new techniques secret while waiting to complete a patent application. This is because public use of a procedure, or publication of a description of the procedure, prior to applying for a patent may invalidate the application.

Physicians also have an ethical obligation not to permit profit motives to influence their free and independent medical judgment (International Code of Medical Ethics, 17.A). For physicians to pursue, obtain, or enforce medical procedure patents could violate this requirement. Physicians holding patents or licenses for procedures might advocate for the use of those procedures even when they are not indicated, or not the best procedure under the circumstances. Physicians who are not licensed to perform a particular procedure might advocate against that procedure, even when it is the best procedure under the circumstances.

Finally, physicians' professional obligations to practice their profession with conscience and dignity (Declaration of Geneva) might be violated by the enforcement of medical procedure patents. The spectacle of physicians suing each other on a regular basis is unlikely to enhance the standing of the profession.

## **POSITION**

### The World Medical Association

- states that physicians have an ethical responsibility to make relevant scientific information available to colleagues and the public, when possible.
- states that the patenting of medical procedures poses serious risks to the effective practice of medicine by potentially limiting the availability of new procedures to patients.
- considers that the patenting of medical procedures is unethical and contrary to the values of the medical profession that should guide physicians' service to their patients and relations with their colleagues.
- encourages national medical associations to make every effort to protect physicians' incentives to advance medical knowledge and develop new medical procedures.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICIANS AND PHARMACISTS IN MEDICINAL THERAPY**

Adopted by the 51<sup>st</sup> World Medical Assembly, Tel Aviv, Israel, October 1999  
and amended by the 61<sup>st</sup> WMA General Assembly, Vancouver, Canada, October 2010

### **INTRODUCTION**

The goal of pharmacological treatment is to improve patients' health and quality of life. Optimal pharmacological treatment should be safe, effective and efficient. There should be equity of access to this kind of treatment and an accurate and up-to-date information base that meets the needs of patients and practitioners.

Pharmacological treatment has become increasingly complex, often requiring the input of a multi-disciplinary team to administer and monitor the chosen therapy. In the hospital setting the inclusion of a clinical pharmacist in such a team is increasingly common and helpful. The right to prescribe medicine should be competency based and ideally the responsibility of the physician.

Physicians and pharmacists have complementary and supportive responsibilities in achieving the goal of providing optimal pharmacological treatment. This requires communication, respect, trust and mutual recognition of each other's professional competence. Access by both physicians and pharmacists to the same accurate and up-to-date information base is important to avoid providing patients with conflicting information.

Physicians and pharmacists must provide quality service to their patients and ensure safe use of drugs. Therefore collaboration between these professions is imperative, including with respect to the development of training and in terms of information sharing with one another and with patients. It is necessary to keep an open and continued dialogue between physicians' and pharmacists' representative organizations in order to define each profession's respective functions and promote the optimal use of drugs within a framework of transparency and cooperation, all in the best interests of patients.

### **THE PHYSICIAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

Diagnosing diseases on the basis of the physician's education and specialized skills and competence.

Assessing the need for pharmacological treatment and prescribing the corresponding medicines in consultation with patients, pharmacists and other health care professionals, when appropriate.

Providing information to patients about diagnosis, indications and treatment goals, as well as action, benefits, risks and potential side effects of pharmacological treatment. In the case of off-label prescriptions the patient must be informed about the character of the prescription.

Monitoring and assessing response to pharmacological treatment, progress toward therapeutic goals, and, as necessary, revising the therapeutic plan in collaboration with pharmacists, other health professionals and, when appropriate, caregivers.

Providing and sharing information in relation to pharmacological treatment with other health care practitioners.

Leading the multi-disciplinary team of health professionals responsible for managing complex pharmacological treatment.

Maintaining adequate records for each patient, according to the need for therapy and in compliance with legislation respecting confidentiality and protecting the patient's data.

Where practically possible, actively participating in establishing electronic drug delivery systems within their workplace and supporting those systems with their professional knowledge.

Maintaining a high level of knowledge of pharmacological treatment through continuing professional development.

Ensuring safe procurement and storage of medicines that the physician is required to supply or permitted to dispense.

Reviewing prescription orders to identify interactions, allergic reactions, contra-indications and therapeutic duplications.

Reporting adverse reactions to medicines to health authorities, in accordance with national legislation.

Monitoring and limiting, where appropriate, prescriptions of medications that may have addictive properties.

Documenting adverse reactions to medicines in the patient's medical record.

### **THE PHARMACIST'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

Ensuring safe procurement, adequate storage and dispensing of medicines in compliance with the relevant regulations.

Providing information to patients, which may include the information leaflet, name of the medicine, its purpose, potential interactions and side effects, as well as correct usage and storage.

Reviewing prescription orders to identify interactions, allergic reactions, contra-indications and therapeutic duplications. Concerns should be discussed with the prescribing physician but the pharmacist should not change the prescription without consulting the prescriber.

Discussing medicine-related problems or concerns with regard to the prescribed medicines when appropriate and when requested by the patient.

Advising patients, when appropriate, on the selection and the use of non-prescription medicines and the patient's management of minor symptoms or ailments. Where self-medication is not appropriate, advising patients to consult their physician for diagnosis and treatment.

Participating in multi-disciplinary teams concerning complex pharmacological treatment in collaboration with physicians and other health care providers, typically in a hospital setting.

Reporting adverse reactions to medicines to the prescribing physician and to health authorities in accordance with national legislation.

Providing and sharing general as well as specific medicine-related information and advice with the public and health care practitioners.

Maintaining a high level of knowledge of pharmacological treatment through continuing professional development.

### **CONCLUSION**

The patient will best be served when pharmacists and physicians collaborate, recognizing and respecting each other's roles, to ensure that medicines are used safely and appropriately to achieve the best outcome for the patient's health.



## **WMA STATEMENT ON HUMAN ORGAN DONATION AND TRANSPLANTATION**

Adopted by the 52<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Edinburgh, Scotland, October 2000  
and revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

1. Advances in medical sciences, especially surgical techniques, tissue typing and immuno-suppressive drugs, have made possible a significant increase in the rates of successful transplantation of organs. In the light of these developments, there is a need for renewed reflection on ethical issues concerning organ donation and transplantation and on principles relevant to the resolution of these issues. Therefore, the World Medical Association has undertaken a review of issues and principles concerning transplantation and has developed this policy to provide guidance to medical associations, physicians and other health care providers as well as to those who develop policy and protocols bearing on these issues.
2. This policy is based on principles of general and medical ethics. In matters of ethics, conflicts of values and principles are unavoidable; for example, there is a tension between a desire to procure organs for the purpose of providing important medical treatments on the one hand and the preservation of choice and personal liberty on the other. Applicable principles are referenced throughout this policy where they may help to clarify and make explicit the reasoning behind a given statement.

### **B. PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATIONS OF PHYSICIANS**

1. The primary obligation of physicians is to their individual patients, whether they are potential donors or recipients of transplanted organs. In conjunction with this obligation physicians may also have responsibilities to the family members and close friends of their patients, for example, to seek and consider their views on organ retrieval from their deceased relative or friend. The obligation to the patient has primacy over any obligations that may exist in relationship to family members. Nevertheless, this obligation is not absolute; for example, the physician's responsibility for the well-being of a patient who needs a transplant does not justify unethical or illegal procurement of organs.
2. Physicians have responsibilities to society, which include promoting the fair use of resources, preventing harm and promoting health benefit for all; this may include promoting donation of organs.
3. Transplant surgeons should attempt to ensure that the organs they transplant have been obtained in accordance with the provisions of this policy and shall refrain from transplanting organs that they know or suspect have not been procured in a legal and ethical manner.

**C. ORGAN PROCUREMENT: SOCIAL ASPECTS**

1. The WMA encourages its members to support the development of comprehensive, coordinated national strategies concerning organ procurement in consultation and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders. In developing strategy, due consideration should be given to human rights, ethical principles and medical ethics. Ethical, cultural and societal issues arising in connection with such a strategy, and with the subject of donation and transplantation in general, should be resolved, wherever possible, in an open process involving public dialogue and debate informed by sound evidence.
2. Some types of organ transplantation have become established and important health care services. To the extent that the lack of organs is a barrier to the provision of needed treatment, the medical profession has an obligation to promote policies and protocols to procure organs for needed treatment consistent with societal values.
3. It is important that individuals become aware of the option of donation and have the opportunity to choose whether or not to donate (e.g. facilitated choice). Awareness and choice should be facilitated in a coordinated multi-faceted approach by a variety of stakeholders and means, including media awareness and public campaigns. Physicians should provide their patients with the opportunity to make a choice with respect to organ donation, ideally in the context of an ongoing relationship with the patient and in advance of any crisis giving urgency to the choice.
4. The WMA supports informed donor choice. National Medical Associations in countries that have adopted or are considering a policy of "presumed consent", whereby there is a presumption that consent has been given unless there is evidence to the contrary, or "mandated choice", whereby all persons would be required to declare whether they wish to donate, should make every effort to ensure that these policies do not diminish informed donor choice, including the patient's right to refuse to donate.
5. Consideration should be given to the establishment of national donor registries to collect and maintain a list of country citizens who have chosen either to donate or not to donate their organs. Any such registry must protect individual privacy and the individual's ability to control the collection, use, disclosure of and access to his or her health information for purposes other than registration. Provisions must be in place to ensure that the decision is adequately informed and that registrants can withdraw from the registry without penalty.

**D. ORGAN PROCUREMENT AT THE INSTITUTIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL LEVELS**

1. Organ donation can be enhanced by local policies and protocols. The WMA recommends that organ procurement programmes, hospitals and other institutions in which procurement occurs should:
  - a. Develop policies and protocols encouraging the procurement of organs consistent with the statements in this policy. Such policies should be consistent with physicians' professional obligations and societal values, including free and informed decision making, privacy, and equitable access to needed medical care.

- b. Make these policies and protocols known to transplant coordinators, physicians and other health care providers in the institution.
- c. Ensure that adequate resources are available to support proper implementation of the policies and protocols.

#### **E. DONATION AFTER DEATH**

1. Physicians have an obligation to ensure that interactions at the bedside, including those discussions related to organ donation, are sensitive and consistent with ethical principles and with their fiduciary obligations to their patients. This is particularly so given that conditions at the bedside of dying patients are not ideal for the process of free and informed decision making. Protocols should specify that whoever approaches the patient, family members or other designated decision maker about the donation of organs should possess the appropriate combination of knowledge, skill and sensitivity for engaging in such discussions. Medical students and practising physicians should seek the necessary training for this task, and the appropriate authorities should provide the resources necessary to secure that training. It is mandatory that the person who approaches the patient or family about the donation decision not be a member of the transplant team.

#### **F. FREE AND INFORMED DECISION MAKING ABOUT ORGAN DONATION**

1. The WMA considers that the potential donor's wishes are paramount. In the event that the potential donor's wishes about donation are unknown and the potential donor has died without expressing a clear wish about donation, the family or a specified other person may serve as a substitute decision-maker and may be entitled to give or refuse permission for donation unless there are previously expressed wishes to the contrary.
2. Evidence of the free and informed decision of the potential donor, or, where legally relevant, of the appropriate substitute decision-maker, must be ascertained before organ procurement can begin. In countries where presumed consent is the legal norm, the organ procurement process should include reasonable steps to discover whether the potential donor has opted out of donation.
3. Success in procuring organs for transplant should not be construed as a criterion for measuring the quality of the process of free and informed decision-making. The quality of this process depends on whether the choice was adequately informed and free of coercion and not on whether the outcome is a decision to donate.
4. Free and informed decision making is a process requiring the exchange and understanding of information and the absence of coercion. Because prisoners and other individuals in custody are not in a position to give consent freely and can be subject to coercion, their organs must not be used for transplantation except for members of their immediate family.

5. In order for the choice to donate organs to be duly informed, prospective donors or their substitute decision makers should, if they desire, be provided with meaningful and relevant information. Normally, this will include information about:
  - a. in the case of living donors, the benefits and risks of transplantation,
  - b. in the case of deceased donors, procedures and definitions involved in the determination of death,
  - c. testing of organs to determine their suitability for transplantation, which may reveal unsuspected health risks in the prospective donors and their families,
  - d. in the case of deceased donors measures that may be required to preserve organ function until death is determined and transplantation can occur,
  - e. in the case of deceased donors what will happen to the body once death has been declared,
  - f. what organs they are agreeing to donate,
  - g. the protocol that will be followed concerning the family in the event that the family objects to donation, and
  - h. in the case of living donors, the implications of living without the donated organ.
6. Prospective donors should be informed that families sometimes object to donation; donors should be encouraged to discuss their choice with their family to prevent conflict.
7. Prospective donors or their substitute decision makers should be given the opportunity to ask questions about donation and should have their questions answered sensitively and intelligibly.
8. Where the wishes of the patient are known and there is no reason to believe that the choice to donate has been coerced, has not been adequately informed, or has changed, these wishes should be carried out. This should be clarified in law, policy and protocols. Under these circumstances, families should be encouraged to respect the patient's clearly expressed wishes.
9. Where the wishes of the patient are unknown or there is uncertainty about the patient's wishes, national law should prevail.
10. Protocols for free and informed decision making should also be followed in the case of recipients of organs. Normally, this should include information about:
  - a. the risks of the procedure,
  - b. the likely short, medium and long-term survival, morbidity, and quality-of-life prospects,
  - c. alternatives to transplantation, and
  - d. how organs are obtained.
11. In the case of living donors, special efforts should be made to ensure that the choice about donation is free of coercion. Financial incentives for providing or obtaining organs for transplantation can be coercive and should be prohibited. Individuals who are incapable of making informed decisions, for example minors or mentally incompetent persons, should not be considered as potential living donors except in extraordinary circumstances and in accordance with ethics committee review or established protocols. In order to avoid a conflict of interest, the physician who obtains informed consent from the living donor should not be part of the transplant team for the recipient.

## **G. DETERMINATION OF DEATH**

1. The WMA considers that the determination of death is a clinical matter that should be made according to widely accepted guidelines established by expert medical groups, and as outlined in The World Medical Association's Declaration of Sydney on the Determination of Death and the Recovery of Organs.
2. Protocols and procedures should be developed to educate patients and families about procedures for diagnosing death and the opportunities for donation after death.
3. In order to avoid a conflict of interest, the physician who determines and/or certifies the death of a potential organ donor should not be involved in the organ removal or in subsequent transplantation procedures or responsible for the care of potential recipients of these organs.

## **H. JUSTICE IN ACCESS TO ORGANS**

1. The WMA considers there should be explicit policies open to public scrutiny governing all aspects of organ donation and transplantation, including the management of waiting lists for organs to ensure fair and appropriate access.
2. Policies governing the management of waiting lists should ensure efficiency and fairness. Criteria that should be considered in allocating organs include severity of medical need, length of time on the waiting list, and medical probability of success measured by such factors as type of disease, other complications, and histocompatibility. There should be no discrimination based on social status, lifestyle or behaviour.
3. Special appeals for organs for a specific recipient require further study and ethical examination to evaluate the potential impact on the fairness of allocation.
4. Payment for organs for donation and transplantation must be prohibited. A financial incentive compromises the voluntariness of the choice and the altruistic basis for organ donation. Furthermore, access to needed medical treatment based on ability to pay is inconsistent with the principles of justice. Organs suspected to have been obtained through commercial transaction must not be accepted for transplantation. In addition, the advertisement of organs in exchange for money should be prohibited. However, reasonable reimbursement of expenses such as those incurred in procurement, transport, processing, preservation, and implantation is permissible.
5. Physicians who are asked to transplant an organ that has been obtained through a commercial transaction should refuse to do so and should explain to the patient why such a medical act would be unethical: because the person who provided the organ risked his or her future health for financial rather than altruistic motives, and because such transactions are contrary to the principle of justice in the allocation of organs for transplantation.

### I. EXPERIMENTAL AND NEWLY DEVELOPING TRANSPLANTATION PROCEDURES

1. The WMA considers that, although many transplantation procedures have become standard medical care for a range of medical conditions, others are experimental and/or morally controversial and require further research, safeguards, guidelines, and public debate.
2. Experimental procedures require protocols, including ethics review, that are different and more rigorous than those for standard medical procedures.
3. Xenotransplantation raises special issues, particularly in light of the risk of unwitting cross-species transmission of viruses and other pathogens. There is an urgent need for extensive public debate about xenotransplantation to ensure that developments in this field are consistent with societal values. International guidelines to govern these practices should be developed.
4. Transplantation of organs developed using cell nuclear replacement technologies requires scientific review, public debate and appropriate guidelines before becoming accepted.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON SAFE INJECTIONS IN HEALTH CARE**

Adopted by the 53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington, DC, USA, October 2002  
and amended with minor revision by the 192<sup>nd</sup> WMA Council Session,  
Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

### **PREAMBLE**

According to the World Health Organization, billions of injections are administered worldwide each year in health care. Of these injections, many millions are unsafe, especially those that are administered with a re-used syringe and/or needle.

The most common diseases acquired from unsafe injections are hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV.

In many countries disposable equipment is always used in health care settings, and the major problem is the safe use and disposal of sharps.

Physicians are involved in the prescription and/or administration of injections. Therefore, they are in a prime position to bring about changes in behaviour, which could lead to the appropriate and safe use of injections.

Safe and appropriate use of injections is a necessary component of HIV prevention. Safe practices to prevent HIV infection also yield substantial spin-off benefits outside the HIV prevention area, such as hepatitis B and C infections.

### **BASIC CONSIDERATIONS**

Unsafe injections result from the overuse of therapeutic injections and unsafe injection practices. These practices include the use of unsterilized or inadequately sterilized needles, the re-use of syringes and the inappropriate and unsafe disposal of syringes and needles.

Safe injection practices prevent harm to the recipient, the provider and the community. Unsafe injections cause widespread harm by spreading pathogens on a large scale.

Physician attitudes and inappropriate practice standards may be important determinants in the overuse of "therapeutic" injections in certain countries. These are a result of the assumption that some patients only feel satisfied with a treatment if it includes an injection. Scientific evidence has shown that this assumption is incorrect. Patients prefer good

communication with physicians to receiving injections. Furthermore, the payment schemes in some health care systems may be structured in a way that they provide perverse incentives for unnecessary use of injections.

Most non-injectable medications are equivalent in action and efficacy to those which are injectable.

Unsafe injections are a waste of precious healthcare resources and can easily be prevented through integrated interventions. For an effective national, regional or local strategy to promote safe injections, the following primary elements are necessary:

- The use of injections should be limited to suitably trained health care professionals and trained lay persons;
- Behaviour change among patients and health care professionals to decrease injection overuse and achieve injection safety;
- The availability of necessary equipment and supplies, preferably disposable;
- The use of auto-disable syringes where appropriate;
- The appropriate management of sharps waste.

Increased availability of appropriate injection equipment and supplies, preferably disposable, increases the safety of injections without necessarily increasing the number of unnecessary injections.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That National Medical Associations cooperate with their national governments or other appropriate authorities to develop effective policies on the safe and appropriate use of injections. These policies would demand appropriate financing and include the assessment of current injection practices and the development of an integrated plan. Such a plan should support the provision of adequate supplies of injection equipment, measures to enforce proper standards of sterilisation where needed, the management of sharps waste and training programs to deter the overuse of injections and promote safe injection practices.

That physicians worldwide are urged to:

- Prescribe non-injectable medication rather than injectable medication whenever possible and promote the use of non-injectable medication with patients and their colleagues;
- Use injectable medications only if safe and appropriate and administer injections in a way that does not harm the recipient, the provider and the community;



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- Ensure that only waste disposal containers for sharp objects be used to safely dispose of used surgical material (e.g. needles, blades, etc.), and that the covers of sharp instruments not be re-utilised.
  - Raise awareness regarding the risks involved with unsafe injections and help bring about behaviour changes in patients and health professionals to promote safe and appropriate injections. Training in this area should emphasise that needles should not be re-sheathed.

## WMA STATEMENT ON SELF-MEDICATION

Adopted by the 53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington, DC, USA, October 2002  
and reaffirmed by the 191<sup>st</sup> WMA Council Session, Prague, Czech Republic, April 2012

### PREAMBLE

The World Medical Association has developed this statement to provide guidance to physicians and their patients regarding responsible self-medication.

1. Distinction between Self-Medication and Prescription Medicine
  1. Medicinal products can generally be divided into two separate categories: prescription and non-prescription medicines. This classification may differ from country to country. The national authorities must assure that medicines, categorized as non-prescription medicines, are sufficiently safe not to be harmful to health.
  2. Prescription medicines are those which are only available to individuals on prescription from a physician following a consultation. Prescription medicines are not safe for use except under the supervision of a physician because of toxicity, other potential or harmful effects (e.g. addictiveness), the method of use, or the collateral measures necessary for use.
  3. Responsible self-medication, as used in this document, is the use of a registered or monographed medicine legally available without a physician's prescription, either on an individual's own initiative or following advice of a healthcare professional. The use of prescription medicines without a prior medical prescription is not part of responsible self-medication.
  4. The safety, efficacy and quality of non-prescription medicines must be proved according to the same principles as prescription medicines.
2. Use of Self-Medication in conjunction with Prescription Medication A course of treatment may combine self-medication and prescription medication, either concurrently or sequentially. The patient must be informed about possible interactions between prescription medicines and non-prescription medicines. For this reason the patient should be encouraged to inform the physician about his / her self-medication.
3. Roles & Responsibilities in Self-Medication
  1. In self-medication the individual bears primary responsibility for the use of self-medication products. Special caution must be exercised when vulnerable groups such as children, elderly people or pregnant women use self-medication.

2. If individuals choose to use self-medication, they should be able:
    1. to recognize the symptoms they are treating;
    2. to determine that their condition is suitable for self-medication;
    3. to choose an appropriate self-medication product;
    4. to follow the directions for use of the product as provided in the product labelling.
  3. In order to limit the potential risks involved in self-medication it is important that all health professionals who look after patients should provide:
    1. Education regarding the non-prescription medicine and its appropriate use, and instructions to seek further advice from a physician if they are unsure. This is particularly important where self-medication is inappropriate for certain conditions the patient may suffer from;
    2. Encouragement to read carefully a product's label and leaflet (if provided), to seek further advice if necessary, and to recognize circumstances in which self-medication is not, or is no longer, appropriate.
  4. All parties involved in self-medication should be aware of the benefits and risks of any self-medication product. The benefit-risk balance should be communicated in a fair, rational manner without overemphasizing either the risks or the benefits.
  5. Manufacturers in particular are obliged to follow the various codes or regulations already in place to ensure that information provided to consumers is appropriate in style and content. This refers in particular to the labelling, advertising and all notices concerning non-prescription medicines.
  6. The pharmacist has a professional responsibility to recommend, in appropriate circumstances, that medical advice be sought.
4. Role of Governments in Self-Medication Governments should recognize and enforce the distinction between prescription and non-prescription medicines, and ensure that the users of self-medication are well informed and protected from possible harm or negative long-term effects.
  5. The Promotion and Marketing of Self-Medication Products
    1. Advertising and marketing of non-prescription medicines should be responsible, provide clear and accurate information and exhibit a fair balance between benefit and risk information. Promotion and marketing should not encourage irresponsible self-medication, purchase of medicines that are inappropriate, or purchases of larger quantities of medicines than are necessary.
    2. People must be encouraged to treat medicines (prescription and non-prescription) as special products and that standard precautions should be followed in terms of safe storage and usage, in accordance with professional advice.



## **WMA STATEMENT ON FORENSIC INVESTIGATIONS OF THE MISSING**

Adopted by the 54<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, September 2003  
and amended by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

### **PREAMBLE**

Over the last three decades, forensic investigations into the whereabouts and fate of people killed and missing as a result of armed conflict, other situations of violence and catastrophes, have made an important contribution to humanitarian action on behalf of victims, including [the deceased and] bereaved families. Forensic investigations have also helped in achieving justice and reparations for victims.

In 2003 the International Conference on The Missing and their Families, organized by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), adopted a set of recommendations to help prevent people going missing, and resolve the cases of those already missing, as a result of armed conflicts and other situations of violence. The recommendations include ethical, scientific and legal principles that must apply to forensic investigations in the search, recovery, management and identification of human remains. These principles have since been further developed by the ICRC's forensic services and they provide a framework for humanitarian forensic action in situations of armed conflicts, other situations of violence and catastrophes.<sup>1</sup> The principles also ensure the proper and dignified management and identification of the dead, and help provide answers to the bereaved.

National Medical Associations have a role in promoting these principles and encouraging compliance with them, and for ensuring the highest possible ethical, scientific and legal standards in forensic investigations aimed at addressing the humanitarian consequences of armed conflicts, other situations of violence and catastrophes.

In many countries NMAs will not have a role in certifying the qualifications and experience of forensic medical practitioners. NMAs should draw the attention of practitioners to the best practice guidelines produced by the ICRC, the United Nations and Interpol, and recommend or, where possible, require compliance with those standards.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The WMA calls upon all NMAs to help ensure that, when its members take part in forensic investigations for humanitarian and human rights purposes, such investigations are established with a clear mandate based upon the highest ethical, scientific and legal

standards, and conform with the principles and practice of humanitarian forensic action developed by the ICRC.

The WMA calls upon NMAs to develop expertise in the principles collated by the different authorities on forensic investigations for humanitarian and human rights purposes, including those developed by the ICRC to prevent new cases and resolve those of existing missing persons, and to assist their members in applying these principles to forensic investigations worldwide.

The WMA calls upon NMAs to disseminate the principles that should apply to such investigations, including those developed by the ICRC, and to attempt to ensure that physicians refuse to take part in investigations that are ethically or otherwise unacceptable.

The WMA calls upon NMAs to help ensure compliance by forensic medical practitioners with the principles enshrined in international humanitarian law for the dignified and proper management, documentation and identification of the dead, and, where possible, providing answers to the bereaved.

The WMA invites NMAs to be mindful of academic qualifications and ethical understanding, ensuring that forensic doctors practice with competence and independence.

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<sup>1</sup> The ICRC defines catastrophes as disasters beyond expectations. See: M. Tidball-Binz, *Managing the dead in catastrophes: guiding principles and practical recommendations for first responders*. International review of the Red Cross, Vol 89 Number 866 June 2007; 421- 442

## **WMA STATEMENT ON ADVANCE DIRECTIVES ("LIVING WILLS")**

Adopted by the 54<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, September 2003  
and reaffirmed by the 194<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Bali, Indonesia, April 2013

### **A. PREAMBLE**

1. An advance directive is a written and signed document or a witnessed verbal statement whereby persons record their wishes regarding the medical care they wish to receive, or not receive, if they become unconscious or otherwise unable to express their will.
2. This type of document may have different names in different countries (e.g., "living will" or "biological wills"). The acceptability and legal status of such directives may differ from one country to another, depending on social, cultural and religious and other factors.
3. The majority of persons who draw up such directives are particularly concerned about excessive, ineffective or prolonged therapeutic interventions in the terminal phases of life, in situations where there is clear and irreversible physical or mental degeneration.
4. The *WMA Declaration of Lisbon on the Rights of the Patient* states that "If the patient is unconscious and if a legally entitled representative is not available but a medical intervention is urgently needed, consent of the patient may be presumed unless it is obvious and beyond any doubt on the basis of the patient's previous firm expression or conviction that he/she would refuse consent to the intervention in that situation."

### **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. A patient's duly executed advance directive should be honoured unless there are reasonable grounds to suppose that it is not valid because it no longer represents the wishes of the patient or that the patient's understanding was incomplete at the time the directive was prepared. If the advance directive is contrary to the physician's convictions, provisions should be made to transfer the care of the patient to another consenting physician.
2. If the physician is uncertain about the validity of an advance directive to terminate life-prolonging treatment, he/she should consult family members or legal guardians of the patient concerned and should seek advice from at least one other physician

or the relevant ethics committee. The family members or legal guardians should be designated in the advance directive, be trustworthy and willing to testify as to the intention(s) expressed in the advance directive by the signatory. The physician should consider any relevant legislation concerning substitute decision making for incompetent patients.

3. Patients should be advised to review their advance directives periodically.
4. In the absence of an advance directive or a legally designated substitute decision maker, physicians should render such treatment as they believe to be in the patient's best interests.



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## **WMA STATEMENT ON ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OF HEALTH WORKERS**

Adopted by the 54<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, September 2003  
and revised by the 65<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014

### **PREAMBLE**

The WMA acknowledges that temporary stays of physicians in other countries help both the receiving and the sending countries to exchange medical knowledge, skills and attitudes. The exchange of medical professionals is therefore beneficial for the development of medicine and healthcare systems and in general deserves the support of national medical associations as well as governments.

The WMA Statement on Medical Manpower - 1 (1983, 1986) called upon all National Medical Associations to work with their governments towards solutions to the emerging problems related to the medical workforce.

The WMA Resolution on the Medical Workforce (1998) identified the major components of the medical workforce situation that need to be taken into account when developing a national workforce policy.

For several decades many governments, employers and medical associations have misinterpreted demographical data regarding the number of physicians that are required. Young people seeing employment as physicians have often been seriously affected by poor medical workforce planning.

In many countries, including the wealthiest ones, there is a shortage of physicians. A major reason for the shortage is a failure to educate enough physicians to meet the needs of the country. Other reasons for the net loss of physicians are the recruitment of physicians to other professions, early retirement and emigration, and the problems of combining professional and family responsibilities, all of which are often due to poor working conditions for physicians.

Some countries have traditionally solved their need for physicians by recruiting medical graduates from other countries. This practice continues today.

The flow of international migration of physicians is generally from poorer to wealthier countries. The poorer countries bear the expense of educating the migrating physicians and receive no recompense when they enter other countries. The receiving countries gain a

valuable resource without paying for it, and in the process they save the cost of educating their own physicians.

Physicians do have valid reasons for migrating, for example, to seek better career opportunities and to escape poor working and living conditions, which may include the pursuit of more political and personal freedoms and other benefits.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. National medical associations, governments and employers should exercise utmost care in utilizing demographic data to make projections about future requirements for physicians and in communicating these projections to young people contemplating a medical career.
2. Every country should do its utmost to educate an adequate number of physicians, taking into account its needs and resources. A country should not rely on immigration from other countries to meet its need for physicians.
3. Every country should do its utmost to retain its physicians in the profession as well as in the country by providing them with the support they need to meet their personal and professional goals, taking into account the country's needs and resources.
4. Countries that wish to recruit physicians from another country should only do so in terms of and in accordance with the provisions of a Memorandum of Understanding entered into between the countries.
5. Physicians should not be prevented from leaving their home or adopted country to pursue career opportunities in another country.
6. Countries that recruit physicians from other countries should ensure that recruiters provide full and accurate information to potential recruits on the nature and requirements of the position to be filled, on immigration, administrative and contractual requirements, and on the legal and regulatory conditions for the practice of medicine in the recruiting country, including language skills.
7. Physicians who are working, either permanently or temporarily, in a country other than their home country should be treated fairly in relation to other physicians in that country (for example, equal opportunity career options and equal payment for the same work).
8. Nothing should prevent countries from entering into bilateral agreements and agreements of understanding, as provided for in international law and with due cognizance of international human rights law, so as to effect meaningful co-operation on health care delivery, including the exchange of physicians.
9. [The WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health](#)

[Personnel](#) (May 2010) was established to promote voluntary principles and practices for the ethical international recruitment of health professionals and to facilitate the strengthening of health systems. The Code takes into account the rights, obligations and expectations of source countries and migrant health professionals. The WMA was involved in the drafting of the Code and supports its implementation.

10. The WHO Code states that international recruitment should be “conducted in accordance with the principles of transparency, fairness and promotion of sustainability of health systems in developing countries.”
11. The monitoring and information-sharing system established by the WHO should be robustly supported with the goal of international cooperation. Stakeholders should regularly collate and share data, which should be monitored and analysed by the WHO. The WHO should provide substantive critical feedback to governments. Information should be shared about how to overcome challenges encountered.



## WMA STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE AND HEALTH

Adopted by the 54<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, September 2003  
and reaffirmed by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

### INTRODUCTION

In the year 2000 there were over 1.6 million people who lost their lives to violence - meaning that every day more than 4,000 people around the world die a violent death. Roughly half of these deaths are due to suicide, almost a third due to homicide, and the remainder arise from conflict-related violence. These fatalities are only the tip of the iceberg - available data tends to come from higher income countries with established reporting systems and it is known that many forms of violence are more prevalent in lower income settings that may not provide data to the World Health Organization. In addition to potential data collection problems, a variety of different forms of violence, child abuse and neglect, intimate partner violence and elder abuse, to name a few, are systematically under-reported, owing to fear, shame, or cultural norms.

For every young person killed by homicide, at least 20-40 other youth receive hospital treatment for violence-related injuries. One in five females and 5-10% of males report being sexually abused during childhood. International population-based studies indicate that between 10 and 69 percent of women report having been physically assaulted by an intimate partner. In addition to the direct effects of injury arising from violence there are a wide range of health effects, including mental and reproductive health problems, sexually transmitted diseases, and other health problems. Health effects arising from violence can last for years, and may include permanent mental or physical disability. From a societal perspective, the economic costs associated with violence are substantial, with direct costs for health services alone amounting to 5.0% of GDP in some countries.

No single factor drives violence, either at the level of the community or the individual. Violence arises out of a complex interplay of individual, relationship, community, societal and political factors.

In 1996 the World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA49.25, which declared violence a global public health priority. One year later, resolution WHA50.19 was adopted, which endorsed the World Health Organization's integrated plan of action for a science-based public health approach to the prevention of violence and called for further work in this field.

## INVOLVEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL COMMUNITY

Irrespective of the diversity of factors that give rise to violence, there is one feature common to all forms of violence: the health effects suffered are a direct concern for the medical community.

Doctors can be victims of violence in the workplace or in other settings. In some cases doctors can be involved in committing acts of violence or neglect. Doctors of every description also deal with the victims of violence on a daily basis. They make decisions regarding referral and coordinated care across specialties and health sectors, they plan for long-term follow-up and care of disabilities, and in some settings they have contributed as a profession to the prevention of violence. Whether as a pediatrician assessing if a child is a victim of abuse, an emergency physician or surgeon tending to a shooting victim, a psychiatrist dealing with the psychosocial impacts of intimate partner violence or any number of other possible encounters, the reality is that more than any other profession the medical community is absolutely central in terms of responding to the health effects of violence.

The manner in which the medical community can respond is varied and will depend as much as anything else upon contextual features and realities. In some settings more structured forms of data collection are of paramount concern and doctors may be the only group within such settings with the ability to lobby for health systems to adequately integrate systematic data collection related to violent injury. In other settings that are more advanced, clinicians and public health practitioners can play a major role in facilitating or conducting focused studies that examine an aspect of violence or violence prevention. The provision of such data to policy-makers in a timely and appropriate fashion can contribute to further development of evidence-based policies to reduce violence.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

National Medical Associations are encouraged to contribute to more systematic approaches to dealing with violence, including:

**Advocacy** - violence is a global health problem and its victims are frequently among the poorest, most powerless or otherwise most vulnerable within society. The medical profession should advocate at local, national and international levels for effective strategies to prevent violence and limit its impact on health. Moreover, the medical profession should denounce all depictions or uses of violent behaviour as solutions for personal, societal or political problems.

**Data collection** - the medical profession should play a central role in ensuring that routine data collection occurs and is of a sufficient standard and comprehensive enough to be a valuable tool to guide public health policy. Research has shown that a large proportion of victims of violence are not reported in police statistics because they are not the victims of a crime (e.g. forms of family violence, bullying, etc.) or have avoided being reported to the police.

**Medical training** - in recognition of the substantial burden of global morbidity and mortality that is related to violence and the fact that violence and injury as a threat to health is largely absent from medical training, the medical profession should take steps to ensure the integration of injury and violence prevention into medical school curricula.

**Prevention** - the medical profession should use the unique opportunity during clinical encounters, where appropriate, to counsel patients and families with respect to creating safer, less violent household environments. They can also use their clinical judgment to detect victims of violence or those at potential risk for violence and make arrangements for appropriate care.

**Coordination of victim assistance** - whether through detecting victims that may suffer from violence but do not know how to bring themselves to medical attention, or through appropriate referral to deal with the related health conditions or the physical, psychosocial or long-term disability associated with injury, doctors can play a vital role in enhancing the quality and comprehensiveness of victim assistance.

**Research** - violence is an under-documented global public health problem. Better understanding of causes and consequences of violence is necessary, along with an enhanced understanding of the effectiveness of various strategies to prevent violence.

**Social example** - the medical profession should contribute to the creation and reinforcement of social norms by not participating in or tolerating various forms of violence, such as torture or mistreatment or neglect of certain populations such as prisoners, and actively opposing such violence.

**Policy-making** - many countries still lack comprehensive national or local violence prevention policies and plans of action. The medical profession should encourage the development of such policies and in some cases take a leading role in developing them.





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## **WMA STATEMENT CONCERNING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICIANS AND COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES**

Adopted by the 55<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Tokyo, Japan, October 2004  
and amended by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### **PREAMBLE**

In the treatment of their patients, physicians use drugs, instruments, diagnostic tools, equipment and materials developed and produced by commercial enterprises. Industry possesses resources to finance expensive research and development programmes, for which the knowledge and experience of physicians are essential. Moreover, industry support enables the furtherance of medical research, scientific conferences and continuing medical education that can be of benefit to patients and the entire health care system. The combination of financial resources and product knowledge contributed by industry and the medical knowledge possessed by physicians enables the development of new diagnostic procedures, drugs, therapies, and treatments and can lead to great advances in medicine.

However, conflicts of interest between commercial enterprises and physicians occur that can affect the care of patients and the reputation of the medical profession. The duty of the physician is to objectively evaluate what is best for the patient, while commercial enterprises are expected to bring profit to owners by selling their own products and competing for customers. Commercial considerations can affect the physician's objectivity, especially if the physician is in any way dependent on the enterprise.

Rather than forbidding any relationships between physicians and industry, it is preferable to establish guidelines for such relationships. These guidelines must incorporate the key principles of disclosure, avoidance of obvious conflicts of interest and the physician's clinical autonomy to act in the best interests of patients.

These guidelines should serve as the basis for the review of existing guidelines and the development of any future guidelines.

### **MEDICAL CONFERENCES**

Physicians may attend medical conferences sponsored in whole or in part by a commercial entity if these conform to the following principles:

1. The main purpose of the conference is the exchange of professional or scientific information.

2. Hospitality during the conference is secondary to the professional exchange of information and does not exceed what is locally customary and generally acceptable.
3. Physicians do not receive payment directly from a commercial entity to cover traveling expenses, room and board at the conference or compensation for their time unless provided for by law and/or the policy of their National Medical Association.
4. Physicians may not accept unjustified hospitality and may not receive payment from a commercial entity to cover room and board for accompanying persons.
5. The name of a commercial entity providing financial support is publicly disclosed in order to allow the medical community and the public to assess the information presented in light of the source of funding. In addition, conference organizers and lecturers disclose to conference participants any financial affiliations they may have with manufacturers of products mentioned at the event or with manufacturers of competing products.
6. Presentation of material by a physician is scientifically accurate, gives a balanced review of possible treatment options, and is not influenced by the sponsoring organization.
7. A conference can be recognised for purposes of continuing medical education / continuing professional development (CME/CPD) only if it conforms to the following principles:
  - 7.1. The commercial entities acting as sponsors, such as pharmaceutical companies, have no influence on the content, presentation, choice of lecturers, or publication of results.
  - 7.2. Funding for the conference is accepted only as a contribution to the general costs of the meeting.

### **GIFTS**

Physicians may not receive a gift from a commercial entity unless this is permitted by law and/or by the policy of their National Medical Association and it conforms to the following conditions:

1. Physicians may not receive payments in cash or cash equivalents from a commercial entity.
2. Physicians may not receive gifts for their personal benefit.
3. Gifts designed to influence clinical practice are always unacceptable. Promotional aids may be accepted provided that the gift is of minimal value and is not connected to any stipulation that the physician prescribes a certain medication, uses certain instruments or materials or refers patients to a certain facility.
4. Cultural courtesy gifts may be received on an infrequent basis according to local standards if the gift is inexpensive and not related to the practice of medicine.

## RESEARCH

A physician may carry out research funded by a commercial entity, whether individually or in an institutional setting, if it conforms to the following principles:

1. The physician is subject only to the law, the ethical principles and guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and clinical judgment in performing research and does not allow himself or herself to be subject to external pressure regarding the results of his or her research or their publication.
2. If possible, a physician or institution wishing to undertake research approaches more than one company to request funding for the research.
3. Identifiable information about research patients or voluntary participants is not passed to the sponsoring company without the consent of the individuals concerned.
4. A physician's compensation for research is based on his or her time and effort and such compensation is in no way connected to the results of the research.
5. The results of research are made public with the name of the sponsoring entity disclosed, along with a statement disclosing who requested the research. This applies whether the sponsorship is direct or indirect, full or partial.
6. Commercial entities do not suppress the publication of research results. If results of research are not made public, especially if they are negative, the research may be repeated unnecessarily and thereby expose future participants to potential harm.

## AFFILIATIONS WITH COMMERCIAL ENTITIES

A physician may not enter into an affiliation with a commercial entity such as consulting or membership on an advisory board unless the affiliation conforms to the following principles:

1. The affiliation does not compromise the physician's integrity.
2. The affiliation does not conflict with the physician's obligations to his or her patients.
3. Affiliations and/or other relationships with commercial entities are fully disclosed in all relevant situations such as lectures, articles and reports.



## **WMA STATEMENT ON WATER AND HEALTH**

Approved by the 55<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Tokyo, Japan, October 2004  
and revised by the 65<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014

### **PREAMBLE**

An adequate supply of fresh (i.e. clean and uncontaminated) water is essential for individual and public health. It is central to living a life in dignity and upholding human rights. Unfortunately, over half of the world's population does not have access to such a supply, and even in those places where there is an abundance of fresh water, it is threatened by pollution and other negative forces.

In keeping with its mission to serve humanity by endeavoring to achieve the highest international standards in health care for all people in the world, the World Medical Association has developed this statement to encourage all those responsible for health to consider the importance of water for individual and public health.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Water-borne diseases account for a large proportion of mortality and morbidity, especially in developing countries. These problems are accentuated in times of disasters such as wars, nuclear and man-made accidents with oil and/or chemicals, earthquakes, epidemics, droughts and floods.
2. Anthropogenic changes to ecosystems, lowered retention by the earth's surface, and the limitation of the inherent capacity of nature to filter dirt from the water are causing increasing damage to the natural environment, especially the water environment.
3. The commodification of water, whereby it is provided for profit rather than as a public service, has implications for access to an adequate supply of drinking water.
4. The development of sustainable infrastructure for the provision of safe water contributes greatly to sound public health and national well-being. Curtailing infectious diseases and other ailments that are caused by unsafe water alleviates the burden of health care costs and improves productivity. This creates a positive ripple effect on national economies.
5. Water as a vital and necessary resource for life has become scarce in many parts of the world and therefore has to be used reasonably and with care.

6. Water is an asset that is shared by humanity and the earth. Thus, water-related issues should be addressed collaboratively by the global community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Physicians, National Medical Associations and health authorities are encouraged to support the following measures related to water and health:

1. International and national programmes to provide access to safe drinking water at low cost to every human on the planet and to prevent the pollution of water supplies.
2. International, national and regional programmes to provide access to sanitation and to prevent the degradation of water resources.
3. Research on the relationship between water supply systems, including waste-water treatment, and health.
4. The development of plans for providing potable water and proper wastewater disposal during emergencies. These will vary according to the nature of the emergency, but may include on-site water disinfection, identifying sources of water, and back-up power to run pumps.
5. Preventive measures to secure safe water for health care institutions after the occurrence of natural disasters, especially earthquakes. Such measures should include the development of infrastructure and training programs to help health care institutions cope with such crises. The implementation of continued emergency water supply programs should be done in conjunction with regional authorities and with community involvement.
6. More efficient use of water resources by each nation. The WMA especially urges hospitals and health institutions to examine their impact on sustainable water resources.
7. Preventive measures and emergency preparedness to save water from pollution.
8. The promotion of the universal access to clean and affordable water as a human right<sup>1</sup> and as a common good of humanity.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation, derived from the right to an adequate standard of living as stipulated in article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other international human rights treaties. Hence, it is part of international human rights law.



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## **WMA STATEMENT ON REDUCING THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF ALCOHOL ON HEALTH AND SOCIETY**

Adopted by the 56<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Santiago, Chile, October 2005

### **PREAMBLE**

1. Alcohol use is deeply embedded in many societies. Overall, 4% of the global burden of disease is attributable to alcohol, which accounts for about as much death and disability globally as tobacco or hypertension. Overall, there are causal relationships between alcohol consumption and more than 60 types of disease and injury including traffic fatalities. Alcohol consumption is the leading risk factor for disease burden in low mortality developing countries and the third largest risk factor in developed countries. Beyond the numerous chronic and acute health effects, alcohol use is associated with widespread social, mental and emotional consequences. The global burden related to alcohol consumption, both in terms of morbidity and mortality, is considerable.
2. Alcohol-related problems are the result of a complex interplay between individual use of alcoholic beverages and the surrounding cultural, economic, physical environment, political and social contexts.
3. Alcohol cannot be considered an ordinary beverage or consumer commodity since it is a drug that causes substantial medical, psychological and social harm by means of physical toxicity, intoxication and dependence. There is increasing evidence that genetic vulnerability to alcohol dependence is a risk factor for some individuals. Fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects, preventable causes of mental retardation, may result from alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Growing scientific evidence has demonstrated the harmful effects of consumption prior to adulthood on the brains, mental, cognitive and social functioning of youth and increased likelihood of adult alcohol dependence and alcohol related problems among those who drink before full physiological maturity. Regular alcohol consumption and binge drinking in adolescents can negatively affect school performance, increase participation in crime and adversely affect sexual performance and behaviour.
4. Alcohol advertising and promotion is rapidly expanding throughout the world and is increasingly sophisticated and carefully targeted, including to youth. It is aimed to attract, influence, and recruit new generations of potential drinkers despite industry codes of self-regulation that are widely ignored and often not enforced.



5. Effective alcohol social policy can put into place measures that control the supply of alcohol and/or affect population-wide demand for alcohol beverages. Comprehensive policies address legal measures to: control supply and demand, control access to alcohol (by age, location and time), provide public education and treatment for those who need assistance, levy taxation to affect prices and to pay for problems generated by consumption, and harm-reduction strategies to limit alcohol-related problems such as impaired driving and domestic violence.
6. Alcohol problems are highly correlated with per capita consumption so that reductions of use can lead to decreases in alcohol problems. Because alcohol is an economic commodity, alcohol beverage sales are sensitive to prices, i.e., as prices increase, demand declines, and visa versa. Price can be influenced through taxation and effective penalties for inappropriate sales and promotion activities. Such policy measures affect even heavy drinkers, and they are particularly effective among young people.
7. Heavy drinkers and those with alcohol-related problems or alcohol dependence cause a significant share of the problems resulting from consumption. However, in most countries, the majority of alcohol-related problems in a population are associated with harmful or hazardous drinking by non-dependent 'social' drinkers, particularly when intoxicated. This is particularly a problem of young people in many regions of the world who drink with the intent of becoming intoxicated.
8. Although research has found some limited positive health effects of low levels of alcohol consumption in some populations, this must be weighed against potential harms from consumption in those same populations as well as in population as a whole.
9. Thus, population-based approaches that affect the social drinking environment and the availability of alcoholic beverages are more effective than individual approaches (such as education) for preventing alcohol related problems and illness. Alcohol policies that affect drinking patterns by limiting access and by discouraging drinking by young people through setting a minimum legal purchasing age are especially likely to reduce harms. Laws to reduce permitted blood alcohol levels for drivers and to control the number of sales outlets have been effective in lowering alcohol problems.
10. In recent years some constraints on the production, mass marketing and patterns of consumption of alcohol have been weakened and have resulted in increased availability and accessibility of alcoholic beverages and changes in drinking patterns across the world. This has created a global health problem that urgently requires governmental, citizen, medical and health care intervention.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The WMA urges National Medical Associations and all physicians to take the following actions to help reduce the impact of alcohol on health and society:

1. Advocate for comprehensive national policies that
  - a. incorporate measures to educate the public about the dangers of hazardous and unhealthy use of alcohol (from risky amounts through dependence), including, but not limited to, education programs targeted specifically at youth;
  - b. create legal interventions that focus primarily on treating or provide evidence-based legal sanctions that deter those who place themselves or others at risk, and
  - c. put in place regulatory and other environmental supports that promote the health of the population as a whole.
2. Promote national and sub-national policies that follow 'best practices' from the developed countries that with appropriate modification may also be effective in developing nations. These may include setting of a minimum legal purchase age, restricted sales policies, restricting hours or days of sale and the number of sales outlets, increasing alcohol taxes, and implementing effective countermeasures for alcohol impaired driving (such as lowered blood alcohol concentration limits for driving, active enforcement of traffic safety measures, random breath testing, and legal and medical interventions for repeat intoxicated drivers).
3. Be aware of and counter non-evidence-based alcohol control strategies promoted by the alcohol industry or their social aspect organizations.
4. Restrict the promotion, advertising and provision of alcohol to youth so that youth can grow up with fewer social pressures to consume alcohol. Support the creation of an independent monitoring capability that assures that alcohol advertising conforms to the content and exposure guidelines described in alcohol industry self-regulation codes.
5. Work collaboratively with national and local medical societies, specialty medical organizations, concerned social, religious and economic groups (including governmental, scientific, professional, nongovernmental and voluntary bodies, the private sector, and civil society) to:
  - a. reduce harmful use of alcohol, especially among young people and pregnant women, in the workplace, and when driving;
  - b. increase the likelihood that everyone will be free of pressures to consume alcohol and free from the harmful and unhealthy effects of drinking by others; and
  - c. promote evidence-based prevention strategies in schools.
6. Undertake to
  - a. screen patients for alcohol use disorders and at-risk drinking, or arrange to have screening conducted systematically by qualified personnel using evidence-based screening tools that can be used in clinical practice;

- b. promote self-screening/mass screening with questionnaires that could then select those needing to be seen by a provider for assessment;
  - c. provide brief interventions to motivate high-risk drinkers to moderate their consumption; and
  - d. provide specialized treatment, including use of evidence-based pharmaceuticals, and rehabilitation for alcohol-dependent individuals and assistance to their families.
7. Encourage physicians to facilitate epidemiologic and health service data collection on the impact of alcohol.
8. Promote consideration of a Framework Convention on Alcohol Control similar to that of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control that took effect on February 27, 2005.
9. Furthermore, in order to protect current and future alcohol control measures, advocate for consideration of alcohol as an extraordinary commodity and that measures affecting the supply, distribution, sale, advertising, promotion or investment in alcoholic beverages be excluded from international trade agreements.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON DRUG SUBSTITUTION**

Adopted by the 56<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Santiago, Chile, October 2005  
and reaffirmed by the 200<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Oslo, Norway, April 2015

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. The prescription of a drug represents the culmination of a careful deliberative process between physician and patient aimed at the prevention, amelioration or cure of a disease or problem. This deliberative process requires that the physician evaluate a variety of scientific and other data including costs and make an individualized choice of therapy for the patient. Sometimes, however, a pharmacist is required to substitute a different drug for the one prescribed by the physician. The World Medical Association has serious concerns about this practice.
2. Drug substitution can take two forms: generic substitution and therapeutic substitution.
3. In generic substitution, a generic drug is substituted for a brand name drug. However, both drugs have the same active chemical ingredient, same dosage strength, and same dosage form.
4. Therapeutic substitution occurs when a pharmacist substitutes a chemically different drug for the drug that the physician prescribed. The drug substituted by the pharmacist belongs to the same pharmacologic class and/or to the same therapeutic class. However since the two drugs have different chemical structures, adverse outcomes for the patient can occur.
5. The respective roles of physicians and pharmacists in serving the patient's need for optimal drug therapy are outlined in the WMA Statement on the Working Relationship between Physicians and Pharmacists in Medicinal Therapy.
6. The physician should be assured by national regulatory authorities of the bioequivalence and the chemical and therapeutic equivalence of prescription drug products from both multiple and single sources. Quality assurance procedures should be in place to ensure their lot-to-lot bioequivalence and their chemical and therapeutic equivalence.
7. Many considerations should be addressed before prescribing the drug of choice for a particular indication in any given patient. Drug therapy should be individualized based on a complete clinical patient history, current physical findings, all relevant laboratory data, and psychosocial factors. Once these primary considerations are met, the physician should then consider comparative costs of similar drug products available to best serve the patient's needs. The physician should select the type and quantity of drug product that he or she considers to be in the best medical and financial interest of the patient.

8. Once the patient gives his or her consent to the drug selected, that drug should not be changed without the consent of the patient and his or her physician. Failure to follow this principle can result in harm to patients. On behalf of patients and physicians alike, National Medical Associations should do everything possible to ensure the implementation of the following recommendations:

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Physicians should become familiar with specific laws and/or regulations governing drug substitution where they practise.
2. Pharmacists should be required to dispense the exact chemical, dose, and dosage form prescribed by the physician. Once medication has been prescribed and begun, no drug substitution should be made without the prescribing physician's permission.
3. If substitution of a drug product occurs, the physician should carefully monitor and adjust the dose to ensure therapeutic equivalence of the drug products.
4. If drug substitution leads to serious adverse drug reaction or therapeutic failure, the physician should document this finding and report it to appropriate drug regulatory authorities.
5. National Medical Associations should regularly monitor drug substitution issues and keep their members advised on developments that have special relevance for patient care. Collection and evaluation of information reports on significant developments in this area is encouraged.
6. Appropriate drug regulatory bodies should evaluate and ensure the bioequivalence and the chemical and therapeutic equivalence of all similar drug products, whether generic or brand-name, in order to ensure safe and effective treatment.
7. National Medical Associations should oppose any action to restrict the freedom and the responsibility of the physician to prescribe in the best medical and financial interest of the patient.
8. National Medical Associations should urge national regulatory authorities to declare therapeutic substitution illegal, unless such substitution has the immediate prior consent of the prescribing physician.

## WMA STATEMENT ON GENETICS AND MEDICINE

Adopted by the 56<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Santiago, Chile, October 2005  
and amended by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### PREAMBLE

1. In recent years, the field of genetics has undergone rapid change and development. The areas of gene therapy and genetic engineering and the development of new technology have presented possibilities inconceivable only decades ago.
2. The Human Genome Project opened new spheres of research. Its applications also proved useful to clinical care, by allowing physicians to utilize knowledge of the human genome in order to diagnose future disease as well as to individualize drug therapy (pharmacogenomics).
3. Because of this, genetics has become an integral part of primary care medicine. Whereas at one time, medical genetics was devoted to the study of relatively rare genetic disorders, the Human Genome Project has established a genetic contribution to a variety of common diseases. It is therefore incumbent upon all physicians to have a working knowledge of the field.
4. Genetics is an area of medicine with enormous medical, social, ethical and legal implications. The WMA has developed this statement in order to address some of these concerns and provide guidance to physicians. These guidelines should be updated in accordance with developments in the field of genetics.

### MAJOR ISSUES:

#### Genetic testing

5. The identification of disease-related genes has led to an increase in the number of available genetic tests that detect disease or an individual's risk of disease. As the number and types of such tests and the diseases they detect increases, there is concern about the reliability and limitations of such tests, as well as the implications of testing and disclosure. The ability of physicians to interpret test results and counsel their patients has also been challenged by the proliferation of knowledge.
6. Genetic testing may be undergone prior to marriage or childbearing to detect the presence of carrier genes that might affect the health of future offspring. Physicians should actively inform those from populations with high incidence of certain genetic

diseases about the possibility of pre-marital and pre-pregnancy testing, and genetic counselling should be made available to those individuals or couples who are considering such testing.

7. Genetic counselling and testing during pregnancy should be offered as an option. In cases where no medical intervention is possible following diagnosis, this should be explained to the couple prior to their decision to test.
8. In recent years, with the advent of IVF, genetic testing has been extended to pre-implantation genetic diagnosis of embryos (PGD). This can be a useful tool in cases where a couple has a high chance of conceiving a child with genetic disease.
9. Since the purpose of medicine is to treat, in cases where no sickness or disability is involved, genetic screening should not be employed as a means of producing children with pre-determined characteristics. For example, genetic screening should not be used to enable sex selection unless there is a gender-based illness involved. Similarly, physicians should not countenance the use of such screening to promote non-health related personal attributes.
10. Genetic testing should be done only with informed consent of the individual or his/her legal guardian. Genetic testing for predisposition to disease should be performed only on consenting adults, unless there is treatment available for the condition and the test results would facilitate earlier instigation of this treatment.
11. Valid consent to genetic testing should include the following factors:
  - The limitations of genetic testing, including the fact that the presence of a specific gene may denote predisposition to disease rather than the disease itself and does not definitively predict the likelihood of developing a certain disease, particularly in multi-factorial disorders.
  - The fact that a disease may manifest itself in one of several forms and in varying degrees. Information about the nature and predictability of information received from the tests.
  - The benefits of testing including the relief of uncertainty and the ability to make informed choices, including the possible need to increase or reduce regular screenings and checkups and to implement risk reduction measures.
  - The implications of a positive result and the prevention, screening and/or treatment possibilities.
  - The possible implications for the family members of the patient involved.
12. In the case of a positive test result that may have implications for third parties such as close relatives, the individual tested should be encouraged to discuss the results of the test with such third parties. In cases where not disclosing the results involves a direct and imminent threat to the life or health of an individual, the physician may reveal the results to such third parties, but should usually discuss this with the patient first. If the physician has access to an ethics committee, it is preferable to consult such a committee prior to revealing results to third parties.

**Genetic counselling**

13. Genetic counselling is generally offered prior to marriage or conception, in order to predict the likelihood of conceiving an affected child, during pregnancy, in order to determine the condition of the fetus, or to an adult, in order to determine susceptibility to a certain disease.
14. Individuals at higher risk for conceiving a child with a specific disease should be offered genetic counselling prior to conception or during pregnancy. In addition, adults at higher risk for various diseases such as cancer, mental illness or neurodegenerative diseases in which the risk can be tested for, should be made aware of the availability of genetic counselling.
15. Because of the scientific complexity involved in genetic testing as well as the practical and emotional implications of the results, the WMA sees great importance in educating and training medical students and physicians in genetic counselling, particularly counselling related to pre-symptomatic diagnosis of disease. Independent genetic counsellors also have an important role to play. The WMA acknowledges that there can be very complex situations requiring the involvement of medical genetics specialists.
16. In all cases where genetic counselling is offered, it should be non-directive and protect the individual's right not to be tested.
17. In cases of counselling prior to or during pregnancy, the prospective parents should be given information to provide the basis for an informed decision regarding child-bearing, but should not be influenced by the physicians' personal views in this matter and physicians should be careful not to substitute their own moral judgment for that of the prospective parents. In cases where a physician is morally opposed to contraception or abortion, he/she may choose not to provide these services but should alert prospective parents that a potential genetic problem exists and make note of the option of contraception or abortion as well as treatment alternatives, relevant genetic tests, and the availability of genetic counselling.

**Confidentiality of results**

18. Like all medical records, the results of genetic testing should be kept strictly confidential, and should not be revealed to outside parties without the consent of the individual tested. Third parties to whom results may in certain circumstances be released are identified in paragraph 12.
19. Physicians should support the passage of laws guaranteeing that no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of genetic makeup in the fields of human rights, employment and insurance.

**Gene therapy and genetic research**

20. Gene therapy represents a combination of techniques used to correct defective genes that cause disease, especially in the fields of oncology, hematology and immune disorders. Gene therapy is not yet an active current therapy but is still in a stage of clinical



cal investigation. However, with the continued development of this field, it should proceed according to the following guidelines:

- Gene therapy performed in a research context should conform to the requirements of the Declaration of Helsinki while therapy performed in a treatment context should conform to standards of medical practice and professional responsibility.
  - Informed consent should always be obtained from the patient undergoing the therapy. This informed consent should include disclosure of the risks of gene therapy, including the fact that the patient may have to undergo multiple rounds of gene therapy, the risk of an immune response, and the potential problems arising from the use of viral vectors.
  - Gene therapy should only be undertaken after a careful analysis of the risks and benefits involved and an evaluation of the perceived effectiveness of the therapy, as compared to the risks, side effects, availability and effectiveness of other treatments.
21. It is currently possible to undertake screening of an embryo in order to provide stem cell or other therapies for an existing sibling with a genetic disorder. This may be considered acceptable medical practice where no evidence exists that the embryo is being created exclusively for this purpose.
  22. Genetic discoveries should be shared as much as possible between countries so as to benefit humankind and reduce duplication of research and the risk inherent in research in this area.
  23. The mapping of human genomes must be anonymous but the information acquired will apply to every human being. The genetic information should be general property. Therefore, no patents should be given for the human genome or parts of it.
  24. In the case of genetic research performed on large, defined population groups, efforts should be made to avoid potential stigmatization.

### **Cloning**

25. Recent developments in science have led to the cloning of a mammal and raise the possibility of such cloning techniques being used in humans.
26. Cloning includes both therapeutic cloning, namely the cloning of individual stem cells in order to produce a healthy copy of a diseased tissue or organ for transplant, and reproductive cloning, namely the cloning of an existing mammal to produce a duplicate of such mammal. The WMA currently opposes reproductive cloning, and in many countries it is considered to pose more of an ethical problem than therapeutic cloning.
27. Physicians should act in accordance with the codes of medical ethics in their countries regarding the use of cloning and be mindful of the law governing this activity.

## WMA STATEMENT ON MEDICAL LIABILITY REFORM

Adopted by the 56<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Santiago, Chile, October 2005  
and reaffirmed by the 200<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Oslo, Norway, April 2015

1. A culture of litigation is growing around the world that is adversely affecting the practice of medicine and eroding the availability and quality of health care services. Some National Medical Associations report a medical liability crisis whereby the lawsuit culture is increasing health care costs, restraining access to health care services, and hindering efforts to improve patient safety and quality. In other countries, medical liability claims are less rampant, but National Medical Associations in those countries should be alert to the issues and circumstances that could result in an increase in the frequency and severity of medical liability claims brought against physicians.
2. Medical liability claims have greatly increased health care costs, diverting scarce health care resources to the legal system and away from direct patient care, research, and physician training. The lawsuit culture has also blurred the distinction between negligence and unavoidable adverse outcomes, often resulting in a random determination of the standard of care. This has led to the broad perception that anyone can sue for almost anything, betting on a chance to win a big award. Such a culture breeds cynicism and distrust in both the medical and legal systems with damaging consequences to the patient-physician relationship.
3. In adopting this Statement, the World Medical Association makes an urgent call to all National Medical Associations to demand the establishment of a reliable system of medical justice in their respective countries. Legal systems should ensure that patients are protected against harmful practices, physicians are protected against unmeritorious lawsuits, and standard of care determinations are consistent and reliable so that all parties know where they stand.
4. In this Statement the World Medical Association wishes to inform National Medical Associations of some of the facts and issues related to medical liability claims. The laws and legal systems in each country, as well as the social traditions and the economic conditions of the country, will affect the relevance of some portions of this Statement to each National Medical Association but do not detract from the fundamental importance of such a Statement.
5. An increase in the frequency and severity of medical liability claims may result, in part, from one or more of the following circumstances:
  - a. Increases in medical knowledge and medical technology that have enabled physicians to accomplish medical feats that were not possible in the past, but that involve considerable risks in many instances.

- b. Pressures on physicians by private managed care organizations or government-managed health care systems to limit the costs of medical care.
    - c. Confusing the right to access to health care, which is attainable, with the right to achieve and maintain health, which cannot be guaranteed.
    - d. The role of the media in fostering mistrust of physicians by questioning their ability, knowledge, behaviour, and management of patients, and by prompting patients to submit complaints against physicians.
6. A distinction must be made between harm caused by medical negligence and an untoward result occurring in the course of medical care and treatment that is not the fault of the physician.
  - a. Injury caused by negligence is the direct result of the physician's failure to conform to the standard of care for treatment of the patient's condition, or the physician's lack of skill in providing care to the patient.
  - b. An untoward result is an injury occurring in the course of medical treatment that was not the result of any lack of skill or knowledge on the part of the treating physician, and for which the physician should not bear any liability.
7. Compensation for patients suffering a medical injury should be determined differently for medical liability claims than for the untoward results that occur during medical care and treatment, unless there is an alternative system in place such as a no-fault system or alternate resolution system.
  - a. Where an untoward result occurs without fault on the part of the physician, each country must determine if the patient should be compensated for the injuries suffered, and if so, the source from which the funds will be paid. The economic conditions of the country will determine if such solidarity funds are available to compensate the patient without being at the expense of the physician.
  - b. The laws of each jurisdiction should provide the procedures for deciding liability for medical liability claims and for determining the amount of compensation owed to the patient in those cases where negligence is proven.
8. National Medical Associations should consider some or all of the following activities in an effort to provide fair and equitable treatment for both physicians and patients:
  - a. Establish public education programs on the risks inherent in some of the new advances in treatment modalities and surgery, and professional education programs on the need for obtaining the patient's informed consent to such treatment and surgery.
  - b. Implement public advocacy programs to demonstrate the problems in medicine and health care delivery resulting from strict cost containment limitations.

- c. Enhance the level and quality of medical education for all physicians, including improved clinical training experiences.
- d. Develop and participate in programs for physicians to improve the quality of medical care and treatment.
- e. Develop appropriate policy positions on remedial training for physicians found to be deficient in knowledge or skills, including policy positions on limiting the physician's medical practice until the deficiencies are corrected.
- f. Inform the public and government of the dangers that various manifestations of defensive medicine may pose (the multiplication of medical acts or, on the contrary, the abstention of the physicians, the disaffection of young physicians for certain higher risk specialties or the reluctance by physicians or hospitals to treat higher-risk patients).
- g. Educate the public on the possible occurrence of injuries during medical treatment that are not the result of physician negligence, and establish simple procedures to allow patients to receive explanations in the case of adverse events and to be informed of the steps that must be taken to obtain compensation, if available.
- h. Advocate for legal protection for physicians when patients are injured by untoward results not caused by any negligence, and participate in decisions relating to the advisability of providing compensation for patients injured during medical treatment without any negligence.
- i. Participate in the development of the laws and procedures applicable to medical liability claims.
- j. Develop active opposition to meritless or frivolous claims and to contingency billing by lawyers.
- k. Explore innovative alternative dispute resolution procedures for handling medical liability claims, such as arbitration, rather than court proceedings.
- l. Encourage self-insurance by physicians against medical liability claims, paid by the practitioners themselves or by the employer if the physician is employed.
- m. Encourage the development of voluntary, confidential, and legally protected systems for reporting untoward outcomes or medical errors for the purpose of analysis and for making recommendations on reducing untoward outcomes and improving patient safety and health care quality.
- n. Advocate against the increasing criminalization or penal liability of medical acts by the courts.

## WMA STATEMENT ON ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### PREAMBLE

1. Assisted reproductive technology encompasses a wide range of techniques designed primarily to aid couples unable to conceive without medical assistance. Since the birth of the first so-called 'test-tube baby' in 1978, more than 1.5 million children worldwide have been born following IVF treatment.
2. The term 'assisted reproductive technology' includes techniques such as in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) and intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI). It can be defined as including all treatments that include medical and scientific manipulation of human gametes and embryos in order to produce a term pregnancy. Although some legislatures have considered artificial insemination, whether using donor semen or semen from the patient's partner, as different, many of the issues about regulation in relation to obtaining, storing, using and disposing of gametes and embryos are closely inter-linked. In this statement treatments such as artificial insemination are excluded.
3. Assisted reproductive technologies raise profound moral issues. Views and beliefs about the moral status of the embryo, which are central to much of the debate in this area, vary both within and among countries. Assisted conception is also regulated differently in various countries. Whilst consensus can be reached on some issues, there remain fundamental differences of opinion that cannot be resolved. This statement identifies areas of agreement and also highlights those matters on which agreement cannot be reached. Physicians faced with such situations should comply with applicable laws and regulations as well as the ethical requirements and professional standards established by their National Medical Association and other appropriate organisations in the community.
4. Physicians involved in providing assisted reproductive technologies should always consider their ethical responsibilities towards any child who may be born as a result of the treatment. If there is evidence that a future child would be exposed to serious harm, treatment should not be provided.
5. As with all other medical procedures, physicians also have an ethical obligation to limit their practice to areas in which they have relevant expertise and experience and to respect the rights of patients. These rights include that of personal bodily integrity and freedom from coercion. In practice this means that valid or real consent is required as with other medical procedures; the validity of such consent is dependent upon the adequacy of the information offered to the patient and their freedom to make a decision, including freedom from coercion or other pressures to decide in a particular way.

6. Assisted conception differs from the treatment of illness in that the inability to become a parent without medical intervention is not always regarded as an illness. While it may have profound psychosocial, and thus medical, consequences, it is not in itself life limiting. It is, however, a significant cause of major psychological illness and its treatment is clearly medical.
7. Obtaining informed consent from those considering undertaking treatment must include consideration of the alternatives, including accepting childlessness or pursuing adoption, the risks associated with the various techniques, and the possibility of failure. In many jurisdictions the process of obtaining consent must follow a process of information giving and the offer of counselling and might also include a formal assessment of the patient in terms of the welfare of the potential child.
8. Patients seeking assisted reproductive technologies are entitled to the same level of confidentiality and privacy as for any other medical treatment.
9. Assisted reproductive technology always involves handling and manipulation of human gametes and embryos. Different individuals regard this with different levels of concern but there is general agreement that these special concerns should be met by specific safeguards to protect from abuse. In some jurisdictions all centres handling such materials require a licence and must demonstrate compliance with high normative standards.

### **SUCCESS OF THE TECHNIQUES**

1. The success of different techniques may differ widely from centre to centre. Physicians have an obligation to give realistic information about success rates to potential patients. If their success rates are widely different from the current norm they should disclose this fact to patients. They also have an obligation to consider the reasons for this as they might relate to poor practice, and if so, to correct their deficiencies.

### **MULTIPLE PREGNANCIES**

1. Replacement of more than one embryo may raise the likelihood of at least one embryo implanting. This is offset by the increased risk, especially of premature labour, in multiple pregnancies. The risk of twin pregnancies, while higher than that of singleton pregnancies, is considered acceptable by most people. Practitioners should follow professional guidance on the maximum number of embryos to be transferred per treatment cycle. If multiple pregnancies occur, selective termination might be considered on medical grounds to increase the chances of the pregnancy proceeding to term where this is compatible with the national law and code of ethics.

### **DONATION**

1. Some patients are unable to produce usable gametes. They require ova or sperm from donors. Donation should follow counselling and be carefully controlled to avoid abuses, including coercion of potential donors. It is inappropriate to offer money or benefits in kind (for example free or lower cost treatment cycles) to encourage donation but donors may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses.

2. Where a child is born following donation, families should be encouraged to be open with him/her about this, irrespective of whether domestic law entitles the child to information about the donor. Keeping secrets within families is difficult and can be harmful to children if information about donor conception is disclosed inadvertently and without appropriate support.

### **PRE-IMPLANTATION GENETIC DIAGNOSIS (PGD)**

1. Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) may be performed on early embryos to search for the presence of genetic or chromosomal abnormalities, especially those associated with severe illness and very premature death and for other reasons, including identifying those embryos most likely to implant successfully in women who have had multiple spontaneous abortions. Embryos carrying the abnormality are discarded; only embryos with apparently normal genetic and chromosomal complements are implanted.
2. Neither this powerful technique nor simpler means should be used for trivial reasons such as sex selection for reasons of gender preference. The WMA holds that physicians should only be involved with sex selection where it is used to avoid a serious sex-chromosome related condition such as Duchenne's Muscular Dystrophy.
3. PGD can also be combined with HLA matching to select embryos on the basis that stem cells from the resulting child's umbilical cord blood could be used to treat a seriously ill sibling. Views on the acceptability of this practice vary and physicians should follow national laws and local ethical and professional standards if confronted with such requests.

### **USE OF SPARE GAMETES AND EMBRYOS AND DISPOSAL OF UNUSED GAMETES AND EMBRYOS**

1. In most cases, assisted conception results in the production of gametes and embryos that will not be used to treat those from whom they are procured. Such so-called spare gametes and embryos may be stored, cryo-preserved for future use, donated to other patients or disposed of. One alternative to disposal, in countries that permit embryo research, is donation to a research facility. The available options must be explained clearly and precisely to individuals before donations are made or retrievals performed.

### **SURROGACY**

1. Where a woman is unable, for medical reasons, to carry a child to term, surrogacy may be used to overcome childlessness, unless prohibited by national law or the ethical rules of the National Medical Association or other relevant organisation. Where surrogacy is practised, great care must be taken to protect the interests of all parties involved.



## RESEARCH

1. Physicians should promote the importance of research using tissues obtained during assisted conception procedures. Because of the special status of the material being used, research on human gametes and especially on human embryos is, in many jurisdictions, specifically regulated. Physicians have an ethical duty to comply with such regulation and to help inform public debate and understanding of the issues.
2. Due to the special nature of human embryos, research should be carefully controlled and should be limited to areas in which the use of alternative materials will not provide an adequate alternative.
3. Views, and legislation, differ on whether embryos may be created specifically for, or in the course of, research. Physicians should act in accordance with national legislation and local ethical advice.

## CELL NUCLEAR REPLACEMENT

1. The WMA opposes the use of cell nuclear replacement with the aim of cloning human beings.
2. Cell nuclear replacement may also be used to develop embryonic stem cells for research and ultimately, it is hoped, for therapy for many serious diseases. Views on the acceptability of such research differ and physicians wishing to participate in such research should ensure that they are acting in accordance with national laws and local ethical guidance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Assisted reproductive technology is a dynamic, rapidly developing field of medical practice. Developments should be subject to careful ethical consideration alongside the scientific monitoring.
2. Human gametes and embryos are accorded a special status. Their use, including for research, donation to others and disposal, should be carefully explained to potential donors and subject to local regulation.
3. Embryo research should only be carried out if local law and ethical standards permit it and should be limited to areas where the use of alternative materials or computer modelling does not provide an adequate alternative.
4. Physicians should follow professional guidance on the maximum number of embryos to transfer in any treatment cycle.
5. It is inappropriate to offer money or benefits in kind (for example free or lower cost treatment cycles) to encourage donation but donors may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses.



6. Families using donated embryos or gametes should be encouraged and supported to be open with the child about this.
7. Sex selection should only be carried out to avoid serious, including life threatening, medical conditions.
8. Physicians have an important role in ensuring that public debate about the possibilities of assisted conception, and the limits to be applied to its practice, is informed.
9. Physicians should comply with national legislation and should demonstrate compliance with high normative standards.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON AVIAN AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA**

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

1. This statement provides guidance to National Medical Associations and physicians on how they should be involved in their respective country's pandemic planning process. It also encourages governments to involve their National Medical Associations when planning for pandemic influenza. Finally, it provides broadly stated recommendations about activities that physicians should consider in preparing themselves for pandemic influenza.

### **AVIAN INFLUENZA VERSUS PANDEMIC INFLUENZA**

1. Avian influenza (bird flu) is a contagious common viral infection of birds and, less commonly, pigs. Two forms have been identified: less pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) and highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), which is extremely contagious and has nearly a 100% mortality rate in birds. Avian influenza viruses differ from human influenza viruses. While avian influenza viruses do not normally infect humans, since 1997 several cases of human infection have been documented.
2. The current H5N1 HPAI virus is a subtype of influenza type A viruses and was first isolated from South African terns in 1961. The current outbreak started in late 2003 and early 2004 in eight countries in Asia. While originally reported as controlled, since June 2004 new outbreaks of H5N1 have reappeared. Migratory and smuggled birds are likely to be responsible for the spread of H5N1. The infected birds shed large quantities of virus in their feces, and exposure to infected droppings or to environments contaminated by the virus is common. It is anticipated that H5N1 will continue to spread along the migratory pathways of wild birds. Most human infections have occurred in rural areas where freely-roaming small poultry flocks are kept.
3. HPAI is controlled by rapidly destroying all infected and/or exposed birds, by proper disposal of the carcasses, and by quarantining and rigorous disinfection of farms. In order to contain an outbreak, aggressive measures are needed immediately after the outbreak is detected.
4. Human pandemic influenza occurs three to four times a century and can take place in any season, not just winter. Pandemic influenza results from the emergence of a new human influenza strain to which no human immunity exists. This new human pandemic strain can arise from either avian influenza strains or from influenza viruses infecting swine and potentially other mammalian species. It is usually associated with a higher severity of illness and, consequently, a higher risk of death. All age groups

may be at risk, and experts predict an infection rate of 25-50% of the population, depending on the severity of the strain. Since the virus strain cannot be accurately predicted, a vaccine against pandemic flu may not be available until several months after the pandemic begins. A major factor in protecting populations will be the time from emergence of a new strain to the development and manufacture of vaccine. It is hypothesized that use of anti-virals may control the progression of a pandemic following its emergence, so adequate supplies of anti-virals are important. At all phases of a pandemic outbreak, but especially during the period when vaccine is unavailable, infection control is critical.

5. Health officials are concerned that avian influenza, if given the right opportunities, could mutate to form a new strain of human influenza virus against which humans have no immunity or existing vaccine - a pandemic strain. It is apparent that H5N1 has the capacity to directly jump the species barrier and cause serious disease in humans but thus far, H5N1 has demonstrated very limited, if any, human transmission potential. A new pandemic virus could develop if a human became simultaneously infected with H5N1 and a human influenza virus, resulting in gene swapping. Also, the H5N1 virus could mutate on its own. With this new virus strain, direct human-to-human transmission could result, and if the virus remains highly pathogenic, a pandemic with high mortality rates could occur. This is believed to have happened in the worst pandemic of the 20th century, the "Spanish Flu" of 1918, that killed 50 million people worldwide.
6. Even though the H5N1 virus is not easily transmitted to humans, any H5N1 human infection provides an opportunity for co-existence with a human influenza virus. Consequently, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other health organizations recommend that any person coming in contact with infected poultry receive the current annual flu vaccine. Since it is not yet known whether residual immunity to the N1 component of the annual vaccine provides any immunity to H5N1, there is no way to accurately predict the severity of the next pandemic. It is important to recognize that while there is current concern surrounding H5N1, a pandemic influenza strain may not arise from H5N1 but may come from another HPAI strain. Regardless, the odds are great that another pandemic will occur.

## **PRINCIPLES OF PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PLANNING**

### **The Role of Governments**

1. The WHO has responsibility for co-ordinating the international response to an influenza pandemic. It has defined phases in the evolution of a pandemic that allow an escalating approach to preparedness planning and response leading up to a declaration of onset of a pandemic.
2. The development of a national pandemic plan, will, by necessity, be led by the national government, but physicians should be involved at all stages. While each nation will have unique situations to address, the following pandemic preparedness principles apply:

- a. Define key preparedness issues, needs, and goals.
  1. The prioritization of one or two goals for the nation's pandemic planning is essential. Depending on these goals, the prioritization and use of vaccines and antivirals will vary. For example, a goal of reducing morbidity and mortality due to influenza will have very different planning criteria from a goal of preserving societal infrastructure.
  2. Defining the nation's needs in the event of a pandemic will require making some basic assumptions about the severity of the pandemic in the nation. Based upon that assumption, it will then be possible to make some predictions about the issues and needs facing the country. It will be useful to consult with other nations that have prepared pandemic plans to see what challenges they faced in identifying their needs and issues.
- b. In countries where there is a substantial presence of healthcare professionals in the private sector, involve those in the private sector, who will be managing the pandemic on the ground, particularly physicians, in the decision-making process. The administration of millions of doses of antivirals and vaccine to the management of surge capacity and hospital beds will all require specific participation of those most knowledgeable and involved in the process.
- c. Prepare risk communication and crisis communication strategies and messages in anticipation of public and media fear and anxiety.
- d. Provide guidance and timely information to regional health departments, health care organizations, and physicians. Utilize physicians as spokespeople to explain the medical and ethical issues to the public. Ensure that communications mechanisms and infrastructure continue to function efficiently.
  1. As planning proceeds, timely and clear information not only of the plan, but also of the rationale behind decisions, needs to be made available to public health authorities and the medical establishment as well as to the public. Physician leaders in a community are well-respected and frequently can serve as excellent spokespersons to educate the public about the issues surrounding pandemic planning. Public feedback into important decisions that may have moral and ethical implications will help secure public acceptance of the plan. For example, holding a public engagement process to assess the public's opinion about rationing of vaccine during a pandemic can be useful.
  2. It is important that government representatives and physicians speak with one voice in order to avoid confusion and panic during a pandemic event.
- e. Identify the legal issues and authorities for pandemic responses, e.g. liability, quarantine, closing borders.

Authorities will need to make decisions that range in complexity from local decisions to close public areas to national decisions regarding border closings and/or quarantine/isolation of exposed/infected citizens. The legal and ethical issues surrounding these decisions need to be in place prior to a pandemic.

- f. Determine the order of importance for use of scarce resources such as vaccines and antivirals based on pandemic response goals. Priority groups chosen for vaccine should be those that help maintain essential community services and those at highest risk.
- g. Do not put physicians in the position of being responsible for decisions regarding the rationing of vaccine, antivirals and other scarce resources during a pandemic. Those decisions must be made by the government.
- h. Outline coordination and implementation of a response by stages of the pandemic.  
Depending on the size of a country, this response may be at a national level or at a regional level. Large countries may see the pandemic occur in waves in which case affected regions will need to have their own response ready to be implemented.
- i. Consider the surge capacity of hospitals, laboratories, and the public health infrastructure and improve them if necessary. Prepare for absences of key staff and the need to maintain health services for conditions other than influenza.
- j. Prepare for the psychosocial impact on health care workers in managing the waves of a pandemic.
- k. Consider whether the safety of those in facilities managing the pandemic must be ensured, such as police protection of the supply chain for vaccines and antivirals. Address what might be needed to control a pandemic in the absence of a vaccine.
- l. Assess whether there is sufficient funding available to adequately prepare for pandemic influenza.  
Political will to fund public health preparedness is essential. Resources spent on pandemic planning should be framed in the context of general preparedness; pandemic preparedness and public health preparedness share many of the same issues.
- m. Identify key issues that remain to be resolved, which may include management of patients in the community, triage in hospitals, ventilation management, safe handling of bodies, and death investigations and reports.

#### **The Role of the National Medical Association (NMA)**

- 1. In any disaster situation or infectious disease outbreak, physicians and their professional organisations will be challenged to continue to provide needed care to the vulnerable and sick, as well as to aid in the emergency response called for in the specific situation. The following issues should be considered in this regard:
  - a. NMAs should have their own organization-specific business contingency plan in place to ensure continued support of their members.

Many existing plans anticipate disruptions such as fires, earthquakes, and floods that are geographically restricted and have fairly well defined timeframes. However, pandemic influenza planning requires assumptions that the influenza will be widely dispersed geographically and will potentially last many months.

- b. NMAs should clearly identify their responsibilities during a pandemic.  
The NMA should actively seek participation in the nation's pandemic planning process. If this is achieved, the NMA's responsibilities will also be clearly defined to its physicians as well as to the government.
- c. For effective global pandemic influenza planning, NMAs should collaborate and network with NMAs from other countries.  
Many NMAs have already been involved in their countries' pandemic planning process. Challenges and key roles for the NMA that have been identified should be shared.
- d. NMAs should have an essential role in communicating vital information:
  1. To the public. As the authoritative medical voice, an NMA engenders public trust and should use that trust to communicate accurate and timely information regarding pandemic planning and the current state of the pandemic to the public;
  2. Between authorities and physicians, and between physicians in affected areas and their colleagues elsewhere;
  3. Between health care professionals. NMAs should work with other health care provider organizations (e.g., nurses, hospital groups) to identify common issues and congruent policies and messages regarding pandemic preparedness and response.
- e. NMAs should offer training seminars and clinical support tools, such as online and e-published self-help training materials, for physicians and regional medical associations.  
Such training/tools should consider how, in a worst-case pandemic scenario, physicians will manage respiratory crises without intensive or critical care facilities. Training should also be given in triage strategies and how infected patients should be counselled.
- f. NMAs should consider what new programs and services they might offer during a pandemic, such as coordination or provision of mental health crisis support programs for affected members and their families, facilitation of health emergency response teams, emergency locum relief, and facilitation of equipment supply lines.
- g. NMAs should be involved in and support the development and implementation of government plans while still considering their own professional code of ethics. They should monitor and assess the implementation of said plans to ensure that as pandemic outbreaks cycle through their natural history, health interests remain paramount.

- h. NMAs should advocate for adequate government funding to prepare for pandemic influenza.
- i. NMAs should anticipate the different practice environments that may evolve during pandemic conditions and be prepared to discuss liability and related issues with health authorities and advise members on such issues.
- j. NMAs should be prepared to advocate on behalf of members who, during a pandemic, will have rapidly emerging professional needs that must be met, and on behalf of patients and the public who will be affected by the unfolding events.

### **The Role of the Physician**

1. Physicians will be the first point of contact and source for advice for many as a pandemic evolves. The following are broad issues that physicians should consider in the event of a pandemic:
  - a. Be sufficiently educated about pandemic influenza and transmission risks. Communication about the actual risks of pandemic influenza is important to impart a sense of urgency without creating undue public alarm. Consider active physician participation in the media response to a pandemic.
  - b. Be vigilant for the possibility of severe or emerging respiratory diseases, especially in patients who have recently travelled internationally. As with any emerging infection, the astute physician is one of the important surveillance tools for detecting and managing an outbreak.
  - c. Plan for how to manage high-risk patients in the office/clinic setting and communicate the plan to clinic staff. Isolation and infection control plans must be available and staff should be well-versed in them. Be aware of what regional public health authorities are requesting be done with potential patients and their exposed contacts.
  - d. Plan how to concurrently manage patients with chronic illnesses who require routine medical management.
  - e. Plan accordingly for possible interruptions of essential services like sanitation, water, power, and disruptions to the food supply. Plan for the possibility of staff shortages because of personal illness and/or the care of next-of-kin who are ill. It is vital to have contingency plans in place to deal with possible societal disruption. Recognize that usual sources of these essential services may not be functioning so identifying alternative sources for these essentials may be necessary.
  - f. Prepare educational materials for patients and staff, including recommendations for proper infection control. An educated patient/public that recognizes the necessity for stringent measures such as quarantine and isolation will make a physician's job easier should s/he have to utilize such procedures when a pandemic occurs.



- g. Remain involved in local pandemic planning efforts and understand how the plan will affect the physician. Participate in local simulation exercises.  
Since physicians will be on the frontlines of monitoring, reporting, and eventually managing pandemic influenza patients, they must be closely involved in the planning process. They must continuously provide feedback as to what is logistically possible regarding physicians' efforts on the ground when a pandemic arrives.
- h. Physicians have an ethical responsibility to provide services to the injured or ill. They should have resources in place in the event they and/or their own families become infected.
  - 1. A physician will have a strong public health duty in the time of a pandemic and his/her services will be critical at a time when surge capacity will be stressed. Physicians should make arrangements for the care of their families and dependents in the event of a pandemic.
  - 2. Physicians should take all measures necessary to protect their own health and the health of their staff.
  - 3. Physicians can also consult the WMA Statement on Medical Ethics in the Event of Disasters for additional guidance.
- i. Develop a clinic plan to decrease potential for contact including isolation areas for infected patients, use of close-fitting surgical masks, designating separate blocks of time for non-influenza-related patient care, and postponing non-essential medical visits.
- j. Review staff infection control procedures and train staff in the use of personal protective equipment. Provide signage in the office instructing patients on respiratory hygiene practices; provide tissues, receptacles for their disposal, and hand hygiene materials in waiting areas and examination rooms.
- k. Get vaccinated against annual influenza each year and urge all staff to be vaccinated.  
Annual influenza readiness goes a long way for pandemic preparedness. Additionally, it is possible that components in the annual vaccine (e.g., N1) may provide some immunity against H5N1.
- l. Work to ensure that the office/clinic has access to adequate supplies of antibiotic and antiviral medications as well as commonly prescribed drugs like insulin or warfarin, in case the pharmaceutical supply line is disrupted.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. That the WMA increase its collaboration with the WHO on pandemic planning and commit to becoming an important participant in the decision-making process.



2. That the WMA communicate to the WHO its capabilities and the capabilities of its NMA members to provide a credible voice that can efficiently reach many practising physicians.
3. That the WMA acknowledge that although pandemic planning is a country-specific task, it can provide general principles for guidance. Additionally, the WMA can provide basic advice that can be given by its member NMAs to practising physicians.
4. That the WMA establish an operational capacity to develop and maintain emergency communication channels between the WMA and NMAs during a pandemic.
5. That the WMA provide timely evidence-based control measures to countries with no or limited up-dated information about pandemics.
6. That NMAs be actively involved in the national pandemic planning process.
7. That physicians participate in local pandemic planning efforts and be involved in communicating vital information to the public.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON HIV/AIDS AND THE MEDICAL PROFESSION**

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. HIV/AIDS is a global pandemic that has created unprecedented challenges for physicians and health infrastructures. In addition to representing a staggering public health crisis, HIV/AIDS is also fundamentally a human rights issue. Many factors drive the spread of the disease, such as poverty, homelessness, illiteracy, prostitution, human trafficking, stigma, discrimination and gender-based inequality. Efforts to tackle the disease are constrained by the lack of human and financial resources available in health care systems. These social, economic, legal and human rights factors affect not only the public health dimension of HIV/AIDS but also individual physicians/health workers and patients, their decisions and relationships.

### **DISCRIMINATION**

1. Unfair discrimination against HIV/AIDS patients by physicians must be eliminated completely from the practice of medicine.
  - a. All persons infected or affected by HIV/AIDS are entitled to adequate prevention, support, treatment and care with compassion and respect for human dignity.
  - b. A physician may not ethically refuse to treat a patient whose condition is within his or her current realm of competence, solely because the patient is seropositive.
  - c. National Medical Associations should work with governments, patient groups and relevant national and international organizations to ensure that national health policies clearly and explicitly prohibit discrimination against people infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

### **APPROPRIATE / COMPETENT MEDICAL CARE**

1. Patients with HIV/AIDS must be provided with competent and appropriate medical care at all stages of the disease.
2. A physician who is not able to provide the care and services required by patients with HIV/AIDS should make an appropriate referral to those physicians or facilities that are equipped to provide such services. Unless or until the referral can be accomplished, the physician must care for the patient to the best of his or her ability.

3. Physicians and other appropriate bodies should ensure that patients have accurate information regarding means of transmission of HIV/AIDS and strategies to protect themselves against infection. Proactive measures should be taken to ensure that all members of the population, and at-risk groups in particular, are educated to this effect.
4. With reference to those patients who are found to be seropositive, physicians must be able to effectively counsel them regarding: (a) responsible behaviour to prevent the spread of the disease; (b) strategies for their own health protection; and (c) the necessity of alerting sexual and needle-sharing contacts, past and present, as well as other relevant contacts (such as medical and dental personnel) regarding their possible infection.
5. Physicians must recognize that many people still believe HIV/AIDS to be an automatic and immediate death sentence and therefore will not seek testing. Physicians must ensure that patients have accurate information regarding the treatment options available to them. Patients should understand the potential of antiretroviral treatment (ART) to improve not only their medical condition but also the quality of their lives. Effective ART can greatly extend the period of time that patients are able to lead healthy productive lives, functioning socially and in the workplace and maintaining their independence. HIV/AIDS is increasingly looked upon as a manageable chronic condition.
6. While strongly advocating ART as the best course of action for HIV/AIDS patients, physicians must also ensure that their patients are fully and accurately informed about all aspects of ART, including potential toxicity and side effects. Physicians must also counsel patients honestly about the possibility of failure of first line ART, and the subsequent options should failure occur. The importance of adhering to the regimens and thereby reducing the risk of failure should be emphasized.
7. Physicians should be aware that misinformation regarding the negative aspects of ART has created resistance toward treatment by patients in some areas. Where misinformation is being spread about ART, physicians and medical associations must make it an immediate priority to publicly challenge the source of the misinformation and to work with the HIV/AIDS community to counteract the negative effects of the misinformation.
8. Physicians should encourage the involvement of support networks to assist patients in adhering to ART regimens. With the patient's consent, counselling and training should be available to family members to assist them in providing family based care. Physicians must recognize families and other support networks as crucial partners in adherence strategies and, in many places, the only means to adequately expand the care system so that patients receive the required attention.
9. Physicians must be aware of the discriminatory attitudes toward HIV/AIDS that are prevalent in society and local culture. Because physicians are the first, and sometimes the only, people who are informed of their patients' HIV status, physicians should be able to counsel them about their basic social and legal rights and responsibilities or should refer them to counsellors who specialize in the rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

## TESTING

1. Mandatory testing for HIV must be required of: donated blood and blood fractions collected for donation or to be used in the manufacture of blood products; organs and other tissues intended for transplantation; and semen or ova collected for assisted reproduction procedures.
2. Mandatory HIV testing of an individual against his or her will is a violation of medical ethics and human rights. Exceptions to this rule may be made only in the most extreme cases and should be subject to review by an ethics panel or to judicial review.
3. Physicians must clearly explain the purpose of an HIV test, the reasons it is recommended and the implications of a positive test result. Before a test is administered, the physician should have an action plan in place in case of a positive test result. Informed consent must be obtained from the patient prior to testing.
4. While certain groups are labelled "high risk", anyone who has had unprotected sex should be considered at some risk. Physicians must become increasingly proactive about recommending testing to patients, based on a mutual understanding of the level of risk and the potential to benefit from testing. Pregnant women should routinely be offered testing.
5. Counselling and voluntary anonymous testing for HIV should be available to all persons who request it, along with adequate post-testing support mechanisms.

## PROTECTION FROM HIV IN THE HEALTH CARE ENVIRONMENT

1. Physicians and all health care workers have the right to a safe work environment. Especially in developing countries, the problem of occupational exposure to HIV has contributed to high attrition rates of the health labour force. In some cases, employees become infected with HIV, and in other cases fear of infection causes health care workers to leave their jobs voluntarily. Fear of infection among health workers can also lead to refusal to treat HIV/AIDS patients. Likewise, patients have the right to be protected to the greatest degree possible from transmission of HIV from health professionals and in health care institutions.
  - a. Proper infection control procedures and universal precautions consistent with the most current national or international standards, as appropriate, should be implemented in all health care facilities. This includes procedures for the use of preventive ART for health professionals who have been exposed to HIV.
  - b. If the appropriate safeguards for protecting physicians or patients against infection are not in place, physicians and National Medical Associations should take action to correct the situation.
  - c. Physicians who are infected with HIV should not engage in any activity that creates a risk of transmission of the disease to others. In the context of possible exposure to HIV, the activity in which the physician wishes to engage will be the determining factor. Whether or not an activity is acceptable should be determined by a panel or committee of health care workers with specific expertise in infectious diseases.

- d. In the provision of medical care, if a risk of transmission of an infectious disease from a physician to a patient exists, disclosure of that risk to patients is not enough; patients are entitled to expect that their physicians will not increase their exposure to the risk of contracting an infectious disease.
- e. If no risk exists, disclosure of the physician's medical condition to his or her patients will serve no rational purpose.

## **PROTECTING PATIENT PRIVACY AND ISSUES RELATED TO NOTIFICATION**

1. Fear of stigma and discrimination is a driving force behind the spread of HIV/AIDS. The social and economic repercussions of being identified as infected can be devastating and can include violence, rejection by family and community members, loss of housing and loss of employment, to name only a few. Normalizing the presence of HIV/AIDS in society through public education is the only way to reduce discriminatory attitudes and practices. Until that can be universally achieved, or a cure is developed, potentially infected individuals will refuse testing to avoid these consequences. The result of individuals not knowing their HIV status is not only disastrous on a personal level in terms of not receiving treatment, but may also lead to high rates of avoidable transmission of the disease. Fear of unauthorized disclosure of information also provides a disincentive to participate in HIV/AIDS research and generally thwarts the efficacy of prevention programs. Lack of confidence in protection of personal medical information regarding HIV status is a threat to public health globally and a core factor in the continued spread of HIV/AIDS. At the same time, in certain circumstances, the right to privacy must be balanced with the right of partners (sexual and injection drug) of persons with HIV/AIDS to be informed of their potential infection. Failure to inform partners not only violates their rights but also leads to the same health problems of avoidable transmission and delay in treatment.
2. All standard ethical principles and duties related to confidentiality and protection of patients' health information, as articulated in the WMA Declaration of Lisbon on the Rights of the Patient, apply equally in the context of HIV/AIDS. In addition, National Medical Associations and physicians should take note of the special circumstances and obligations (outlined below) associated with the treatment of HIV/AIDS patients.
  - a. National Medical Associations and physicians must, as a matter of priority, ensure that HIV/AIDS public education, prevention and counselling programs contain explicit information related to protection of patient information as a matter not only of medical ethics but of their human right to privacy.
  - b. Special safeguards are required when HIV/AIDS care involves a physically dispersed care team that includes home-based service providers, family members, counsellors, case workers or others who require medical information to provide comprehensive care and assist in adherence to treatment regimens. In addition to implementing protection mechanisms regarding transfer of information, ethics training regarding patient privacy should be given to all team members.

- c. Physicians must make all efforts to convince HIV/AIDS patients to take action to notify all partners (sexual and/or injection drug) about their exposure and potential infection. Physicians must be competent to counsel patients about the options for notifying partners.

These options should include:

1. notification of the partner(s) by the patient. In this case, the patient should receive counselling regarding the information that must be provided to the partner and strategies for delivering it with sensitivity and in a manner that is easily understood. A timetable for notification should be established and the physician should follow-up with the patient to ensure that notification has occurred.
  2. notification of the partner(s) by a third party. In this case, the third party must make every effort to protect the identity of the patient.
- d. When all strategies to convince the patient to take such action have been exhausted, and if the physician knows the identity of the patient's partner(s), the physician is compelled, either by law or by moral obligation, to take action to notify the partner(s) of their potential infection. Depending on the system in place, the physician will either notify directly the person at risk or report the information to a designated authority responsible for notification. In cases where a physician must disclose the information regarding exposure, the physician must:
1. inform the patient of his or her intentions,
  2. to the extent possible, ensure that the identity of the patient is protected,
  3. take the appropriate measures to protect the safety of the patient, especially in the case of a female patient vulnerable to domestic violence.
- e. Regardless of whether it is the patient, the physician or a third party who undertakes notification, the person learning of his or her potential infection should be offered support and assistance in order to access testing and treatment.
- f. National Medical Associations should develop guidelines to assist physicians in decision-making related to notification. These guidelines should help physicians understand the legal requirements and consequences of notification decisions as well as the medical, psychological, social and ethical considerations.
- g. National Medical Associations should work with governments to ensure that physicians who carry out their ethical obligation to notify individuals at risk, and who take precautions to protect the identity of their patient, are afforded adequate legal protection.

## **MEDICAL EDUCATION**

1. National Medical Associations should assist in ensuring that there is training and education of physicians in the most current prevention strategies and medical treatments available for all stages of HIV/AIDS, including prevention and support.

2. National Medical Associations should insist upon, and assist with when possible, the education of physicians in the relevant psychological, legal, cultural and social dimensions of HIV/AIDS.
3. National Medical Associations should fully support the efforts of physicians wishing to concentrate their expertise in HIV/AIDS care, even where HIV/AIDS is not recognized as an official specialty or sub-specialty within the medical education system.
4. The WMA encourages its National Medical Associations to promote the inclusion of designated, comprehensive courses on HIV/AIDS in undergraduate and postgraduate medical education programs, as well as continuing medical education.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON MEDICAL EDUCATION**

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **PREAMBLE**

The practice of medicine is dynamic and continues to evolve. Medical education represents a continuum of learning that commences with undergraduate medical school and endures until a physician retires from active practice. Its goal is to prepare practitioners of medicine to apply the latest scientific knowledge for the promotion of health and the prevention and cure of human diseases and the mitigation of symptoms of presently incurable diseases. Medical education also comprises the ethical standards governing the thought and behaviour of physicians. All physicians have a responsibility to themselves, the profession and their patients to maintain a high standard for their medical education.

### **BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MEDICAL EDUCATION**

Medical education consists of basic medical education, postgraduate medical education, and continuing professional development. The profession, the faculties and educational institutions, and the government share the responsibility for guaranteeing that medical education meets a high quality standard throughout this continuum. The aim of medical education is to develop competent and ethical physicians that deliver high quality healthcare to the public.

### **BASIC MEDICAL EDUCATION**

The goal of basic medical education is to instruct students in the practice of the profession, and to supply the public with well-qualified physicians. The first professional degree should represent the completion of a curriculum that qualifies the student for a spectrum of career choices, including, but not limited to, patient care, public health, clinical or basic research, or medical education. Each of these choices will require additional education beyond the first professional degree.

### **SELECTION OF STUDENTS**

A general liberal education is beneficial for anyone embarking on the study of medicine. A broad cultural education in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, as well as biological and physical sciences, is advantageous. Students should be chosen for the study of



medicine on the basis of their intellectual ability, motivation, previous experiences, and character and integrity. The numbers admitted for training must meet the needs of the population and be matched by appropriate resources. Selection of students should not be influenced by age, sex, race, creed, political persuasion or national origin, although the mix of students should reflect the population.

## **FACULTY**

Basic medical education must be taught by a structured faculty. The faculty must possess the appropriate qualifications that can only be achieved through formal training and experience. The selection should not be based on age, race, creed, political affiliation, or national origin.

The faculty must foster an academic environment in which learning and inquiry are encouraged and can thrive. As such, active research to advance the body of medical knowledge and the quality of care must take place in academic settings that promote the highest medical standards. The goals, content, format and evaluation of the education provided are the responsibility of the faculty. Medical schools should ensure continued growth of the teaching skills of the faculty.

The faculty is accountable for providing its own basic curriculum in an academic environment that allows learning to flourish. The faculty should review the curriculum frequently, allowing for the needs of the community and for input from practising physicians. Furthermore, the faculty is responsible for regularly evaluating the quality of each educational experience and for reviewing each other.

In addition to competent faculty, the institution must require that library resources, research laboratories, clinical facilities, and study areas be available in sufficient quantity to meet the needs of all learners. Moreover, a proper administrative structure, including but not limited to academic records, must be maintained in order to provide the most comprehensive education.

## **CONTENT OF BASIC MEDICAL EDUCATION**

The educational content should equip the student with a broad base of general knowledge in the whole field of medicine. This includes a study of the biological and behavioural sciences as well as the socio-economics of health care. These sciences are basic to an understanding of clinical medicine. Critical thinking and self-directed learning should also be required, as should firm grounding in the ethical principles upon which the physicians will function and in the principles of human rights. The student should also be introduced to medical research and its methodology at this stage.

## **CLINICAL EDUCATION**

The clinical component of medical education must be centered on the supervised study of

patients and must involve direct experiences in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. The clinical component should include personal diagnostic and therapeutic experiences with a gradual increase in responsibilities. An appropriate balance among the patient base, trainees and teachers must be observed.

Before beginning independent practice, every physician should complete a formal program of supervised clinical education. This clinical experience should range from primary to tertiary care in a variety of inpatient and outpatient settings, such as university hospitals, community hospitals and other health care facilities.

The faculty and medical schools have the responsibility to ensure that students who have graduated and received the first professional degree have acquired a basic understanding of clinical medicine and the basic skills needed to evaluate clinical problems and take appropriate action independently, and exhibit the attitude and character to be an ethical physician.

## **POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION**

It is highly desirable, and in many jurisdictions it is already a requirement, that a graduate from a basic medical education institution participate in a postgraduate training program prior to obtaining a license. Postgraduate medical education, the second phase of medical education, prepares physicians for practice in a medical specialty. Postgraduate medical education focuses on the development of clinical skills and general and professional competencies and on the acquisition of detailed factual knowledge in a medical specialty. This learning process prepares the physician for the independent practice of medicine in that specialty.

The programs are based in communities, clinics, hospitals or other health care institutions and should, in most specialties, utilize both inpatient and ambulatory settings, reflecting the importance of care for adequate numbers of patients in the postgraduate medical education experience. Postgraduate medical education programs, including Transitional Year programs, are usually called residency programs, and the physicians being educated in them, residents. A resident takes on progressively greater responsibility throughout the course of a residency, consistent with individual growth in clinical experience, knowledge, and skill.

The education of resident physicians relies on an integration of didactic activity in a structured curriculum with diagnosis and management of patients under appropriate levels of supervision and scholarly activity aimed at developing and maintaining life-long learning skills. The quality of this experience is directly related to the quality of patient care, which is always the highest priority. Educational quality and patient care quality are interdependent and must be pursued in such a manner that they enhance one another. A proper balance must be maintained so that a program of postgraduate medical education does not rely on residents to meet service needs at the expense of educational objectives. A resident is prepared to undertake independent medical practice within a chosen specialty on the satisfactory completion of a residency.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PHYSICIANS

Continuing professional development\* is defined as the educational activities that serve to maintain, develop, or increase the knowledge, skills, and professional performance and relationships a physician uses to provide services for patients, the public, or the profession. Physicians should strive to further their medical education throughout their careers. These educational experiences are essential to the physician's continuing professional development: to keep abreast of developments in clinical medicine and the health care delivery environment, and to maintain the knowledge and skills necessary to provide high quality care. The goal of continuing professional development is to sustain and enhance the competent physician. Medical schools, hospitals and professional societies all share a responsibility for developing and making available to all physicians effective opportunities for continuing professional development.

The demand for physicians to provide medical care, prevent disease, and give advice in health matters calls for the highest standards of basic, postgraduate, and continuing professional development.

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\* Note on terminology

There are different uses of the term 'Continuing Professional Development' (CPD). One way to describe it is all those activities that contribute to the professional development of a physician including involvement in organized medicine, committee work in hospitals or group practices, teaching, mentoring and reading, to name just a few. One of the components of CPD should be Continuing Medical Education, which in many jurisdictions is specially defined and possibly required for licensure.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON THE PHYSICIAN'S ROLE IN OBESITY**

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### **PREAMBLE**

1. Obesity is one of the single most important health issues facing the world in the twenty-first century, affecting all countries and socio-economic groups and representing a serious drain on health care resources.
2. Obesity has complex origins linked to economic and social changes in society including the obesogenic environment within which much of the population lives.
3. Therefore the WMA urges physicians to use their roles as leaders to advocate for recognition by national health authorities that reduction in obesity should be a priority, with culturally appropriate policies involving physicians and other key stakeholders.

### **THE WMA RECOMMENDS THAT PHYSICIANS:**

1. Lead the development of societal changes that emphasize environments which support healthy food choices and regular exercise or physical activity for all people;
2. Individually and through medical associations, express concern that excessive television viewing and video game playing are impediments to physical activity among children and adolescents in many countries;
3. Encourage individuals to make healthy choices;
4. Recognise the role of personal decision making and the adverse influences exerted by current environments;
5. Recognise that collection and evaluation of data can contribute to evidence based management, and should be part of routine medical screening and evaluation throughout life;
6. Encourage the development of life skills that contribute to a healthy lifestyle in all persons and to better public knowledge of healthy diets, exercise and the dangers of smoking and excess alcohol consumption;

7. Contribute to the development of better assessment tools and databases to enable better targeted and evaluated interventions;
8. Ensure that obesity, its causes and management remain part of continuing professional development programmes for health care workers, including physicians;
9. Use pharmacotherapy and bariatric surgery consistent with evidence-based guidelines and an assessment of the risks and benefits associated with such therapies.

**WMA STATEMENT  
ON  
THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PHYSICIANS IN PREVENTING  
AND TREATING OPIATE AND PSYCHOTROPIC DRUG ABUSE**

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

**PREAMBLE**

1. Opiate and psychotropic drugs are valuable therapeutic tools when used appropriately, as medically indicated, for a variety of symptoms and conditions. Unfortunately, non-clinical misuse of these addictive substances is an enormous problem worldwide. Drug addiction is a complex social, economic and legal issue as well as a threat to public health and safety globally. It affects people from all demographic and social groups and economic spheres. In addition to exposing themselves to the direct health risks related to the inappropriate use of these substances, persons addicted to drugs may engage in high risk behaviour, such as needle-sharing and unprotected sex, and many resort to criminal activity to finance their expensive addiction. These factors increase transmission of viral infections, such as Hepatitis B and C and HIV/AIDS, among both users and non-users alike. Other results of addiction include failure to maintain employment or to function in social and family life.
2. The legal ramifications of non-medical drug use, which is illegal in most countries, generally do little to assist users in breaking free from their addiction. Despite drug programs in many correctional facilities, the availability of illegal substances is often prevalent among inmates and, in fact, some users begin their addiction in these institutions. Addressing addiction therefore falls largely to society and the health profession.
3. The World Medical Association, concerned by the widespread misuse of psychotropic and opiate drugs, urges physicians to prioritize this problem in the practice of medicine and to adhere to the following guidelines.

**PRINCIPLES**

1. Responsible prescribing practices
  - a. Physicians should be aware of the addictive properties of certain psychotropic and opiate drugs. Such drugs should be prescribed with the greatest restraint, observing the strictest possible generally accepted medical indications. Physicians must take all necessary measures to ensure that they are fully informed of the effects of these drugs. This includes reviewing up-to-date research regarding dosage, potential effectiveness for the specific condition, potential side effects and interactions and prevalence of misuse.

- b. When such drugs are medically indicated, their use must be carefully monitored to ensure that the patient is following strict instructions regarding dosage, timing and any other factors associated with the safe use of the particular drug. All appropriate measures must be taken to prevent the stockpiling, resale or other illicit usage of the drug.
  - c. Patients must be fully informed of all potential therapeutic and non-therapeutic effects of psychotropic and opiate drugs, including potential for addiction, and be fully involved in the decision to take them. No competent patient should be forced to take any psychotropic drug against his or her will.
  - d. Physicians should be aware of non-medical factors that may predispose patients to addiction. These may include, among others, family history, past addiction, emotional trauma, depression or other mental health conditions and peer pressure, especially among young persons.
  - e. Physicians should learn to recognize 'drug seekers', addicted patients who attempt to obtain psychotropic and opiate drugs under false medical pretences. Drug seekers often consult more than one physician in an effort to obtain multiple prescriptions. In extreme cases, drug seekers may harm themselves to create symptoms to obtain a prescription. All patient conditions and symptoms should be clinically verified, to the extent possible, and meticulous records maintained regarding the patient's drug history. If databases containing patient drug records and prescribing histories are available, they should be consulted.
  - f. When prescribing any psychotropic or opiate substance to minors, physicians must ensure that the parents or guardians of the patient are fully informed of the potential misuse of the drug and encouraged to monitor the child carefully to ensure adherence to the physician's instructions. Parents or guardians should be informed that, in some countries, it is increasingly common for children to sell prescription drugs to their peers.
2. Non-drug therapy for addicts to opiate and psychotropic drugs
    - a. Physicians should be aware of all non-drug treatment options for addicts to opiate and psychotropic drugs, including inpatient and outpatient programs and therapeutic communities, in which recovering addicts live in a supportive, drug-free environment. Most treatment programs are focused on breaking the cycle of drug dependence through detoxification, counselling - including ongoing peer support - and permanent abstinence from the use of any addictive opiate or psychotropic substance, including alcohol. Some offer educational and/or vocational programs to facilitate successful reintegration into community life.
    - b. Physicians should encourage their patients to participate in drug treatment programs at the earliest possible stage of addiction.
    - c. All efforts should be made to respect the dignity and autonomy of addicted patients. Involuntary inpatient treatment of addicted persons should be a last resort, according to established guidelines and, where applicable, legal requirements.

### 3. Drug therapy for addicts to opiate drugs

- a. In some cases, persons addicted to opiate drugs may be treated using medications that relieve withdrawal symptoms and cravings for the addictive substance without producing the 'high' associated with opiates. These medications also provide cross tolerance to other opioids. The objective of drug treatment is the immediate cessation of the use of opiate drugs.
- b. Drug therapy can assist the opiate-dependent patient to function in his or her normal environment and activities while working to overcome the opiate addiction. However, it should always be part of a multi-disciplinary approach that includes proven non-drug treatment elements, such as counselling and peer support.
- c. Drug therapy should be administered according to established evidence-based guidelines and supervised by specially trained physicians with an appropriate support team.

### 4. Awareness raising and policy development

- a. National Medical Associations (NMAs) should engage in cross-sectoral national efforts to raise awareness of the risks associated with the abuse of opiate and psychotropic drugs and to ensure the availability of appropriate treatment options for addicted persons. NMAs should encourage their members to participate in similar programs at the community level.
- b. NMAs should promote appropriate drug prevention programming at all levels of the educational system, recognizing that experimentation with drugs is increasingly prevalent among younger age groups.
- c. NMAs and physicians should participate in the development of evidence-based guidelines that support a multi-disciplinary approach to the treatment of drug addiction, including harm reduction strategies such as needle exchange programmes.
- d. NMAs should participate in the development of legal procedures relating to illegal drug use to ensure that addicted persons are recognized as entitled to receive appropriate medical and rehabilitative care, including in correctional institutions.

## CONCLUSION

1. Physicians have an important role to play in the treatment of drug addiction, both as clinicians and as advocates for the treatment, rights and dignity of persons addicted to these harmful substances. Treatment of addiction, like treatment for any disease or condition, should be undertaken in the best interests of the patient and according to established principles of medical ethics.



## WMA STATEMENT ON HUMAN TISSUE FOR TRANSPLANTATION

Adopted by the 58<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Copenhagen, Denmark, October 2007

### INTRODUCTION

The use of human cells and tissue for therapeutic purposes in medicine covers a broad spectrum. A differentiated examination is necessary in order to do justice to the different requirements of the various sectors of tissue medicine.

The use of so-called "tissue transplants", such as corneas, bone, blood vessels and cardiac valves, is an established treatment method in medicine. Tissues are removed, conserved, stored and then implanted in patients after varying periods of time. In principle, they should therefore be treated in the same way as organs that are used for transplantation (cf. WMA Statement on Human Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation, Edinburgh 2000).

In contrast, so-called "advanced therapies", such as tissue engineering and other techniques of regenerative medicine, involve the use of human tissue as starting material for manufacturing a processed end product. Even though established therapeutic options already exist, it can be expected that the therapeutic importance of these methods may continue to increase, and that there may be many developments in this field in the future. In view of the further processing of the tissue involved, the frequently industrial nature of the manufacturing organizations and the possibility of tissue being pooled, different regulations are necessary for this sector of tissue medicine than for tissue transplantation.

The WMA limits this Statement to tissue in the sense of tissue transplants, and gives the following **Recommendations** for this sector of tissue medicine:

1. Physicians are fundamentally obliged to treat patients according to the best of their knowledge and expertise. However, this obligation must not be taken to the point where, for example, the human tissue necessary for therapy is procured in an unethical or illegal manner. Tissue must always be procured with due consideration for human rights and the principles of medical ethics.
2. To secure the provision of tissue for transplantation, physicians should inform potential donors and/or their family members about the possibility of tissue donation. In the event of combined organ and tissue donation, information should be provided, and consent obtained, in one step.
3. The voluntariness of tissue donation must be ensured. The informed and non-coerced consent of the donor or his/her family members is required for any use of human tissue for transplantation. Free and informed decision-making is a process requiring the

exchange and understanding of information and the absence of coercion. Because prisoners and other individuals in custody are not in a position to give consent freely and can be subject to coercion, their tissues must not be used for transplantation except for members of their immediate family.

4. Financial incentives such as direct payments for donating tissue for transplantation are to be rejected – in the same way that they are in connection with organ transplants. All other steps, such as the procurement, testing, processing, conservation, storage and allocation of tissue transplants, should likewise not be commercialised.
5. If both organs and tissue can be removed from a potential donor for transplantation, organ donation must be given priority over tissue donation.
6. Posthumous donation of tissue to a specific recipient (directed donation beyond the immediate family) is to be avoided. Living directed donation requires both: a) proof of direct personal ties between donor and recipient (e.g. blood relations, spouses), and b) exclusion of potentially coercive material interests.
7. For posthumous tissue donation, the WMA calls for the determination of death to be conducted in accordance with its Declaration of Sydney on the Determination of Death.
8. The risk of diseases (e.g. infections, malignant tumors) being transmitted by transplanted tissue must be minimized through appropriate testing that does not merely comply with sufficient standards, but additionally reflects the respective, nationally implemented state of medical science and technology.
9. In the case of a delayed diagnosis for infectious disease or malignancy of the donor, an alert should immediately be reported to all tissue recipients in order to institute the appropriate precautionary steps.
10. Contamination must be avoided when removing, storing, processing and transplanting tissue.
11. Unethical allocation formulas for tissue transplants are to be rejected. Allocation should be based on the medical indication, urgency and prospects of success.
12. Experimental and clinical studies, as well as open discussions on ethical and moral principles in society, are important for establishing new therapeutic methods. All experimental and clinical studies are to be conducted in accordance with the WMA Declaration of Helsinki. Scientists and physicians should continuously inform the public about developments in tissue medicine and its therapeutic options.
13. International exchange of tissue for transplantation should be properly regulated according to agreed upon standards.
14. Information on tissue donors should be stored and maintained by national transplant organizations and should be provided only if the living donor or family of the deceased donor provides free and informed consent.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON THE ETHICS OF TELEMEDICINE**

Adopted by the 58<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Copenhagen, Denmark, October 2007

### **DEFINITION**

Telemedicine is the practice of medicine over a distance, in which interventions, diagnostic and treatment decisions and recommendations are based on data, documents and other information transmitted through telecommunication systems.

### **PREAMBLE**

The development and implementation of information and communication technology are creating new modalities for providing care for patients. These enabling tools offer different ways of practising medicine. The adoption of telemedicine is justified because of its speed and its capacity to reach patients with limited access to medical assistance, in addition to its power to improve health care.

Physicians must respect the following ethical guidelines when practising telemedicine.

### **PRINCIPLES**

#### **Patient-physician relationship and confidentiality**

The patient-physician relationship should be based on a personal encounter and sufficient knowledge of the patient's personal history. Telemedicine should be employed primarily in situations in which a physician cannot be physically present within a safe and acceptable time period.

The patient-physician relationship must be based on mutual trust and respect. It is therefore essential that the physician and patient be able to identify each other reliably when telemedicine is employed.

Ideally, telemedicine should be employed only in cases in which a prior in-person relationship exists between the patient and the physician involved in arranging or providing the telemedicine service.

The physician must aim to ensure that patient confidentiality and data integrity are not compromised. Data obtained during a telemedical consultation must be secured through encryption and other security precautions must be taken to prevent access by unauthorized persons.

### **Responsibilities of the physician**

A physician whose advice is sought through the use of telemedicine should keep a detailed record of the advice he/she delivers as well as the information he/she received and on which the advice was based.

It is the obligation of the physician to ensure that the patient and the health professionals or family members caring for the patient are able to use the necessary telecommunication system and necessary instruments. The physician must seek to ensure that the patient has understood the advice and treatment suggestions given and that the continuity of care is guaranteed.

The physician asking for another physician's advice or second opinion remains responsible for treatment and other decisions and recommendations given to the patient.

A physician should be aware of and respect the special difficulties and uncertainties that may arise when he/she is in contact with the patient through means of tele-communication. A physician must be prepared to recommend direct patient-doctor contact when he/she feels that the situation calls for it.

### **Quality of care**

Quality assessment measures must be used regularly to ensure the best possible diagnostic and treatment practices in telemedicine.

The possibilities and weaknesses of telemedicine in emergencies must be acknowledged. If it is necessary to use telemedicine in an emergency situation, the advice and treatment suggestions are influenced by the level of threat to the patient and the know-how and capacity of the persons who are with the patient.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The WMA and National Medical Associations should encourage the development of national legislation and international agreements on subjects related to the practise of telemedicine, such as e-prescribing, physician registration, liability and the legal status of electronic medical records.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON REDUCING DIETARY SODIUM INTAKE**

Adopted by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) remain a leading cause of mortality throughout the world. Risk factors include high blood cholesterol, hypertension, cigarette smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, and diabetes. These risk factors are largely preventable and modifiable.

Globally, about 25% of all deaths from cardiovascular diseases are due to hypertension. This figure may underestimate the true impact of elevated blood pressure since the blood pressure cardiovascular risk continuum begins at 115/75 mm Hg. There is overwhelming evidence that excessive sodium intake is a risk factor for the development, or worsening of hypertension, and it may also be an independent risk factor for cardiovascular diseases as well as all-cause mortality.

Substantial overall benefits can accrue from even small reductions in the population's blood pressure. Depending upon an individual's salt sensitivity, sodium may cause great damage to both normotensive and hypertensive populations. Therefore, population-wide efforts to reduce dietary sodium intake are a cost-effective way to reduce overall hypertension levels and subsequent cardiovascular disease.

### **BACKGROUND**

In acculturated populations, the level of blood pressure, the incremental rise in blood pressure with age, and the prevalence of hypertension are related to salt intake. Observational studies and randomized controlled trials document a clear and consistent effect of salt consumption on increased blood pressure. Blood pressure is also affected by other foods and nutrients, and a reduced salt intake should be only one component of a comprehensive strategy to lower blood pressure. Increasing physical activity, consuming a diet high in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated and total fats, maintenance of optimal body weight, and moderation in alcohol intake are also recommended lifestyle approaches to preventing and managing hypertension and reducing its impact on cardiovascular disease.

The World Health Organization recommends that average daily sodium consumption in adults should be less than 2000 mg (5 g salt). Epidemiologic evidence, including the marked reduction of either hypertension or of a progressive rise in blood pressure with advancing age in populations with an average sodium ingestion <1500 mg (3.8 g salt) per day, supports the concept of such a threshold, above which the risk for harmful cardiovascular disease consequences begins to increase.

The world's population consumes 2300-4600 mg of sodium (5.8 - 11.5 g salt) per day per 2000 calories. In developed countries, it is estimated that 75% to 80% of the daily intake of sodium comes from processed foods and foods that are prepared outside of the home (e.g., fast food or restaurant meals). Therefore, any meaningful strategy to reduce population salt intake must rely on food manufacturers and preparers to reduce the amount added during preparation as well as on nutritional education programs. The largest impact on sodium in the food supply of developed countries may derive from the stepwise lowering of sodium in foods that are most commonly eaten and are large contributors to sodium intake. In less developed countries, reductions in sodium are more likely to be achieved by adding less salt during cooking inside the home.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

National Medical Associations should:

- In cooperation with national and international health organizations, work to educate consumers about the effects of sodium intake on hypertension and cardiovascular disease, the benefits of long-term reductions in sodium intake, and about the dietary sources of salt/sodium and how these can be reduced.
- Call for a stepwise 50% reduction in the sodium content of processed foods, "fast" food products, and restaurant meals over the next decade.
- Urge physicians to counsel patients about the major sources of sodium in their diets and how to reduce sodium intake, including reducing the amount of salt used in cooking at home.
- In cooperation with the food industry and government regulators, discuss ways to improve labeling of food products and develop label markings and warnings for foods high in sodium.
- Encourage government authorities to create national laws and regulations that enforce the reduction of sodium in processed foods to acceptable levels. Establish a deadline for industries to comply with new laws and regulations.
- Stimulate debate on the issue at conferences, symposia, and teleconferences in an effort to promote awareness among the medical profession regarding sodium in food and its consequences. Doctors who are well-informed will transmit the information to their patients and may be able to prescribe fewer antihypertensive medications.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON REDUCING THE GLOBAL BURDEN OF MERCURY**

Adopted by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

Mercury is a naturally occurring heavy metal that is a potent neurotoxin. The most likely routes of human exposure on a population basis are ingestion of methylmercury from contaminated fish. Less commonly, individuals are exposed via inhalation of inorganic mercury vapor after a spill or during a manufacturing process.

Mercury has been the ideal choice for use in medical devices that measure temperature and pressure. Therefore, a typical large hospital may have more than a hundred pounds of mercury onsite incorporated into various devices in separate locations.

Hospitals and clinics can avoid the occupational or environmental risk of mercury by using products that don't rely on mercury-based technology. Major healthcare institutions around the world have demonstrated that safe, effective alternative products exist, and can be safely used for most situations.

Although the rationale for instituting voluntary mercury replacement initiatives is compelling from both occupational and environmental perspectives, financial considerations may ultimately motivate hospitals to undertake a mercury replacement program. Hazardous waste clean-up costs, reporting requirements for spills, disruptions in services, and staff training are costly. The cost of cleaning up one significant contamination can be substantially higher than the cost of converting to mercury-free alternatives.

By implementing a "best practices" management method for mercury use, the need for increased government regulations in the future, may be avoided. Such regulations may create costly burdens that some facilities may not be able to meet.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are based on the urgent need to reduce both the supply and demand of mercury in the health care sector:

#### **Global**

The World Medical Association and its member national medical associations should:

- Advocate for the United Nations and individual governments to voluntarily cooperate to implement key features of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Mercury Programme, which provides a framework for reducing the use, release, trade and risk related to mercury.
- Enhance the activity of existing partnerships.

### Regional/National

National medical associations should advocate that their governments work to reduce risks related to mercury in the environment by:

- reducing reliance on mercury mining in favor of environmentally-friendly sources of mercury, such as recycled mercury.
- developing options and scientifically sound plans for the long term safe storage of excess mercury supplies.
- urging governments and other stakeholders to continue to enhance their support of the UNEP Mercury Programme partnerships, through the provision of technical and financial resources.
- encouraging a phase-out of mercury use in the health care sector
- designing and implementing regulations and/or requirements designed to significantly reduce mercury emissions from coal combustion and cement production by using specific mercury emission controls.

### Local

Physicians should:

- Explore eliminating mercury-containing products in their offices and clinical practices, including thermometers, sphygmomanometers, gastrointestinal tubes, batteries, lamps, electrical supplies, thermostats, pressure gauges, and other laboratory reagents and devices.
- Ensure that local hospitals and medical facilities have a plan to identify sources of mercury in their workplace, a commitment to mercury reduction, and a mercury management policy regarding recycling, disposal and education.
- Encourage local hospitals and medical facilities to phase out mercury-containing products and switch to non-mercury equivalents.
- Counsel patients about local and national advisories related to fish consumption designed to limit exposure to mercury in children and women of childbearing age.



## WMA STATEMENT ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Adopted by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### PREAMBLE

This policy is intended to identify areas where a conflict of interest might occur during the day-to-day practice of medicine, and to assist physicians in resolving such conflicts in the best interests of their patients. A conflict of interest is understood to exist when professional judgement concerning direct patient care might be unduly influenced by a secondary interest.

In some cases, it may be enough to acknowledge that a potential or perceived conflict exists. In others, specific steps to resolve the conflict may be required. Some conflicts of interest are inevitable and there is nothing inherently unethical in the occurrence of conflicts of interest in medicine but it is the manner in which they are addressed that is crucial.

In addition to the clinical practice of medicine and direct patient care, physicians have traditionally served in several different roles and pursued various other interests, such as participation in research, the education of future physicians and physicians in training and the occupation of administrative or managerial positions. As private interests within medicine have expanded in many locales, physicians have occasionally provided their expertise to these endeavours as well, acting as consultants (and sometimes employees) for private enterprise.

Although the participation of physicians in many of these activities will ultimately serve the greater public good, the primary obligation of the individual physician continues to be the health and well-being of his or her patients. Other interests must not be allowed to influence clinical decision-making (or even have the potential to do so).

Each doctor has a moral duty to scrutinise his or her own behaviour for potential conflicts of interest, even if the conflicts fall outside the kinds of examples or situations addressed in this document. If unacknowledged, conflicts of interest can seriously undermine patient trust in the medical profession as well as in the individual practitioner.

Physicians may also wish to avail themselves of additional resources such as specialty societies, national medical associations or regulatory authorities, and should be aware of applicable national regulations and laws.

### RECOMMENDATION

#### Research

The interests of the clinician and the researcher may not be the same. If the same individual is assuming both roles, as is often the case, the potential conflict should be addressed by ensuring that appropriate steps are put in place to protect the patient, including disclosure of the potential conflict to the patient.

As stated in the Declaration of Helsinki:

- The Declaration of Geneva of the World Medical Association states that, "The health of my patient will be my first consideration," and the International Code of Medical Ethics declares that, "A physician shall act only in the patient's interest when providing medical care which might have the effect of weakening the physical and mental condition of the patient."
- The Declaration of Helsinki states that "In medical research involving human subjects, the well-being of the individual research subject must take precedence over all other interests."

Research should be conducted primarily for the advancement of medical science. A physician should never place his or her financial interests above the welfare of his or her patient. Patient interests and scientific integrity must be paramount.

All relevant and material physician-researcher relationships and interests must be disclosed to potential research participants, research ethics boards, appropriate regulatory oversight bodies, medical journals, conference participants and the medical centre where the research is conducted.

All hypothesis-testing research trials should be registered with a publicly-accessible research registry.

A clear contract should be signed by all parties, including sponsors, investigators and program participants, clarifying terms relating to, at a minimum:

- financial compensation for the physician-researcher (which should approximate lost clinical earnings)
- ownership of research results (which should rest with the investigator)
- the right of the investigator to publish negative results
- the right of the investigator to release relevant information to trial participants at any point during the study.

Physician-researchers should retain control of and should have full access to all trial data, and should decline non-disclosure clauses.

Physician-researchers should ensure that, regardless of the trial results, the presentation or publication of the results of hypothesis-testing trials will not be unduly delayed or otherwise obstructed.

Referral fees should not be accepted for providing the names of potential trial participants, and patient information should not be released without the consent of the patient, except where required by legislation or regulatory authorities.

Any compensation received from trial sponsors should approximately replace lost clinical income and should be commensurate with the efforts and responsibilities of the physician performing the research. When enrolment is particularly challenging and time-consuming, reasonable additional payments may be made to compensate the clinical investigator or institution specifically for time and effort spent on extra recruiting efforts to enrol appropriate research participants. Escalating bonuses designed to increase trial enrolment should not be accepted.

Physician-researchers should decline requests to review grant applications or research paper submissions from colleagues or competitors where their relationship would have the potential to influence their judgment on the matter.

Payments or compensation of any sort should not be tied to the outcome of clinical trials. Physician-researchers should not have a financial interest in a company sponsoring a trial or a product being studied in a clinical trial if this financial interest could be affected positively or negatively by the results of the trial; they should have no direct financial stake in the results of the trial. They should not purchase, buy or sell stock (shares) in the company while the trial is ongoing and until the results have been made public. This might not apply for those physicians who have developed a medication but are not part of the enrolment process.

Physician-researchers should only participate in clinical trials when they relate to their area of medical expertise and they should have adequate training in the conduct of research and the principles of research ethics.

Authorship should be determined prior to the start of the trial and should be based on substantive scientific contribution.

### **Education**

The educational needs of students and the quality of their training experience must be balanced with the best interests of patients. Where these are in conflict, the interests of patients will take precedence.

While recognizing that medical trainees require experience with real patients, physician-educators must ensure that these trainees receive supervision commensurate with their level of training.

Patients should be made aware that their medical care may be performed in part by students and physicians in training, including the performance of procedures and surgery, and where possible should give appropriate informed consent to this effect.

Patients should be made aware of the identity and qualifications of the individuals involved in their care.

Refusal by a patient to involve trainees in their care should not affect the amount or quality of care they subsequently receive.

### **Self-referrals and fee-splitting**

All referrals and prescriptions (whether for specific goods or services) should be based on an objective assessment of the quality of the service or of the physician to whom the patient has been referred.

Referral by physicians to health care facilities (such as laboratories) where they do not engage in professional activities but in which they have a financial interest is called self-referral. This practice has the potential to significantly influence clinical decision-making and is not generally considered acceptable unless there is a need in that particular community for the facility and other ownership is not a possibility (for example, in small rural communities). The physician in this situation should receive no more financial interest than would an ordinary investor.

Kickbacks (or fee-splitting) occur when a physician receives financial consideration for referring a patient to a specific practitioner or for a specific service for which a fee is charged. This practice is not acceptable.

### **Physician offices**

For reasons of patient convenience, many physician offices are located in close geographic proximity to other medical services such as laboratories, pharmacies and opticians. The physician should not receive any financial compensation or other consideration either for referring a patient to these services, or for being located in close geographical proximity to them. Physician-owned buildings should not charge above-market or below-market rates to tenants.

Non-medical products (those having nothing to do with patient health or the practice of medicine) and scientifically non-validated medical products should not be sold out of the physician's office. If scientifically validated medical products are sold out of the physician's office charges should be limited to the costs incurred in making them available and the products should be offered in such a way that the patient does not feel pressured to purchase them.

### **Organizational/institutional conflicts**

Health care institutions in particular are increasingly subject to a number of pressures that threaten several of their roles, and many academic medical centres have begun to identify alternate sources of revenue. Policies should be in place to ensure that these new sources are not in conflict with the values and mission of the institution (for example, tobacco funding in medical schools).

Individual medical organizations and institutions (including, but not limited to, medical schools, hospitals, national medical associations, official/state regulators and research institutions) should develop and, where possible, enforce conflict of interest guidelines for their employees and members.

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Physician-researchers and others will benefit from the development of institutional conflict of interest guidelines to assist them in making appropriate disclosure and clearly identifying situations where a conflict would preclude them from participating in a research study or other activity.

Academic health care institutions should have a clear demarcation between investment decision-making committees, technology transfer and the research arm of the institution.

Written policies should provide guidelines for disclosure requirements, or for discontinuing participation in the decision-making process, for those individuals who are conflicted due to sponsored research, consulting agreements, private holdings or licensing agreements.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH**

Adopted by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### **PREAMBLE**

The field of stem cell research has been developing during the last decade and is now one of the fastest growing areas of biotechnology.

Stem cells can be harvested from an established tissue (adult stem cell) or from the blood of the umbilical cord and these sources, for many, create no specific ethical dilemma.

Stem cells can also be obtained from the embryo (embryonic stem cells). Obtaining and using these stem cells raises specific ethical questions and is, for some, problematic.

Some legislatures have prohibited obtaining and using embryonic stem cells. Others have allowed using so-called spare or excess embryos from assisted reproduction cycles for research purposes, but often the production of embryos solely for research purposes is prohibited. Many jurisdictions have no specific legislative provisions with respect to embryonic stem cells.

The basis of legal and ethical consideration is that human embryos have a specific and special ethical status. This has generated debate amongst ethicists, philosophers, clinicians, scientists, health workers, the public and legislators.

Some assisted reproductive technology, specifically in vitro fertilisation, involves the production of embryos outside of the human body. In many cases not all of these are needed to achieve pregnancies. Those not used, so called “spare or excess embryos”, may be donated for the treatment of others or for research or stored for some time and then destroyed.

The differing legislative approaches to the use of embryos for research, may be reflected in law prohibiting the public funding of such research.

Stem cells can be used to conduct research into human disease and basic developmental biology. There are many current research programs investigating the use of stem cells to treat human disease. Although clinical studies have not yet validated the use of stem cells in therapy, the potential for therapeutic use in the future has been widely acknowledged by members of the medical and scientific community.

It is too early to assess the likelihood of success in any specific therapy and the place of stem cells amongst a variety of forms of treatments.

Public views of stem cell research are at least as varied as those of doctors and scientists. Much public debate centres on concerns of abuse of the technology as well as specific concerns about the use of embryos.

Regulation according to established ethical principles is likely to alleviate concerns for many members of the public, especially if associated with careful and credible policing of the regulations.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Whenever possible research should be carried out using stem cells that are not of embryonic origin. However, there will be circumstances where only embryonic stem cells will be suitable for the research model.

All research on stem cells, regardless of their origin, must be carried out according to agreed ethical principles. Regulation and legislation must also accord with these principles to avoid confusion or conflicts between law and ethics.

The ethical principles should, where possible, follow international agreement. Recognising that different groups have widely varying views on the use, especially, of embryonic stem cells, these principles should be drafted to allow different jurisdictions to limit their allowed levels of research as locally appropriate.

All and any research using embryos must only occur when written informed consent has been obtained from both donors of the genetic material that created the embryo.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON INEQUALITIES IN HEALTH**

Adopted by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### **PREAMBLE**

For over 150 years, the existence of health inequality has been acknowledged worldwide. The recently published Final Report of the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health has highlighted the critical importance of health equity to the health, economy and social cohesiveness of all countries. It is clear that while there are major differences between countries, especially between the developing and developed countries, there are also substantial disparities within countries with respect to various measures of socio-economic and cultural diversity. Disparities in health can be defined as either disparities in access to healthcare, disparities in quality of care received, or both. The differences manifest themselves in a wide variety of health measures, such as life expectancy, infant mortality, and childhood mortality. Particularly disturbing is evidence of the gradual and ongoing widening of specific disparities.

At the core of this issue is the healthcare provided by physicians. National medical associations should take an active role in combating social and health inequalities in order to allow their physician members the ability to provide equal, quality service to all.

The Role of the Health Care System:

While the major causes of health disparities lie in the socio-economic and cultural diversity of population groups, there is a very significant role for the health care system in their prevention and reduction. This role can be summarized as follows:

- To prevent the health effects of socio-economic and cultural inequality and inequity – especially by health promotion and disease prevention activities (Primary Prevention)
- To Identify, treat and reduce existing health inequality, e.g. early diagnosis of disease, quality management of chronic disease, rehabilitation (Secondary and Tertiary Prevention).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The members of the medical profession, faced with treating the results of this inequity, have a major responsibility and call on their national medical associations to:

- Recognize the importance of health inequality and the need to influence national policy and action for its prevention and reduction



- Identify the social and cultural risk factors to which patients and families are exposed and to plan clinical activities (diagnostic and treatment) to counter their consequences.
- Advocate for the abolishment of financial barriers to obtaining needed medical care.
- Advocate for equal access for all to health care services irrespective of geographic, social, age, gender, religious, ethnic and economic differences or sexual orientation.
- Require the inclusion of health inequality studies (including the scope, severity, causes, health, economic and social implications) as well as the provision of cultural competence tools, at all levels of academic medical training, including further training for those already in clinical practice.

**WMA STATEMENT  
ON  
GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE USE OF TELEHEALTH  
FOR THE PROVISION OF HEALTH CARE**

Adopted by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

**DEFINITION**

Telehealth is the use of information and communications technology to deliver health and healthcare services and information over large and small distances.

**PREAMBLE**

The prevalence of telemedicine and telehealth in most countries in the world has led the World Medical Association (WMA) to develop ethical guidelines for physicians who use this modality to provide health care services. The WMA defines telemedicine as “the practice of medicine over a distance, in which interventions, diagnostics and treatment decisions and recommendations are based on data, including voice and images, documents and other information transmitted through telecommunication systems”. This could include telephone and internet.

A broader telehealth definition brings into play the entire range of activities that support the patient and the public in being healthy: prevention, promotion, diagnostics self-care and treatment are all areas where physicians play an important role. It is this broader definition that the WMA endorses.

Telehealth/telemedicine helps eliminate distance barriers and improve equity of access to services that otherwise often would not be available in remote, rural and increasingly urban communities. It is about transmitting voice, data, images, and information rather than physically moving patients, health professionals and educators – thereby improving access, timeliness and convenience and reducing travel costs. It also has the added benefit that the patients more easily can become active participants in their own health and well-being and are able to engage in educational programs aimed at fostering wellness from the comfort, convenience and safety of their own homes. While this statement focuses mainly on telehealth encounters between patients and health professionals, it should be noted that another important aspect of telehealth is the use of tele-communication between health professionals when providing health care.

The telemedicine/telehealth agenda will become an integral part of the larger eHealth programs that most countries in the developed world are pursuing, as are many countries in the developing world. More and more solutions are being introduced that provide the ability to deliver care through an e-channel and therefore more physicians will have access to this capability to provide care to their patients.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **Duty of Care**

While the practice of telehealth challenges the conventional perception of the physician-patient relationship, there is a “duty of care” established in all telehealth encounters between the physician and the patient as in any healthcare encounter.

The physician needs to give clear and explicit direction to the patient during the telehealth encounter as to who has ongoing responsibility for any required follow-up and ongoing health care. Physician supervision regarding protocols, conferencing and medical record review is required in all settings and circumstances. Physicians should have the capability to immediately contact nonphysician providers and technicians as well as patients.

The physician needs to clarify ongoing responsibility for the patient with any other health care providers who are involved in the patient’s care.

The legal responsibility of health professionals providing health care through means of telehealth must be clearly defined by the appropriate jurisdiction.

### **Communication with Patients**

The physician will take steps to ensure that quality of communication during a telehealth encounter is maximized. Any significant technical deficiencies should be noted in the documentation of the consultation.

The physician providing telehealth services should be familiar with the technology.

The physician should be aware of and accommodate the limitations of video/audio in the provision of telehealth health care services.

The physician should receive education/orientation in telehealth communication skills prior to the initial telehealth encounter.

The physician needs to determine to the best of his or her ability each patient’s appropriateness for, and level of comfort with, telehealth prior to or at the encounter, while recognizing that this will not be possible in all situations.

The physician, to the extent possible, should ensure that the patient receives sufficient education/orientation to the telehealth process and communication issues prior to their initial telehealth encounter.

### **Standards of Practice/Quality of Clinical Care**

The physician must be satisfied that the standard of care delivered via telehealth is “reasonable” and at least equivalent to any other type of care that can be delivered to the patient/client, considering the specific context, location and timing, and relative availability of traditional care. If the “reasonable” standard cannot be satisfied via telehealth, the physician should inform the patient and suggest an alternative type of health care delivery/service.

The physician should use existing clinical practice guidelines, whenever possible, to guide the delivery of care in the telehealth setting, recognizing that certain modifications may need to be made to accommodate specific circumstances.

The physician should ensure that any modifications to clinical practice guidelines for the telehealth setting are approved by the discipline's clinical governing body or association.

The physician providing telehealth services should follow all relevant protocols and procedures related to: informed consent (verbal, written, and recorded); privacy and confidentiality; documentation; ownership of patient/client record; and appropriate video/telephone behaviours.

The physician providing telehealth services ensures compliance with the relevant legislation and professional guidelines of the jurisdiction from which the services are provided as well as the jurisdiction from which the service is administered.

The physician providing telehealth services should possess the following: required skills expected in the professional's field of practice; competent communication skills; an understanding of the scope of service being provided via telehealth; orientation to and ability to navigate the technology system and environment; an understanding of the telehealth operational protocols and procedures; and an understanding of any limitations of the technology being used.

#### **Clinical Outcomes**

Organizations providing telehealth programs should monitor and continuously strive to improve the quality of services in order to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Organizations providing telehealth programs should have in place a systematic method of collecting, evaluating and reporting meaningful health care outcome data and clinical effectiveness. Quality indicators should be identified and utilized.

#### **Patient Confidentiality**

The confidentiality of patient information should be protected.

The health care organization and physician providing telehealth services should be aware of, and ensure compliance with, relevant legislation and regulations designed to protect the confidentiality of patient/client information and have its own confidentiality guidelines.

The health care organizations and the physician are encouraged to consult with legal counsel and relevant professional licensing/regulatory bodies when determining confidentiality policy.

#### **Informed Consent**

Relevant legislation and regulations that relate to patient decision-making and consent should be applied.

To the extent possible, informed consent shall be obtained by the physician before starting any service or intervention. Where appropriate the patient's consent should be noted in the documentation of the consultation.

Consent for telehealth should follow similar principles and processes as those used for other health services.

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## **WMA STATEMENT ON ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS**

Adopted by the 61<sup>st</sup> WMA General Assembly, Vancouver, Canada, October 2010

### **PREAMBLE**

This Statement focuses on one important aspect of environmental degradation, which is environmental contamination by harmful domestic and industrial substances. It emphasizes the harmful chemical contribution to environmental degradation and physicians' role in promoting sound management of chemicals as part of sustainable development, especially in the healthcare environment.

Most chemicals to which humans are exposed come from industrial sources and include, food additives, household consumer and cosmetic products, agrochemicals, and other substances (drugs; dietary supplements) used for therapeutic purposes. Recently, attention has been concentrated on the effects of human engineered (or synthetic) chemicals on the environment, including specific industrial or agrochemicals and on new patterns of distribution of natural substances due to human activity. As the number of such compounds has multiplied, governments and international organizations have begun to develop a more comprehensive approach to their safe regulation.

While governments have the primary responsibility for establishing a framework to protect the public's health from chemical hazards, the World Medical Association, on behalf of its members, emphasizes the need to highlight the human health risks and make recommendations for further action.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Chemicals of Concern**

During the last half-century, the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers dominated agricultural practice and manufacturing industries rapidly expanded their use of synthetic chemicals in the production of consumer and industrial goods<sup>1</sup>. The greatest concern relates to chemicals, which persist in the environment, have low rates of degradation, bioaccumulate in human and animal tissue (concentrating as they move up the food chain), and which have significant harmful impacts on human health and the environment (particularly at low concentrations)<sup>2</sup>. Some naturally occurring metals including lead, mercury, and cadmium have industrial sources and are also of concern. Advances in environmental health research including environmental and human sampling and measuring techniques, and better information about the potential of low dose human health effects have helped to underscore emerging concerns.

Health effects from chemical emissions can be direct (occurring as an immediate effect of the emission) or indirect. Indirect health effects are caused by the emissions' effects on water, air and food quality as well as the alterations in regional and global systems, such as red tide in many oceans, and the ozone layer and the climate, to which the emissions may contribute.

### **National and International Actions**

The model of regulation of chemicals varies widely both within and between countries, from voluntary controls to statutory legislation. It is important that all countries move to a coherent, standardized national legislated approach to regulatory control. Furthermore, international regulations must be coherent such that developing countries will not be forced by economic circumstances to circumvent potentially weak national regulations. An example of a legislative framework can be found at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/index.htm>.

Synthetic chemicals include all substances that are produced by, or result from, human activities including industrial and household chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides, chemicals contained in products and in wastes, prescription and over-the-counter drug products and dietary supplements, and unintentionally produced byproducts of industrial processes or incineration, like dioxins. Furthermore, nanomaterials, in some circumstances, can be regulated by synthetic chemicals regulations but in other cases, may need explicit regulation.

### **Notable International Agreements on Chemicals**

Several notable agreements on chemicals exist. These were prompted by the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment declaration in 1972 (Stockholm) on the discharge of toxic substances into the environment<sup>3</sup>. These agreements include the 1989 Basel Convention to control/prevent trans-boundary movements of hazardous wastes, the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the 1998 Rotterdam Convention on informed consent and shipment of hazardous substances, and the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants<sup>4 5 6</sup>. It should be noted that little information is available on the efficacy of the controls.

## **STRATEGIC APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT**

Worldwide hazardous environmental contamination persists despite these agreements, making a more comprehensive approach to chemicals essential. Reasons for ongoing contamination include persistence of companies, absolute lack of controls in some countries, lack of awareness of the potential hazards, inability to apply the precautionary principle, non-adherence to the various conventions and treaties and lack of political will. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) was adopted in Dubai, on February 6, 2006 by delegates from over 100 governments and representatives of civil society. This is a voluntary global plan of action designed to assure the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle so that, by 2020, chemicals are used and produced in ways that minimize significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. The SAICM addresses both agricultural and industrial chemicals, covers all stages of the chemical life cycle of manufacture, use and disposal, and includes chemicals in products and in wastes<sup>7</sup>.

## WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (WMA) RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite these national and international initiatives, chemical contamination of the environment due to inadequately controlled chemical production and usage continues to exert harmful effects on global public health. Evidence linking some chemicals to some health issues is strong, but there is not evidence for all chemicals, especially newer or nano materials, particularly at low doses over long periods of time. Physicians and the healthcare sector are frequently required to make decisions concerning individual patient and the public as a whole based on existing data. Physicians therefore caution that they, too, have a significant role to play in closing the gap between policy formation and chemicals management and in reducing risks to human health.

### The World Medical Association Recommends That:

#### ADVOCACY

- National Medical Associations (NMAs) advocate for legislation that reduces chemical pollution, reduces human exposure to chemicals, detects and monitors harmful chemicals in both humans and the environment, and mitigates the health effects of toxic exposures with special attention to vulnerability during pregnancy and early childhood.
- NMAs urge their governments to support international efforts to restrict chemical pollution through safe management, or phase out and safer substitution when unmanageable (e.g. asbestos), with particular attention to developed countries aiding developing countries to achieve a safe environment and good health for all.
- NMAs facilitate better communication between government ministries/departments responsible for the environment and public health.
- Physicians and their medical associations advocate for environmental protection, disclosure of product constituents, sustainable development, and green chemistry within their communities, countries and regions.
- Physicians and their medical associations should support the phase out of mercury and persistent bioaccumulative and toxic chemicals in health care devices and products.
- Physicians and their medical associations should support legislation to require an environmental and health impact assessment prior to the introduction of a new chemical or a new industrial facility.
- Physicians should encourage the publication of evidence of the effects of different chemicals and dosages on human health and the environment. These publications should be accessible internationally and readily available to media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and concerned citizens locally.
- Physicians and their medical associations advocate for the development of effective and safe systems to collect and dispose of pharmaceuticals that are not consumed.
- Physicians and their medical associations should support efforts to rehabilitate or clean areas of environmental degradation based on a “polluter pays” and precautionary principles and ensure that moving forward, such principles are built into legislation.
- The WMA, NMAs and physicians should urge governments to collaborate within and between departments to ensure coherent regulations are developed.



### LEADERSHIP

#### The WMA:

- Supports the goals of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), which promotes best practices in the handling of chemicals by utilizing safer substitution, waste reduction, sustainable non-toxic building, recycling, as well as safe and sustainable waste handling in the health care sector.
- Cautions that these chemical practices must be coordinated with efforts to reduce green house gas emissions from health care to mitigate its contribution to global warming.
- Urges physicians, medical associations and countries to work collaboratively to develop systems for event alerts to ensure that health care systems and physicians are aware of high-risk industrial accidents as they occur, and receive timely accurate information regarding the management of these emergencies.
- Urges local, national and international organizations to focus on sustainable production, safer substitution, green safe jobs, and consultation with the health care community to ensure that damaging health impacts of development are anticipated and minimized.
- Emphasizes the importance of the safe disposal of pharmaceuticals as one aspect of health care's responsibility and the need for collaborative work in developing best practice models to reduce this part of the chemical waste problem.
- Encourages environmental classification of pharmaceuticals in order to stimulate prescription of environmentally less harmful pharmaceuticals.
- Encourages ongoing outcomes research on the impact of regulations and monitoring of chemicals on human health and the environment.

#### The WMA recommends that Physicians;

- Work to reduce toxic medical waste and exposures within their professional settings as part of the World Health Professional Alliance's campaign for Positive Practice Environments.
- Work to provide information on the health impacts associated with exposure to toxic chemicals, how to reduce patient exposure to specific agents and encourage behaviors that improve overall health.
- Inform patients about the importance of safe disposal of pharmaceuticals that are not consumed.
- Work with others to help address the gaps in research regarding the environment and health (i.e., patterns and burden of disease attributed to environmental degradation; community and household impacts of industrial chemicals; the most vulnerable populations and protections for such populations).

### PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & CAPACITY BUILDING

#### The WMA recommends that:

- Physicians and their professional associations assist in building professional and public awareness of the importance of the environment and global chemical pollutants on personal health.



- National Medical Associations (NMAs) and physician professional associations develop tools for physicians to help assess their patients' risk from chemical exposures.
- Physicians and their professional associations develop locally appropriate continuing medical education on the clinical signs, diagnosis and treatment of diseases that are introduced into communities as a result of chemical pollution and exacerbated by climate change.
- Environmental health and occupational medicine should become a core theme in medical education. Medical schools should encourage in the training of sufficient specialists in environmental health and occupational medicine.

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<sup>1</sup> Wisner G, Center for International Environmental Law, UNEP Forum, Sept. 2005

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unep.org/hazardoussubstances/Introduction/tabid/258/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=97&ArticleID=1503&l=en>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=78&ArticleID=1163>

<sup>5</sup> Wisner G, Center for International Environmental Law, UNEP Forum, Sept. 2005

<sup>6</sup> <http://chm.pops.int/Convention/tabid/54/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.chem.unep.ch/saicm/SAICM%20texts/SAICM%20documents.htm>



## **WMA STATEMENT ON THE GLOBAL BURDEN OF CHRONIC DISEASE**

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

### **INTRODUCTION**

Chronic diseases, including cardiovascular and circulatory diseases, diabetes, cancer, and chronic lung disease are the leading cause of death and disability in both the developed and developing world. Chronic diseases are not replacing existing causes of disease and disability (infectious disease and trauma), but are adding to the disease burden. Developing countries now face the triple burden of infectious disease, trauma and chronic disease. This increased burden is straining the capacity of many countries to provide adequate health care services. This burden is also undermining these nations' efforts to increase life expectancy and spur economic growth.

Ongoing and anticipated global trends that will lead to more chronic disease problems in the future include an aging population, urbanization and community planning, increasingly sedentary lifestyles, climate change and the rapidly increasing cost of medical technology to treat chronic disease. Chronic disease prevalence is closely linked to global social and economic development, globalization and mass marketing of unhealthy foods and other products. The prevalence and cost of addressing the chronic disease burden is expected to rise in coming years.

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

The primary solution is disease prevention. National policies that help people achieve healthy lifestyles and behaviors are the foundation for all possible solutions.

Increased access to primary care combined with well designed and affordable disease - control programs can greatly improve health care. Partnerships of national ministries of health with institutions in developed countries may overcome many barriers in the poorest settings. Effective partnerships currently exist in rural Malawi, Rwanda and Haiti. In these settings where no oncologists are available, care is provided by local physicians and nurse teams. These teams deliver chemotherapy to patients with a variety of treatable malignancies.

Medical education systems should become more socially accountable. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines social accountability of medical schools as the obligation to direct their education, research and service activities towards addressing the priority health concerns of the community, region, or nation they have a mandate to serve. The priority health concerns are to be identified jointly by governments, health care organizations,

health professionals and the public. There is an urgent need to adopt accreditation standards and norms that support social accountability. Educating physicians and other health care professionals to deliver health care that is concordant with the resources of the country must be a primary consideration. Led by primary care physicians, teams of physicians, nurses and community health workers will provide care that is driven by the principles of quality, equity, relevance and effectiveness. [see WMA Resolution on Medical Workforce]

Strengthening the health care infrastructure is important in caring for the increasing numbers of people with chronic disease. Components of this infrastructure include training the primary health care team, improved facilities, chronic disease surveillance, public health promotion campaigns, quality assurance and establishment of national and local standards of care. One of the most important components of health care infrastructure is human resources; well-trained and motivated health care professionals led by primary care physicians are crucial to success. International aid and development programs need to move from "vertical focus" on single diseases or objectives to a more sustainable and effective primary care health infrastructure development.

### **For World Governments:**

1. Support global immunization strategies;
2. Support global tobacco and alcohol control strategies;
3. Promote healthy living and implement policies that support prevention and healthy lifestyle behaviors;
4. Set aside a fixed percentage of national budget for health infrastructure development and promotion of healthy lifestyles.
5. Promote trade policy that protects public health;
6. Promote research for prevention and treatment of chronic disease;
7. Develop global strategies for the prevention of obesity.

### **For National Medical Associations:**

1. Work to create communities that promote healthy lifestyles and prevention behaviors and to increase physician awareness of optimal disease prevention behaviors;
2. Offer patients smoking cessation, weight control strategies, substance abuse counseling, self-management education and support, and nutritional counseling;
3. Promote a team-based approach to chronic disease management;
4. Advocate for integration of chronic disease prevention and control strategies in government-wide policies;
5. Invest in high quality training for more primary care physicians and an equitable distribution of them among populations;

6. Provide high quality accessible resources for continuing medical education;
7. Support establishing evidence-based standards of care for chronic disease;
8. Establish, support and strengthen professional associations for primary care physicians
9. Promote medical education that is responsive to societal needs;
10. Promote an environment of support for continuity of care for chronic disease, including patient education and self-management;
11. Advocate for policies and regulations to reduce factors that promote chronic disease such as smoking cessation and blood pressure control;
12. Support strong public health infrastructure; and
13. Support the concept that social determinants are part of prevention and health care.

**For Medical Schools:**

1. Develop curriculum objectives that meet societal needs; e.g., social accountability;
2. Focus on providing primary care training opportunities that highlight the integrative and continuity elements of the primary care specialties including family medicine;
3. Provide community-oriented and community-based primary care educational venues so that students become acquainted with the basic elements of chronic care infrastructure and continuity care provision;
4. Create departments of family medicine that are of equal academic standing in the university; and
5. Promote the use of interdisciplinary and other collaborative training methodologies within primary and continuing education programs.
6. Include instruction in prevention of chronic diseases in the general curriculum.

**For Individual Physicians:**

1. Work to create communities that promote healthy lifestyles and prevention behaviors;
2. Offer patients smoking cessation, weight control strategies, substance abuse counseling, self-management education and support, and nutritional counseling;
3. Promote a team-based approach to chronic disease management;
4. Ensure continuity of care for patients with chronic disease;

5. Model prevention behaviors to patients by maintaining personal health;
6. Become community advocates for positive social determinants of health and for best prevention methods;
7. Work with parents and the community to ensure that the parents have the best advice on maintaining the health of their children.
8. Physicians should collaborate with patients' associations in designing and delivering prevention education.

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Note: Depending on the country, different stakeholders will assume greater or lesser responsibility for change.

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**WMA RECOMMENDATION  
ON  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MONITORING AND  
REPORTING MECHANISM TO PERMIT AUDIT OF  
ADHERENCE OF STATES TO THE DECLARATION OF TOKYO**

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

**The WMA recommends that**

1. Where physicians are working in situations of dual loyalties, support must be offered to ensure they are not put in positions that might lead to violations of fundamental professional ethics, whether by active breaches of medical ethics or omission of ethical conduct, and/or of human rights, as laid out in the Declaration of Tokyo.
2. National Medical Associations (NMA's) should offer support for physicians in difficult situations, including, as feasible and without endangering either patients or doctors, helping individuals to report violations of patients' health rights and physicians' professional ethics in custodial settings.
3. The WMA should review the evidence available, in cases brought to it by its members, of the violation of human rights codes by states and/or the forcing of physicians to violate the Declaration of Tokyo, and refer as appropriate such cases to the relevant national and international authorities.
4. The WMA should contact member associations and encourage them to investigate accusations of physician involvement in torture and similar abuses of human rights reported to it from reputable sources, and to report back in particular on whether physicians are at risk and in need of support. The WMA should provide support to the NMAs and their members to resist such violations, and as far as realistically possible, stand firm in their ethical convictions.
5. The WMA shall encourage and support NMAs in their calls for investigations by the relevant special rapporteur (or other individual or organization) when NMAs and their members raise valid concerns.





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**WMA STATEMENT  
ON  
THE PROTECTION AND INTEGRITY OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL  
IN ARMED CONFLICTS AND OTHER SITUATIONS OF VIOLENCE**

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

**PREAMBLE**

During wars and armed conflicts hospitals and other medical facilities have often been attacked and misused and patients and medical personnel have been killed or wounded. Such attacks are a violation of the Geneva Conventions (1949), Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions (1977) and WMA regulations in times of war (2006).

The World Medical Association (WMA) has been active in condemning documented attacks on medical personnel and facilities in armed conflicts. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols shall protect medical personnel in international and non-international armed conflicts. The warring parties have duty not to interfere with medical care for wounded or sick combatants and civilians, and not attack, threaten or impede medical functions. Physicians and other health care personnel must be considered as neutral and must not be prevented from fulfilling their duties.

The lack of systematic reporting and documentation of violence against medical personnel and facilities creates threats to both civilians and military personnel. The development of strategies for protection and efforts to improve compliance with the laws of war are impeded as long as such information is not available.

**STATEMENT**

The World Medical Association condemns all attacks on and misuse of medical personnel, facilities and vehicles in armed conflicts. These attacks put people in need of help in great danger and can lead to the flight of physicians and other health personnel from the conflict areas with a lack of available medical personnel as a result.

Currently no party is responsible for collecting data regarding assaults on medical personnel and facilities. Data collection after attacks is vital to identify the reasons why medical personnel and facilities are attacked. Such data are important in order to understand the nature of the attacks and to take necessary steps to prevent attacks in the future. All attacks must also be properly investigated and those responsible for the violations of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols must be brought to justice.

The WMA requests that appropriate international bodies establish mechanisms with the necessary resources to collect and disseminate data regarding assaults on physicians, other health care personnel and medical facilities in armed conflicts. Such mechanisms could include the establishment of a new United Nations post of Rapporteur on the independence and integrity of health professionals. As stated in the WMA proposal for a United Nations Rapporteur on the Independence and Integrity of Health Professionals (1997), "The new rapporteur would be charged with the task of monitoring that doctors are allowed to move freely and that patients have access to medical treatment, without discrimination as to nationality or ethnic origin, in war zones or in situations of political tension".

When a reporting system is established the WMA will recommend to their member organisations reporting armed conflicts which they become aware of.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH**

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

The social determinants of health are: the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age; and the societal influences on these conditions. The social determinants of health are major influences on both quality of life, including good health, and length of disability-free life expectancy. While health care will attempt to pick up the pieces and repair the damage caused by premature ill health, it is these social, cultural, environmental, economic and other factors that are the major causes of rates of illness and, in particular, the magnitude of health inequalities.

Historically, the primary role of doctors and other health care professionals has been to treat the sick - a vital and much cherished role in all societies. To a lesser extent, health care professionals have dealt with individual exposures to the causes of disease - smoking, obesity, and alcohol in chronic disease, for example. These familiar aspects of life style can be thought of as 'proximate' causes of disease.

The work on social determinants goes far beyond this focus on proximate causes and considers the "causes of the causes". For example, smoking, obesity, alcohol, sedentary life style are all causes of illness. A social determinants approach addresses the causes of these causes; and in particular how they contribute to social inequalities in health. It focuses not only on individual behaviours but seeks to address the social and economic circumstances that give rise to premature ill health, throughout the life course: early child development, education, work and living conditions, and the structural causes that give rise to these living and working conditions. In many societies, unhealthy behaviours follow the social gradient: the lower people are in the socioeconomic hierarchy, the more they smoke, the worse their diet, and the less physical activity they engage in. A major, but not the only, cause of the social distribution of these causes is level of education. Other specific examples of addressing the causes of the causes: price and availability, which are key drivers of alcohol consumption; taxation, package labeling, bans on advertising, and smoking in public places, which have had demonstrable effects on tobacco consumption. The voice of the medical profession has been most important in these examples of tackling the causes of the causes.

There is a growing movement, globally, that seeks to address gross inequalities in health and length of life through action on the social determinants of health. This movement has involved the World Health Organisation, several national governments, civil society organization, and academics. Solutions are being sought and learning shared. Doctors should be well informed participants in this debate. There is much that can happen within the practice of medicine that can contribute directly and through working with other sectors. The

medical profession can be advocates for action on those social conditions that have important effects on health.

The WMA could add significant value to the global efforts to address these social determinants by helping doctors, other health professionals and National Medical Associations understand what the emerging evidence shows and what works, in different circumstances. It could help doctors to lobby more effectively within their countries and across international borders, and ensure that medical knowledge and skills are shared.

The WMA should help to gather data of examples that are working, and help to engage doctors and other health professionals in trying new and innovative solutions. It should work with national associations to educate and inform their members and put pressure on national governments to take the appropriate steps to try to minimise these root causes of premature ill health. In Britain, for example, the national government has issued a public health white paper that has at its heart reduction of health inequalities through action on the social determinants of health; several local areas have drawn up plans of action; there are good examples of general practice that work across sectors improve the quality of people's lives and hence reduce health inequalities. The WMA should gather examples of good practice from its members and promote further work in this area.

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## **WMA STATEMENT ON THE PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

### **DEFINITION**

Social Media is generally understood to be a collective term for the different platforms and applications that allow user-generated content to be created and shared electronically.

### **PREAMBLE**

The objectives of the proposed policy are to:

- Examine the professional and ethical challenges related to the increasing usage of social media by physicians, medical students and patients.
- Establish a framework that protects their respective interests.
- Ensure trust and reputation by maintaining high professional and ethical standards.

The use of social media has become a fact of life for many millions of people world wide including physicians, medical students and patients.

Interactive, collaborative tools such as wikis, social networks, chat rooms and blogs have transformed passive Internet users into active participants. They are means for gathering, sharing and disseminating personal information, including health information, socializing and connecting with friends, relatives, professionals etc. They can be used to seek medical advice, and patients with chronic diseases can share their experiences with each other. They can also been used in research, public health, education and direct or indirect professional promotion.

The positive aspects of social media should be recognized such as in promoting healthy life style, in empowering patients and in reducing patients' isolation.

Areas, which may require special attention:

- Sensitive content, photographs, other personal materials posted on online social forums often exists in the public domain and have the capacity to remain on the internet permanently. Individuals may not have control over the ultimate distribution of material they post on-line.
- Patient portal, blogs and tweets are not a substitute for one on one consultation with physicians but may widen engagement with health services amongst certain

groups. Online "friendships" with patients may also alter the patient-physician relationship, and may result in unnecessary, possibly problematic physician and patient self-disclosure.

- Each party's privacy may be compromised in the absence of adequate and conservative privacy settings or by their inappropriate use. Privacy settings are not absolute; social media sites may change default privacy settings unilaterally, without the user's knowledge. Social media sites may also make communications available to third parties.

Interested stakeholders such as current/prospective employers, insurance companies and commercial entities may monitor these Internet web sites for various purposes such as to better understand their customer's needs and expectations, to profile job candidates or to improve a product or a service.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The WMA urges their NMA's to establish guidelines for their physicians addressing the following issues:

1. To maintain appropriate boundaries of the patient-physician relationship in accordance with professional ethical guidelines just as they would in any other context.
2. To study carefully and understand the privacy provisions of social networking sites, bearing in mind their limitations.
3. For physicians to routinely monitor their own Internet presence to ensure that the personal and professional information on their own sites and, to the extent possible, content posted about them by others is accurate and appropriate.
4. To consider the intended audience and assess whether it is technically feasible to restrict access to the content to pre-defined individuals or groups.
5. To adopt a conservative approach when disclosing personal information as patients can access the profile. The professional boundaries that should exist between the physician and the patient can thereby be blurred. Physicians should acknowledge the potential associated risks of social media and accept them, and carefully select the recipients and privacy settings.
6. To provide factual and concise information, declare any conflicts of interest and adopt a sober tone when discussing professional matters.
7. To ensure that no identifiable patient information be posted in any social media by their physician. Breaching confidentiality undermines the public's trust in the medical profession, impairing the ability to treat patients effectively.
8. To draw the attention of medical students and physicians to the fact that online posting may contribute also to the public perception of the profession.

9. To consider the inclusion of educational programs with relevant case studies and appropriate guidelines in medical curricula and continuing medical education.
10. To bring their concerns to a colleague when observing his or her clearly inappropriate behavior. If the behaviour significantly violates professional norms and the individual does not take appropriate action to resolve the situation, physicians should report the conduct to appropriate authorities.





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## **WMA STATEMENT ON ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS**

Adopted by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

### **INTRODUCTION**

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are products designed to deliver nicotine to a user in the form of a vapor. They are usually composed of a rechargeable battery-operated heating element, a replaceable cartridge that contains nicotine and/or other chemicals, and an atomizer that, when heated, turns the contents of the cartridge into a vapor (not smoke). This vapor is then inhaled by the user. These products are often made to look like other tobacco-derived products like cigarettes, cigars, and pipes. They can also be made to look like everyday items such as pens and USB memory sticks.

No standard definition of e-cigarettes exists and different manufacturers use different designs and different ingredients. Quality control processes used to manufacture these products are substandard or non-existent. Few studies have been done to analyze the level of nicotine delivered to the user and the composition of the vapor produced.

Manufacturers and marketers of e-cigarettes often claim that use of their products is a safe alternative to smoking, particularly since they do not produce carcinogenic smoke. However, no studies have been conducted to determine that the vapor is not carcinogenic, and there are other potential risks associated with these devices: Appeal to children, especially when flavors like strawberry or chocolate are added to the cartridges. E-cigarettes can increase nicotine addiction among young people and their use may lead to experimenting with other tobacco products.

Manufacturers and distributors mislead people into believing these devices are acceptable alternatives to scientifically proven cessation techniques, thus delaying actual smoking cessation. E-cigarettes are not comparable to scientifically-proven methods of smoking cessation. Their dosage, manufacture, and ingredients are not consistent or clearly labelled. Brand stretching by using known cigarette logos is to be deplored.

Unknown amounts of nicotine are delivered to the user, and the level of absorption is unclear, leading to potentially toxic levels of nicotine in the system. These products may also contain other ingredients toxic to humans.

High potential of toxic exposure to nicotine by children, either by ingestion or dermal absorption, because the nicotine cartridges and refill liquid are readily available over the Internet and are not sold in child resistant packaging.

Due to the lack of rigorous chemical and animal studies, as well as clinical trials on commercially available e-cigarettes, neither their value as therapeutic aids for smoking cessation nor their safety as cigarette replacements is established. Lack of product testing does not permit the conclusion that e-cigarettes do not produce any harmful products even if they produce fewer dangerous substances than conventional cigarettes.

Clinical testing, large population studies and full analyses of e-cigarette ingredients and manufacturing processes need to be conducted before their safety, viability and impacts can be determined as either clinical tools or as widely available effective alternatives to tobacco use.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the manufacture and sale of e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery systems be subject to national regulatory bodies prior approval based on testing and research as either a new form of tobacco product or as a drug delivery device.

That the marketing of e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery systems as a valid method for smoking cessation must be based on evidence and must be approved by appropriate regulatory bodies based on safety and efficacy data.

That e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery systems be included in smoke free laws.

Physicians should inform their patients of the risks of using e-cigarettes even if regulatory authorities have not taken a position on the efficacy and safety of these products.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION BY PHYSICIANS**

Adopted by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

### **PREAMBLE**

In recent years, in countries where physicians' satisfaction with their working conditions has decreased, collective action by physicians has become increasingly common.

Physicians may carry out protest action and sanctions in order to improve direct and indirect working conditions that also may affect patient care. Physicians must consider not only their duty to individual patients, but also their responsibility to improve the system such that it meets the requirements of accessibility and quality.

In addition to their professional obligations, physicians are often also employees. There may be tension between physicians' duty not to cause harm, and their rights as employees. Therefore, physicians' strikes or other forms of collective action often give rise to public debate on ethical and moral issues. This statement attempts to address these issues.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The World Medical Association recommends that National Medical Associations (NMAs) adopt the following guidelines for physicians with regard to collective action:

Physicians who take part in collective action are not exempt from their ethical or professional obligations to patients.

Even when the action taken is not organized by or associated with the National Medical Association, the NMA should ensure that the individual physician is aware of and abides by his or her ethical obligations.

Whenever possible, physicians should press for reforms through non-violent public demonstrations, lobbying and publicity or informational campaigns or negotiation or mediation.

If involved in collective action, NMAs should act to minimize the harm to the public and ensure that essential and emergency health services, and the continuity of care, are provided throughout a strike. Further, NMAs should advocate for measures to review exceptional cases. If involved in collective action, NMAs should provide continuous and up-to-date information to their patients and the general public with regard to the demands of the conflict and the actions being undertaken. The general public must be kept informed in a timely manner about any strike actions and the restrictions they may have on health care.



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## **WMA STATEMENT ON FORCED AND COERCED STERILISATION**

Adopted by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

The WMA recognises that no person, regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, medical condition or disability, should be subjected to forced or coerced permanent sterilisation.

A full range of contraceptive services, including sterilisation, should be accessible and affordable to every individual. The state may have a role to play in ensuring that such services are available, along with private, charitable and third sector organisations. The decision to undergo contraception, including sterilisation, must be the sole decision of the individual concerned.

As with all other medical treatments, sterilisation should only be performed on a competent patient after an informed choice has been made and the free and valid consent of the individual has been obtained. Where a patient is incompetent, a valid decision about treatment must be made in accordance with relevant legal requirements and the ethical standards of the WMA before the procedure is carried out. Sterilization of those unable to give consent would be extremely rare and done only with the consent of the surrogate decision maker.

Such consent should be obtained when the patient is not facing a medical emergency, or other major stressor.

The WMA condemns practices where a state or any other actor attempts to bypass ethical requirements necessary for obtaining free and valid consent.

Consent to sterilisation should be free from material or social incentives which might distort freedom of choice and should not be a condition of other medical care (including safe abortion), social, insurance, institutional or other benefits.

The WMA calls on national medical associations to advocate against forced and coerced sterilisation in their own countries and globally.



## **WMA STATEMENT ON ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION**

Adopted by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

### **PREAMBLE**

Advances in medical sciences, especially surgical techniques, tissue typing and immunosuppressive drugs, have made possible a significant increase in the rates of successful transplantation of human organs and tissue. Yet, in all countries, a shortage of organ donors results in potentially avoidable loss of life. National medical associations should support attempts to maximise the number of donor organs available in their countries and to ensure that the highest ethical standards are maintained. The World Medical Association has developed this policy to assist medical associations, physicians, other health care providers and policy makers to achieve this.

- This policy is based on a number of core principles: altruism, autonomy, beneficence, equity and justice. These principles should guide those developing local policies and those operating within it, both in relation to organ procurement and to the distribution and transplantation of donor organs. All systems and processes should be transparent and open to scrutiny.
- This statement applies to organ and tissue donation from both deceased and living donors. It does not apply to blood donation.

### **RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS**

It is important that individuals are aware of the option of donation and have the opportunity to choose whether or not to donate organs and/or tissue after their death. Awareness and choice should be facilitated in a coordinated multi-faceted approach by a variety of stakeholders and means, including media awareness and public campaigns. In designing such campaigns account needs to be taken of any religious or cultural sensitivities of the target audience.

Through awareness raising campaigns, individuals should be informed of the benefits of transplantation, the impact on the lives of those who are waiting for a transplant and the shortage of donors available. They should be encouraged to think about their own wishes about donation, to discuss their wishes with their family and friends and to use established mechanisms to formally record them by opting into, or out of, donation.

The WMA advocates informed donor choice. National medical associations in countries that have adopted or are considering a policy of "presumed consent" (or opt-out), in which there is an assumption that the individual wishes to donate unless there is evidence to the contrary, or "mandated choice", in which all persons would be required to declare whether

they wish to donate, should make every effort to ensure that these policies have been adequately publicised and do not diminish informed donor choice, including the patient's right not to donate.

Consideration should be given to the establishment of national donor registries to collect and maintain a list of citizens who have chosen either to donate or not to donate their organs and/or tissue. Any such registry must protect individual privacy and the individual's ability to control the collection, use, disclosure of, and access to, his or her health information for other purposes. Provisions must be in place to ensure that the decision to sign up to a register is adequately informed and that registrants can withdraw from the registry easily and quickly and without prejudice.

Living organ donation is becoming an increasingly important component of transplantation programmes in many countries. Most living donation is between related or emotionally close individuals but small but increasing numbers are donating to people they do not know. Given that there are health risks associated with living organ donation, proper controls and safeguards are essential. Information aimed at informing people about the possibility of donating organs as a living donor should be carefully designed so as not to put pressure on them to donate. Potential donors should know where to obtain detailed information about what is involved, should be informed of the inherent risks and should know that there are safeguard in place to protect those offering to donate.

### **PROTOCOLS FOR ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION FROM DECEASED DONORS**

The WMA encourages its members to support the development of comprehensive, coordinated national protocols for deceased (also referred to as cadaveric) organ and tissue procurement in consultation and cooperation with all relevant stakeholders. Ethical, cultural and societal issues arising in connection with donation and transplantation should be resolved, wherever possible, in an open process involving public debate informed by sound evidence.

National and local protocols should provide detailed information about the identification, referral and management of potential donors as well as communication with those close to people who have died. They should encourage the procurement of organs and tissues consistent with this statement. Protocols should uphold the following key principles:

- Decisions to withhold or withdraw life-prolonging treatment should be based on an assessment of whether the treatment is able to benefit the patient. Such decisions must be, and must be seen to be, completely separate from any decisions about donation
- The diagnosis of death should be made according to national guidelines and as outlined in the WMA's Declaration of Sydney on the Determination of Death and Recovery of Organs.
- There should be a clear separation between the treating team and the transplant team. In particular, the physician who declares or certifies the death of a potential donor should not be involved in the transplantation procedure. Nor should he/she be responsible for the care of the organ recipient.
- Countries that carry out donation following circulatory death should have specific and detailed protocols for this practice.



- Where an individual has expressed a clear and voluntary wish to donate organs and/or tissue after death, steps should be taken to facilitate that wish wherever possible. This is part of the treating team's responsibility to the dying patient.
- The WMA considers that the potential donor's wishes are paramount. Relatives and those close to the patient should be strongly encouraged to support a deceased person's previously expressed wish to donate organs and/or tissues.
- Those charged with approaching the patient, family members or other designated decision maker about organ and tissue donation should possess the appropriate combination of knowledge, skill and sensitivity for engaging in such discussions. Medical students and practising physicians should seek the necessary training for this task, and the appropriate authorities should provide the resources necessary to secure that training.
- Donation should be unconditional. In exceptional cases, requests by potential donors, or their substitute decision makers, for the organ or tissue to be given to a particular recipient may be considered if permitted by national law. Donors seeking to apply conditions that could be seen as discriminatory against certain groups, however, should be declined.

Hospitals and other institutions where donation occurs should ensure that donation protocols are publicised amongst those likely to use them and that adequate resources are available for their implementation. They should also foster a pro-donation culture within the institution in which consideration of donation is the norm, rather than the exception, when a patient dies.

The role of transplant coordination is critical to organ donation. Those performing coordination act as the key point of contact between the bereaved family and the donation team and usually also undertake the complex logistical arrangements to make donation happen. Their role should be recognised and supported.

Deceased organ donation must be based on the notion of a gift, freely and voluntarily given. It should involve the voluntary and unpressured consent of the individual provided before death (by opting in or opting out of donation depending upon the jurisdiction) or the voluntary authorisation of those close to the deceased patient if that person's wishes are unknown. The WMA is strongly opposed to the commercialisation of donation and transplantation.

Prospective donors or their substitute health care decision makers<sup>1</sup> should have access to accurate and relevant information, including through their general practitioners. Normally, this will include information about:

- the procedures and definitions involved in the determination of death,
- the testing that is undertaken to determine the suitability of the organs and/or tissue for transplantation and that this may reveal previously unsuspected health risks in prospective donors and their families,
- measures that may be required to preserve organ function until death is determined and transplantation can occur,
- what will happen to the body once death has been declared,
- what organs and tissues can be donated,
- the protocol that will be followed in the event that the family objects to donation, and
- the possibility of withdrawing consent.

Prospective donors or their substitute health care decision makers should be given the opportunity to ask questions about donation and should have their questions answered sensitively and intelligibly.

Where both organs and tissues are to be donated, information should be provided, and consent obtained, for both together in order to minimise distress and disruption to those close to the deceased.

In some parts of the world a contribution towards funeral costs is given to the family of those who donate. This can be viewed either as appropriate recognition of their altruistic act or as a payment that compromises the voluntariness of the choice and the altruistic basis for donation. The interpretation may depend, in part, on the way it is set up and managed. When considering the introduction of such a system, care needs to be taken to ensure that the core principles of altruism, autonomy, beneficence, equity and justice are met.

Free and informed decision making requires not only the provision of information but also the absence of coercion. Any concerns about pressure or coercion should be resolved before the decision to donate organs or tissue is made.

Prisoners and other people who are effectively detained in institutions should be eligible to donate after death only in exceptional circumstances where:

- there is evidence that this represents their long-standing and considered wish and safeguards are in place to confirm this; and
- their death is from natural causes; and
- the organs are donated to a first or second degree relative either directly or through a properly regulated pool.

In jurisdictions where the death penalty is practised, executed prisoners must not be considered as organ and/or tissue donors. While there may be individual cases where prisoners are acting voluntarily and free from pressure, it is impossible to put in place adequate safeguards to protect against coercion in all cases.

### **ALLOCATION OF ORGANS FROM DECEASED DONORS**

The WMA considers there should be explicit policies, open to public scrutiny, governing all aspects of organ and tissue donation and transplantation, including the management of waiting lists for organs to ensure fair and appropriate access.

Policies governing the management of waiting lists should ensure efficiency and fairness. Criteria that should be considered in allocating organs or tissue include:

- severity and urgency of medical need
- length of time on the waiting list
- medical probability of success measured by such factors as age, type of disease, likely improvements in quality of life, other complications, and histocompatibility.

There should be no discrimination based on social status, lifestyle or behaviour. Non-medical criteria should not be considered.

Living donation is becoming increasingly common as a way to overcome the shortage of organs from deceased donors. In most cases donors provide organs to relatives or people to whom they are emotionally close. A small number of individuals choose to donate an organ altruistically to a stranger. Another scenario is where one or more donor and recipient pairs are incompatible with each other but donate in the form of a cross-over or pooled donation system (for example, donor A donates to recipient B, donor B donates to recipient C and donor C donates to recipient A).

All potential donors should be given accurate and up to date information about the procedure and the risks of donation and have the opportunity to discuss the issue privately with a member of the healthcare team or a counsellor. Normally this information will include:

- the risks of becoming a living donor,
- the tests that are undertaken to assess suitability for donation and that this may reveal previously unsuspected health problems,
- what will happen before, during and after donation takes place, and
- in the case of solid organs, the long-term implications of living without the donated organ.

Prospective donors should be given the opportunity to ask questions about donation and should have their questions answered sensitively and intelligibly.

Procedures should be in place to ensure that living donors are acting voluntarily and free from pressure or coercion. In order to avoid donors being paid and then posing as a known donor, independent checks should also be undertaken to verify the claimed relationship and, where this cannot be proven, the donation should not proceed. Such checks should be independent of the transplant team and those who are caring for the potential recipient.

Additional safeguards should be in place for vulnerable donors, including but not only, people who are dependent in some way (such as competent minors donating to a parent or sibling).

Prisoners should be eligible to be living donors only in exceptional circumstances, to first or second degree family members; evidence should be provided of any claimed relationship before the donation may proceed. Where prisoners are to be considered as living donors, extra safeguards are required to ensure they are acting voluntarily and are not subject to coercion.

Those who lack the capacity to consent should not be considered as living organ donors because of their inability to understand and decide voluntarily. Exceptions may be made in very limited circumstances, following legal and ethical review.

Donors should not lose out financially as a result of their donation and so should be reimbursed for general and medical expenses and any loss of earnings incurred.

In some parts of the world individuals are paid for donating a kidney, although in virtually all countries the sale of organs is unlawful. The WMA is opposed to a market in organs.

Protocols for free and informed decision making should be followed in the case of recipients of organs or tissue. Normally, this will include providing information about:

- the risks of the procedure,
- the likely short, medium and long-term survival, morbidity, and quality-of-life prospects,
- alternatives to transplantation, and
- how organs and tissues are obtained.

Organs or tissue suspected to have been obtained through unlawful means must not be accepted for transplantation.

Organs and tissues must not be sold for profit. In calculating the cost of transplantation, charges related to the organ or tissue itself should be restricted to those costs directly associated with its retrieval, storage, allocation and transplantation.

Transplant surgeons should seek to ensure that the organs and tissues they transplant have been obtained in accordance with the provisions of this policy and should refrain from transplanting organs and tissues that they know, or suspect, have not been procured in a legal and ethical manner.

In the case of a delayed diagnosis for infection, disease or malignancy in the donor, there should be a strong presumption that the recipient will be informed of any risk to which they may have been exposed. Individual decisions about disclosure need to take account of the particular circumstances, including the level and severity of risk. In most cases disclosure will be appropriate and should be managed carefully and sensitively.

### **FUTURE OPTIONS**

Public health measures to reduce the demand for donated organs should be seen as a priority, alongside moves to increase the effectiveness and success of organ donation systems.

New developments and possibilities, such as xenotransplantation and the use of stem cell technology to repair damaged organs, should be monitored. Before their introduction into clinical practice such technologies should be subject to scientific review and robust safety checks as well as ethical review. Where, as with xenotransplantation, there are potential risks that go beyond individual recipients, this process should also involve public debate.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "substitute health care decision maker" is intended to refer to any person properly designated to make health care related decisions on behalf of the patient.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON THE PRIORITISATION OF IMMUNISATION**

Adopted by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

### **PREAMBLE**

Vaccination use to prevent against disease was first done successfully by Jenner in 1796 when he used cowpox material for vaccination against smallpox. Since then, vaccination and immunisation have been acknowledged as an effective preventive strategy for several communicable diseases and are now being developed for the control of some non-communicable diseases.

Vaccine development and administration are some of the most significant interventions to influence global health in modern times. It is estimated that immunisation currently prevents approximately 2.5 million deaths every year, saving lives from diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough (pertussis) and measles. Approximately 109 million children under the age of one are fully vaccinated with the diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTP3) vaccine alone.

Mostly the ultimate goal of immunisation is the total eradication of a communicable disease. This was achieved for smallpox in 1980 and there is a realistic goal for the eradication of polio within the next few years.

The Global Immunisation Vision Strategy (GIVS) 2006-2015 was developed by the WHO and UNICEF in the hope of reaching target populations who currently do not have immunisation services or who do not have an adequate level of coverage.

The four strategies promoted in this vision are:

- Protecting more people in a changing world
- Introducing new vaccines and technologies
- Integrating immunisation, other linked health interventions and
- Surveillance in the health systems context
- Immunizing in the context of global interdependence<sup>1</sup>

Vaccine research is constantly revealing new possibilities to protect populations from serious health threats. Additionally, new strains of diseases emerge requiring the adaptation of vaccines in order to offer protection.

The process of immunisation requires an environment that is resourced with appropriate materials and health workers to ensure the safe and effective administration of vaccines. Administration of vaccines often requires injections, and safety procedures for injections must always be followed.

Immunisation schedules can vary according to the type of vaccine, with some requiring multiple administrations to be effective. It is vitally important that the full schedule is followed otherwise the effectiveness of the vaccine may be compromised.

The benefits of immunisation have had a profound effect on populations, not only in terms of preventing ill health but also in permitting resources previously required to treat the diseases to be redirected to other health priorities. Healthier populations are economically beneficial and can contribute more to society.

Reducing child mortality is the fourth of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, with immunisation of children having a significant impact on mortality rates on children aged under five. According to the WHO, there are still more than 19 million children who have not received the DTP3 vaccine. In addition, basic health care services for maternal health with qualified health care personnel must be established.

Immunisation of adults for diseases such as influenza and pneumococcal infections has been shown to be effective, not only in decreasing the number of cases amongst those that have received immunisation but also in decreasing the disease burden in society.

The medical profession denounce any claims that are unfounded and inaccurate with respect to the possible dangers of vaccine administration. Claims such as these have resulted in diminished immunisation rates in some countries. The result is that the incidences of the diseases to be prevented have increased with serious consequences for a number of persons.

Countries differ in immunisation priorities, with the prevalence and risk of diseases varying among populations. Not all countries have the same coverage rates, nor do they have the resources to acquire, coordinate, distribute or effectively administer vaccines to their populations, often relying on non-governmental organizations to support immunisation programmes. These organizations in turn often rely on external funding that may not be secure. In times of global financial crisis, funding for such programmes is under considerable pressure.

The risk of health complications from vaccine-preventable diseases is greatest in those who experience barriers in accessing immunisation services. These barriers could be cost, location, lack of awareness of immunisation services and their health benefits or other limiting factors.

Those with chronic diseases, underlying health issues or other risk factors such as age are at particular risk of major complications due to vaccine-preventable diseases and therefore should be targeted to ensure adequate immunisation.

Supply chains can be difficult to secure, particularly in countries that lack coordination or support of their immunisation programmes. Securing the appropriate resources, such as qualified health professionals, equipment and administrative support can present significant challenges.

Data collection on vaccine administration rates, side effects of vaccines and disease surveillance can often be difficult to achieve, particularly in isolated and under-resourced areas. Nevertheless, reporting incidents and monitoring disease spread are vital tools in combating global health threats.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The WMA supports the recommendations of the Global Immunisation Vision Strategy (GIVS) 2006-2015, and calls on the international community to:

- Encourage governments to commit resources to immunisation programmes targeted to meet country specific needs.
- Recognise the importance of vaccination/immunisation through the continued support and adoption of measures to achieve global vaccination targets and to meet the Millennium Development Goals, especially four (reduce child mortality), five (improve maternal health) and six (combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases).
- Recognise the global responsibility of immunisation against preventable diseases and support work in countries that have difficulties in meeting the 2012 targets in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative<sup>2</sup>.
- Support national governments with vulnerable populations at risk of vaccine-preventable diseases, and the local agencies that work to deliver immunisation services and to work with them to alleviate restrictions in accessing services.
- Support vaccine research and development and ensure commitment through the adequate funding of vital vaccine research.
- Promote vaccination and the benefits of immunisation, particularly targeting those at-risk and those who are difficult to reach. Comply with monitoring activities undertaken by WHO and other health authorities. Promote high standards in the research, development and administration of vaccines to ensure patient safety. Vaccines need to be thoroughly tested before implemented on a large scale and subsequently monitored in order to identify possible complications and untoward side effects. In order to be successful, immunisation programmes need public trust which depends on safety.

In delivering vaccination programmes, the WMA recommends that:

- The full immunisation schedule is delivered to provide optimum coverage. Where possible, the schedule should be managed and monitored by suitably trained individuals to ensure consistent delivery and prompt appropriate management of adverse reactions to vaccines.
- Strategies are employed to reach populations that may be isolated because of location, race, religion, economic status, social marginalization, gender and/or age.
- Ensure that qualified health professionals receive comprehensive training to safely deliver vaccinations and immunisations, and that vaccination/immunisations are targeted to those whose need is greatest.
- Educate people on the benefits of immunisation and how to access immunisation services.
- Maintain accurate medical records to ensure that valid data on vaccine administration and coverage rates are available, enabling immunisation policies to be based upon sound and reliable evidence.
- Healthcare professionals should be seen as a priority population for the receipt of immunisation services due to their exposure to patients and to diseases.



The WMA calls upon its members to advocate the following:

- To increase awareness of national immunisation schedules and of their own (and their dependents) personal immunisation history.
- To work with national and local governments to ensure that immunisation programmes are resourced and implemented.
- To ensure that health personnel delivering vaccines and immunisation services receive proper education and training.
- To promote the evidence base and increase awareness about the benefits of immunisation amongst physicians and the public.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund. Global Immunisation Vision and Strategy, 2006-2015. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund; 2005. Available at: [http://www.who.int/immunisation/givs/related\\_docs/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/immunisation/givs/related_docs/en/index.html)

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization. Global Polio Eradication Initiative: Strategic Plan 2010-2012. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 2010. Available at: [http://www.polioeradication.org/Portals/0/Document/StrategicPlan/StratPlan2010\\_2012\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.polioeradication.org/Portals/0/Document/StrategicPlan/StratPlan2010_2012_ENG.pdf)



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## **WMA STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE IN THE HEALTH SECTOR BY PATIENTS AND THOSE CLOSE TO THEM**

Adopted by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

### **PREAMBLE**

All persons have the right to work in a safe environment without the threat of violence. Workplace violence includes both physical and non-physical (psychological) violence. Given that non-physical abuse, such as harassment and threats, can have severe psychological consequences, a broad definition of workplace violence should be used. For the purposes of this statement we will use the widely accepted definition of workplace violence, as used by the WHO: "The intentional use of power, threatened or actual, against another person or against a group, in work-related circumstances, that either results in or has a high degree of likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation".

Violence, apart from the numerous health effects it can have on its victims, also has potentially destructive social effects. Violence against health workers, including physicians, not only affects the individuals directly involved, but also impacts the entire health-care system and its delivery. Such acts of violence affect the quality of the working environment, which has the potential to detrimentally impact the quality of patient care. Further, violence can affect the availability of care, particularly in impoverished areas.

While workplace violence is indisputably a global issue, various cultural differences among countries must be taken into consideration in order to accurately understand the concept of violence on a universal level. Significant differences exist in terms of what constitutes violence and what specific forms of workplace violence are most likely to occur. Threats and other forms of psychological violence are widely recognized to be more prevalent than physical violence. Reasons and causes of violence in the healthcare setting are extremely complex.

Several studies have identified common triggers for acts of violence in the health sector to be delays in receiving treatment and dissatisfaction with the treatment provided<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, patients may act aggressively as a result of their medical condition, the medication they take or the use of alcohol and other drugs. Another important example is that individuals may threaten or perpetrate physical violence against healthcare workers because they oppose, on the basis of their social, political or religious beliefs, a specific area of medical practice.

A multi-faceted approach encompassing the areas of legislation, security, data collection, training, environmental factors, public awareness and financial incentives is required in order to successfully address the issue of violence in the health sector.

In addition, collaboration among various stakeholders (including governments, National Medical Associations (NMAs), hospitals, general health services, management, insurance companies, trainers, preceptors, researchers, police and legal authorities) is more effective than the individual efforts of any one party. As the representatives of physicians, NMAs should take an active role in combating violence in the health sector and also encourage other key stakeholders to act, thus further protecting the quality of the working environment for healthcare employees and the quality of patient care.

This collaborative approach to addressing violence in the health sector must be promoted throughout the world.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The WMA encourages National Medical Associations (NMAs) to act in the following areas:

**Strategy** - NMAs should encourage healthcare institutions to develop and implement a protocol to deal with acts of violence. The protocol should include the following:

- A zero-tolerance policy towards workplace violence.
- A universal definition of workplace violence.
- A predetermined plan for maintaining security in the workplace.
- A designated plan of action for healthcare professionals to take when violence takes place.
- A system for reporting and recording acts of violence, which may include reporting to legal and/or police authorities.
- A means to ensure that employees who report violence do not face reprisals.

In order for this protocol to be effective, it is necessary for the management and administration of healthcare institutions to communicate and take the necessary steps to ensure that all staff are aware of the strategy.

**Policymaking** - In order to help increase patient satisfaction, national priorities and limitations on medical care should be clearly addressed by government institutions.

The state has obligations to ensure the safety and security of patients, physicians, and other healthcare workers. This includes providing an appropriate physical environment. Hence, healthcare systems should be designed to promote the safety of healthcare staff and patients. An institution which has experienced an act of violence by a patient may require the provision of extra security, as all healthcare workers have the right to be protected in their work place.

In some jurisdictions, physicians might have the right to refuse to treat a violent patient. In such cases, they must ensure that adequate alternative arrangements are made by the relevant authorities in order to safeguard the patient's health and treatment.

Patients with acute, chronic or illness-induced mental health disturbances may act violently toward caregivers; those offering care to these patients must be adequately protected.

**Training** - A well-trained and vigilant staff supported by management can be a key deterrent of violent acts. NMAs should work with undergraduate and postgraduate education providers to ensure that healthcare professionals are trained in the following: communication skills and recognising and handling potentially violent persons and high risk situations in order to prevent incidents of violence. The cultivation of physician-patient relationships based on respect and mutual trust will not only improve the quality of patient care, but will also foster feelings of security resulting in a reduced risk of violence.

**Communication** - NMAs should work with other key stakeholders to increase awareness of violence in the health sector. When appropriate, they should inform healthcare workers and the public when acts of violence occur and encourage physicians to report acts of violence through the appropriate channels.

Further, once an act of violence has taken place, the victim should be informed about the procedures undertaken thereafter.

**Support to victims** - Medical, psychological and legal counselling and support should be provided to staff members who have been the victims of threats and/or acts of violence while at work.

**Data Collection** - NMAs should lobby their governments and/or hospital boards to establish appropriate reporting systems enabling all healthcare workers to report anonymously and without reprisal, any threats or incidents of violence. Such a system should assess in terms of number, type and severity, incidents of violence within an institution and resulting injuries. The system should be used to analyse the effectiveness of preventative strategies. Aggregated data and analyses should be made available to NMAs.

**Investigation** - In all cases of violence there should be some form of investigation to better understand the causes and to aid in prevention of future violence. In some cases, the investigation may lead to prosecution under civil or criminal codes. The procedure should be, as much as possible, authoritative-led and uncomplicated for the victim.

**Security** - NMAs should work to ensure that appropriate security measures are in place in all healthcare institutions and that acts of violence in the healthcare sector are given a high priority by law-enforcement institutions. A routine violence risk audit should be implemented in order to identify which jobs and locations are at highest risk for violence. Examples of high risk areas include general practice premises, mental health treatment facilities and high traffic areas of hospitals including the emergency department.

The risk of violence may be ameliorated by a variety of means which could include placing security guards in these high risk areas and at the entrance of buildings, by the installation of security cameras and alarm devices for use by health professionals, and by

maintaining sufficient lighting in work areas, contributing to an environment conducive to vigilance and safety.

**Financial** - NMAs should encourage their governments to allocate appropriate funds in order to effectively tackle violence in the health sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Carmi-Iluz T, Peleg R, Freud T, Shvartzman P. *Verbal and physical violence towards hospital- and community- based physicians in the Negev: an observational study* BMC Health Service Research 2005; 5: 54

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## WMA STATEMENT ON FUNGAL DISEASE DIAGNOSIS AND MANAGEMENT

Adopted by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

Annual WHO Global Burden of Disease estimates recognize that fungal diseases account for a significant proportion of health problems worldwide. These include cutaneous fungal infections which affect up to a billion persons and vulvovaginal candidiasis which affects tens of millions of women, often multiple times annually.

Even more serious are invasive and chronic fungal diseases that lead to estimated annual morbidity rates that are similar to those caused by commonly recognized global health concerns such as malaria and tuberculosis. In addition to death, these fungal diseases commonly lead to chronic ill health, including blindness with keratitis, respiratory distress with *allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis (ABPA)*, severe asthma with fungal sensitisation (SAFS) and chronic pulmonary aspergillosis (CPA), weight loss and nutritional deficiency with oesophageal candidiasis and CPA, and inability to engage in healthy sexual activity with vulvovaginal candidiasis.

Serious fungal diseases are often opportunistic, occurring as a consequence of other conditions that suppress the immune system, such as asthma, AIDS, cancer, post-transplant immunosuppressive drugs and corticosteroid therapies. Some occur in critically ill patients.

Despite the fact that many fungal diseases can be treated relatively simply, in many cases, these diseases go untreated. Fungal infections alone are often not distinctive enough to allow a clinical diagnosis, and as cultures are frequently falsely negative, missed diagnosis is common. In addition, a relatively narrow diagnostic window to cure the patient is frequently missed, resulting in prolonged expensive hospital stays, often with a fatal outcome. Despite the existence of effective medicine to treat fungal infections, these are often not available when and where they are needed.

### STATEMENT

The WMA stresses the need to support the diagnosis and management of fungal diseases and urges national governments to ensure that both diagnostic tests and antifungal therapies are available for their populations. Depending on the prevalence of fungal diseases and their underlying conditions, specific antigen testing or microscopy and culture are essential. These tests, and personnel trained to administer and interpret the tests, should be available in all countries where systemic fungal infections occur. This will likely include developing at least one diagnostic centre of excellence with a sufficient staff of trained diagnostic personnel. Monitoring for antifungal toxicities should be available.

## Fungal Disease

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Physicians will be the first point of contact for most patients with a fungal infection and should be sufficiently educated about the topic in order to ensure an effective diagnostic approach.

The WMA encourages its members to undertake and support epidemiologic studies on the burden of fungal disease in their country and to inform the national government of the results.

## **WMA STATEMENT ON HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS VACCINATION**

Adopted by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

### **PREAMBLE**

Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination presents a unique and valuable opportunity for physicians to substantially prevent morbidity and mortality from certain cancers in all populations, and to improve maternal health. The HPV vaccine therefore merits consideration by the World Medical Association (WMA) separately from other vaccines.

HPV is a sexually transmitted virus and is so common that most sexually active adults become infected at some point in their lives. Most infections are asymptomatic and resolve without medical intervention. However, some of the 40 types of HPV can cause cervical cancer. HPV is the cause of nearly 100% of cervical cancer cases and may also cause cancer of the vagina, vulva, anus, penis and the head and neck. Cervical cancer accounts for more than 10% of all female cancers, and the majority of cervical cancer deaths are in developing countries.

Vaccines can protect against infection by the most common HPV types and afford protection against cancer. The U.S. Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends HPV vaccination for both females and males starting at age 11 years up to age 26 years. Benefits of vaccinating young men include protection against genital warts and cancer in addition to preventing transmission of HPV to sexual partners. The additional protection afforded by the quadrivalent vaccine against genital warts as well as cervical and other cancers should be taken into consideration when developing HPV vaccination programmes. The HPV vaccines are effective; post-marketing studies have shown decreases in HPV prevalence and HPV related disorders such as genital warts and abnormal cervical cytology. Studies concerning the safety of HPV vaccines have been reassuring.

These vaccines should be made widely available and should be promoted by physicians as a matter of individual patient wellbeing and public health.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The WMA urges physicians to educate themselves and their patients about HPV and associated diseases, HPV vaccination and routine cervical cancer screening; and encourages the development and funding of programs to make HPV vaccine available and to provide cervical cancer screening in countries without organized cervical cancer screening programs.

National medical associations (NMAs) are encouraged to carry out intensive education of and advocacy efforts toward their members to:

- Improve awareness and understanding of HPV and associated diseases;
- Understand the availability and efficacy of HPV vaccines;
- Understand the desirability of including HPV vaccines in national immunization programs;
- Understand the need for routine cervical cancer screening; and
- Integrate HPV cancer prevention methods, early detection and screening, diagnosis, treatment and palliative care into existing continuing professional development programs and pre-service training. Such training will leverage existing support for HPV programs and help in capacity building and quality assurance efforts.

NMAs are also encouraged to:

- Integrate HPV vaccination for all adolescents and routine cervical cancer screening for young women into all appropriate health care settings and visits;
- Support the availability of the HPV vaccine and routine cervical cancer screening for appropriate populations that benefit most from preventive measures, including but not limited to at-risk patients such as low-income, disadvantaged and populations that are not yet sexually active;
- Recommend HPV vaccination for all appropriate populations;
- Promote member advocacy for HPV prevention, care and treatment; and
- Create a network of physicians and practitioners who are willing and able to mentor and support one another and establish linkages to existing HPV vaccine and cancer prevention networks.



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## WMA STATEMENT ON NATURAL VARIATIONS OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

Adopted by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

### PREAMBLE

Healthcare professionals encounter many aspects of human diversity when providing care, including different variations of human sexuality.

A large body of scientific research indicates that homosexuality is a natural variation of human sexuality without any intrinsically harmful health effects.

As a consequence homosexuality was removed from the American Psychiatric Association's official diagnostic manual in 1973. The World Health Organisation (WHO) removed it from the ICD in 1990 following a similar process of scientific review. The Pan American Health Organization (WHO) states: *"In none of its individual manifestations does homosexuality constitute a disorder or an illness, and therefore it requires no cure."*

Direct and indirect discrimination, stigmatisation, peer rejection, and bullying continue to have a serious impact upon the psychological and physical health of people with a homosexual or bisexual orientation. These negative experiences lead to higher prevalence rates of depression, anxiety disorders, substance misuse, and suicidal ideations and attempts. The suicide rate among adolescents and young adults with a homosexual or bisexual orientation is, consequently, three times higher than that of their peers.

This can be exacerbated by so-called "conversion" or "reparative" procedures, which claim to be able to convert homosexuality into asexual or heterosexual behaviour and give the impression that homosexuality is a disease. These methods have been rejected by many professional organisations due to a lack of evidence of their effectiveness. They have no medical indication and represent a serious threat to the health and human rights of those so treated.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The WMA strongly asserts that homosexuality does not represent a disease, but rather a natural variation within the range of human sexuality.

The WMA condemns all forms of stigmatisation, criminalisation and discrimination of people based on their sexual orientation.

The WMA calls upon all physicians to classify physical and psychological diseases on the basis of clinically relevant symptoms according to ICD-10 criteria regardless of sexual orientation, and to provide therapy in accordance with internationally recognised treatments and protocols.

The WMA asserts that psychiatric or psychotherapeutic approaches to treatment must not focus upon homosexuality itself, but rather upon conflicts, which arise between homosexuality, and religious, social and internalised norms and prejudices.

The WMA condemns so-called “conversion” or “reparative” methods. These constitute violations of human rights and are unjustifiable practices that should be denounced and subject to sanctions and penalties. It is unethical for physicians to participate during any step of such procedures.

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## WMA STATEMENT

### ON

## THE RIGHT OF REHABILITATION OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE

Adopted by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

### PREAMBLE

The World Medical Association notes with grave concern the continued use of torture in many countries throughout the world.

The WMA reaffirms its total condemnation of all form of torture, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as defined by the UN Convention Against Torture (CAT, 1984). Torture is one of the gravest violations of international human rights law and has devastating consequences for victims, their families and society as a whole. Torture causes severe physical and mental injuries and is a crime absolutely prohibited under international law.

The WMA reaffirms its policies adopted previously, namely:

- The Declaration of Tokyo laying down Guidelines for Physicians Concerning Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Relation to Detention and Imprisonment (1975)
- The Declaration of Hamburg concerning Support for Medical Doctors Refusing to Participate in, or to Condone, the Use of Torture or Other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (1997)
- The Resolution on the Responsibility of Physicians in the Documentation and Denunciation of Acts of Torture or Cruel or Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (2003).

The medical evaluation is an essential factor in pursuing the documentation of torture and the reparation of victims of torture. Physicians have a critical role to play in gathering information about torture, documenting evidence of torture for legal purposes, as well as supporting and rehabilitating victims.

The WMA recognizes the adoption, in December 2012, by the UN Committee Against Torture of the General Comment on the Implementation of article 14 of Convention against Torture relating to the right to reparation of victims of torture.

The General Comment outlines the right of rehabilitation as an obligation on States and specifies the scope of these services. The WMA welcomes in particular:

- The obligation of State parties to adopt a “long-term and integrated approach and

ensure that specialized services for the victim of torture or ill treatment are available, appropriate and promptly accessible” (paragraph 13), without making access to these services dependent on the victim pursuing judicial remedies.

- The recognition of the right of victims to choose a rehabilitation service provider, be it a State institution, or a non-State service provider, which is funded by the State.
- The recognition that State parties should provide torture victims with access to rehabilitation programs as soon as possible following an assessment by qualified independent healthcare professionals.
- The references in paragraph 18 to measures aimed at protecting health and legal professionals who assist torture victims, developing specific training on the Istanbul Protocol for health professionals, and promoting the observance of international standards and codes of conduct by public servants, including medical, psychological and social service personnel.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The WMA emphasizes the vital function of reparation for victims of torture and their families in rebuilding their lives and achieve redress and the important role of physicians in rehabilitation.

The WMA encourages its member associations to work with relevant agencies – governmental and non-governmental – acting for the reparation of victims of torture, in particular in the areas of documentation and rehabilitation, as well as prevention.

The WMA encourages its members to support agencies that are under threat of – or subjected to – reprisals from state parties due to their involvement in the documentation of torture, rehabilitation and reparation of torture victims.

The WMA calls on its members to use their medical experience to support torture victims in accordance with article 14 of the UN Convention against Torture.

The WMA calls on its member associations to support and facilitate data collection at the national level in order to monitor the implementation of the State’s obligation to provide rehabilitation services.

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**WMA STATEMENT  
ON  
THE UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION FOR A MORATORIUM ON  
THE USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY**

Adopted by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

**PREAMBLE**

The WMA Resolution on Physician Participation in Capital Punishment states that it is unethical for physicians to take part in capital punishment, and the WMA Declaration of Geneva obliges physicians to maintain the utmost respect for human life.

The WMA acknowledges that the views prevalent in the countries of some of its members prevent all members unconditionally opposing the death penalty.

The WMA therefore supports the suspension of the use of the death penalty through a global moratorium.

The WMA has long recognized that it cannot hold its national medical association members responsible for the actions and policies of their respective governments.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The World Medical Association supports United Nations General Assembly Resolution 65/206 calling for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.



## **WMA STATEMENT ON AESTHETIC TREATMENT**

Adopted by the 65<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014

### **PREAMBLE**

Aesthetic treatments have become increasingly common in recent years as society appears to have become more preoccupied with physical appearance. These treatments are performed by practitioners with widely differing clinical and educational backgrounds.

For the purpose of this statement, aesthetic treatment is defined as an intervention that is performed not to treat an injury, a disease or a deformity, but for non-therapeutic reasons, with the sole purpose of enhancing or changing the physical appearance of the individual concerned. In this statement, the individual undergoing treatment is referred to as the patient. The treatments available include a great variety of interventions, ranging from surgical procedures to injections and different kinds of skin treatments. This statement focuses on interventions that are methodologically similar to those performed in conventional health care. Tattooing, scarring and similar interventions are therefore not considered in this statement.

Body image affects a person's self-esteem and mental health and is an integral part of a person's overall health and well-being. However, media images of “perfect bodies” have become the norm, causing some people, to develop unrealistic and unhealthy body images.

Many aesthetic treatments involve risks and may potentially harm the health of the patient. Minors<sup>1</sup> are particularly vulnerable, as their bodies are often not fully developed. In order to protect persons considering or undergoing aesthetic treatment the WMA has developed the following basic principles regarding aesthetic treatments.

Reaffirming the medical ethics principles laid out in the WMA Declaration of Geneva, the WMA Declaration of Lisbon on the Rights of the Patient and the WMA International Code of Medical Ethics, and consistent with the mandate of the WMA, this statement is addressed primarily to physicians. However, the WMA encourages other practitioners performing aesthetic treatments to adopt these principles.

### **PRINCIPLES**

1. The patient's dignity, integrity and confidentiality must always be respected.
2. Physicians have a role in helping to identify unhealthy body images and to address and treat disorders when these exist.

3. Aesthetic treatments must only be performed by practitioners with sufficient knowledge, skills and experience of the interventions performed.
4. All practitioners providing aesthetic treatments must be registered with and/or licensed by the appropriate regulatory authority. Ideally, the practitioner should also be authorized by this authority to provide these specific aesthetic treatments.
5. All aesthetic treatments must be preceded by a thorough examination of the patient. The practitioner should consider all circumstances, physical and psychological, that may cause an increased risk of harm for the individual patient and should refuse to perform the treatment if the risk is unacceptable. This is especially true in the case of minors. Practitioners should always choose the most appropriate treatment option, rather than the most lucrative one.
6. Minors may need or benefit from plastic medical treatments but pure aesthetic procedures should not be performed on minors. If, in exceptional cases, aesthetic treatment is performed on a minor, it should only be done with special care and consideration and only if the aim of the treatment is to avoid negative attention rather than gain positive attention. All relevant medical factors, such as whether the minor is still growing or whether the treatment will need to be repeated at a later date, must be considered.
7. The patient must consent explicitly to any aesthetic treatment, preferably in writing. Before seeking consent the practitioner should inform the patient of all relevant aspects of the treatment, including how the procedure is performed, possible risks and the fact that many of these treatments may be irreversible. The patient should be given sufficient time to consider the information before the treatment starts. Where the patient requesting the treatment is a minor, the informed consent of his or her parents or legally authorized representative should be obtained.
8. All aesthetic treatments performed should be carefully documented by the practitioner. The documentation should include a detailed description of the treatment performed, information on medications used, if any, and all other relevant aspects of the treatment.
9. Aesthetic treatments must only be performed under strictly hygienic and medically safe conditions on premises that are adequately staffed and equipped. This must include equipment for treating life-threatening allergic reactions and other potential complications.
10. Advertising and marketing of aesthetic treatments should be responsible and should not foster unrealistic expectations of treatment results. Unrealistic or altered photographs showing patients before and after treatments must not be used in advertising.
11. Advertising and marketing of aesthetic treatments should never be targeted to minors.
12. Practitioners should never offer or promote financial loans as a means of paying for aesthetic treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this statement minor is defined as a person who, according to applicable national legislation, is not an adult.



## **WMA STATEMENT ON THE PREVENTION OF AIR POLLUTION DUE TO VEHICLE EMISSIONS**

Adopted by the 65<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014

### **PREAMBLE**

There are a number of ways in which the volume of harmful emissions can be reduced. These include encouraging fewer road traffic journeys, active transport for individuals undertaking relatively short journeys, the use of mass public transit in preference to individual vehicles, and alternative energy sources for vehicles, including electric and hybrid technologies. Where vehicle use is essential, means of reducing harmful emissions should be used.

Physicians around the world are aware of air pollution. It impacts the quality of life for hundreds of millions of people worldwide, causing both, a large burden of disease as well as economic losses and increased health care costs. According to WHO estimates, in 2012, urban outdoor air pollution was responsible for 3.7 million annual deaths, representing 6.7% of the total deaths (WHO, 2014).

Especially, diesel soot is acknowledged as a proven carcinogen (IARC, 07/2012). Furthermore, it has many other toxic effects, most prominently in the cardiovascular (Brook et al., 2010) and respiratory systems (ERS, 2010). Moreover, in the context of global warming, soot, along with methane, is identified as the second most important greenhouse driving force substance after CO<sub>2</sub> (Kerr, 2013).

Despite the fact that new vehicles will have to comply with stricter emission standards which take into account most harmful ultra fine particles too, a high-polluting in-use fleet, including off-road vehicles such as construction engines and ships, will continue polluting for many more years.

### **BACKGROUND**

In many densely populated cities around the world, fine dust concentrations measurable as aerosols exceed up to 50 times the maximum WHO recommendation. High volumes of transport, power generated from coal, and pollution caused by construction machinery are among the contributing factors. People living and working near major (high density volume traffic) streets are most affected by pollutants. For fighting the health risks mentioned above, there exist a variety of highly efficient and reliable filter systems on the market (Best Available Technology (BAT) filters<sup>1</sup>). They are applicable to all internal combustion engines and they reduce even most harmful ultra-fine particles by a factor of

over one hundred. As soon as 90% of heavy duty vehicles, both, new and upgraded ones, satisfy this standard, health problems attributable to emissions of heavy duty traffic will be greatly reduced, and no further tightening of emission standards will be possible or even needed at all because of an almost total elimination of the pollutant as such.

In a variety of countries on different continents and under varying conditions retrofit or upgrading programs have been successfully performed. The UN's Working Party on Pollution Prevention and Energy in Geneva has just proposed a technical standard for regulation in their member states, which will be applicable worldwide.

The WMA supports these efforts and calls on policy makers in all countries, especially in urban regions, to introduce regulatory restrictions of access for vehicles without filter, and/or to provide financial assistance to support the retrofitting of in-use vehicles.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The WMA therefore recommends that all NMAs should encourage their respective governments to:

1. Introduce BAT standards for all new diesel vehicles (on road and off-road)
2. Incentivise retrofitting with BAT filters for all in-use engines
3. Monitor and limit the concentration of nanosize soot particles in the urban breathing air
4. Conduct epidemiological studies detecting and differentiating the health effects of ultrafine particles
5. Build professional and public awareness of the importance of diesel soot and the existing methods of eliminating the particles
6. Contribute to developing strategies to protect people from soot particles in aircraft passenger cabins, trains, homes and in the general environment. These strategies should include plans to develop and increase use of public transportation systems.

### **ABBREVIATIONS:**

EPA: Environmental Protection Agency (US)

ERS: European Respiratory Society

IARC: International Agency for Research of Cancer

BAT Standards: Emission standards for passenger cars, heavy-duty vehicles and off-road machinery, based on count of ultrafine particles rather than mass and aimed at the protection of human health from the most hazardous soot particles, the lung and even cell membrane penetrating ultra-fines.

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<sup>1</sup> Euro 6/VI, US/EPA/CARB, Chinese and equivalent standards.



## **WMA STATEMENT ON SOLITARY CONFINEMENT**

Adopted by the 65<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014

### **PREAMBLE**

In many countries substantial numbers of prisoners are held at times in solitary confinement. Prisoners are typically kept in isolation for most of the day, and are allowed out of their cells only a short period of time of solitary exercise. Meaningful contact with other people (prisoners, prison staff, outside world) is kept to a minimum. Some countries have strict provisions on how long and how often prisoners can be kept in solitary confinement, but many countries lack clear rules on this.

The reasons for the use of solitary confinement vary in different jurisdictions. It may be used as a disciplinary measure when a prisoner does not respond to other sanctions intended to address his or her behaviour, for example, in response to seriously disruptive behaviour, threats of violence or suspected acts of violence.

The legal authorities in some nations allow individuals to be held in solitary confinement during an on-going criminal investigation or to be sentenced to solitary confinement, even when the individual poses no threat to others. Individuals with mental illness may be kept in high-security or super-maximum security (supermax) units or prisons. Solitary confinement can be imposed for hours to days or even years.

Reliable data on the use of solitary confinement are lacking. Various studies estimate that tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of prisoners are currently held in solitary confinement worldwide.

People react to isolation in different ways. For a significant number of prisoners, solitary confinement has been documented to cause serious psychological, psychiatric, and sometimes physiological effects, including insomnia, confusion, hallucinations and psychosis. Solitary confinement is also associated with a high rate of suicidal behaviour. Negative health effects can occur after only a few days, and may in some cases persist when isolation ends.

Certain populations are particularly vulnerable to the negative health effects of solitary confinement. For example, persons with psychotic disorders, major depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder or people with severe personality disorders may find isolation unbearable and suffer health harms. Solitary confinement may complicate treating such individuals and their associated health problems successfully later in the prison environment or when they are released back into the community.

Human rights conventions prohibit the use of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The use of prolonged solitary confinement against a prisoner's own will or the use of solitary confinement during pre-trial detention or against minors can be regarded as a breach of international human rights law, and must be avoided.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The WMA urges National Medical Associations and governments to promote the following principles:

1. Solitary confinement should be imposed only as a last resort whether to protect others or the individual prisoner, and only for the shortest period of time possible. The human dignity of prisoners confined in isolation must always be respected.
2. Authorities responsible for overseeing solitary confinement should take account of the individual's health and medical condition and regularly re-evaluate and document the individual's status. Adverse health consequences should lead to the immediate cessation of solitary confinement.
3. All decisions on solitary confinement must be transparent and regulated by law. The use of solitary confinement should be time-limited by law. Prisoners subject to solitary confinement should have a right of appeal.
4. Prolonged solitary confinement, against the will of the prisoner, must be avoided. Where prisoners seek prolonged solitary confinement, for whatever reason, they should be medically and psychologically assessed to ensure it is unlikely to lead to harm.
5. Solitary confinement should not be imposed when it would adversely affect the medical condition of prisoners with a mental illness. If it is essential to provide safety for the prisoner or other prisoners then especially careful and frequent monitoring must occur, and an alternative found as soon as possible.
6. Prisoners in isolation should be allowed a reasonable amount of regular human contact. As with all prisoners, they must not be subjected to extreme physical and mentally taxing conditions.
7. The health of prisoners in solitary confinement must be monitored regularly by a qualified physician. For this purpose, a physician should be allowed to check both the documentation of solitary confinement decisions in the institution and the actual health of the confined prisoners on a regular basis.
8. Prisoners who have been in solitary confinement should have an adjustment period before they are released from prison. This must never extend their period of incarceration.

9. Physician's role is to protect, advocate for, and improve prisoners' physical and mental health, not to inflict punishment. Therefore, physicians should never participate in any part of the decision-making process resulting in solitary confinement.
  
10. Doctors have a duty to consider the conditions in solitary confinement and to protest to the authorities if they believe that they are unacceptable or might amount to inhumane or degrading treatment.





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**WMA RESOLUTION  
ON  
PHYSICIAN PARTICIPATION IN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**

Adopted by the 34<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Lisbon, Portugal, September/October 1981  
and amended by the 52<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Edinburgh, Scotland, October 2000  
and the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

RESOLVED, that it is unethical for physicians to participate in capital punishment, in any way, or during any step of the execution process, including its planning and the instruction and/or training of persons to perform executions.

The World Medical Association

REQUESTS firmly its constituent members to advise all physicians that any participation in capital punishment as stated above is unethical.

URGES its constituent members to lobby actively national governments and legislators against any participation of physicians in capital punishment.



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**WMA RESOLUTION  
ON  
ACADEMIC SANCTIONS OR BOYCOTTS**

Adopted by the 40<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Vienna, Austria, September 1988  
and editorially revised by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France,  
May 2005  
and reaffirmed by the 200th WMA Council Session, Oslo, Norway, April 2015

WHEREAS

academic sanctions or boycotts are discriminatory restrictions on academic, professional and scientific freedoms that deny or exclude physicians and others from educational, cultural and scientific meetings and other opportunities for the exchange of information and knowledge, the purpose of such restrictions being to protest the social and political policies of governments, and

WHEREAS

such restrictions are in direct conflict with the major objectives of the WMA, viz., to achieve the highest international standards in medical education, medical science, medical art and medical ethics, and

WHEREAS

such restrictions adversely affect health care, particularly of the disadvantaged, and therefore thwart the WMA's objective of obtaining the best possible health care for all people of the world, and

WHEREAS

such restrictions discriminate against physicians and patients on grounds of political persuasion or of political decisions taken by governments and are therefore in conflict with the WMA's Declaration of Geneva, Statement on Non-Discrimination in Professional Membership and Activities of Physicians and Statement on Freedom to Attend Medical Meetings, and

WHEREAS

a basic rule of medical practice is "primum non nocere", i.e. first, do no harm,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

that the WMA regards the application of such restrictions as arbitrary political decisions designed to deny international scholarly exchange and to blacklist particular physicians or bodies of physicians because of their nationality or because of the political policies of their governments. The WMA is unalterably opposed to such restrictions and calls on all National Medical Associations to resist the imposition of such restrictions by every means at their disposal and to heed the WMA's Statement on Non-Discrimination in Professional Membership and Activities of Physicians and the WMA Statement on Freedom to Attend Medical Meetings.

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## **WMA RESOLUTION ON ECONOMIC EMBARGOES AND HEALTH**

Adopted by the 49th WMA General Assembly, Hamburg, Germany, November 1997  
and reaffirmed by the 58<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Copenhagen, Denmark, October 2007

### **RECOGNISING THAT:**

all people have the right to the preservation of health; and,  
the Geneva Convention (Article 23, Number IV, 1949) requires the free passage of medical supplies intended for civilians;

THE WMA URGES national medical associations to ensure that Governments employing economic sanctions against other States respect the agreed exemptions for medicines, medical supplies and basic food items.

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

Adopted by the 49<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Hamburg, Germany, November 1997  
and amended by the 59<sup>th</sup> 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.

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON IMPROVED INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC HEALTH**

Adopted by the 50<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Ottawa, Canada, October 1998  
and amended by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### **INTRODUCTION**

Each country should have a health system with enough resources to attend to the needs of its population. However today, many countries across the world are suffering wide inequities and inequalities in health care and this is causing problems of access to health services for the poorer segments of society [the weak or underprivileged]. The situation is especially serious in low-income countries.

The international community has attempted to improve the situation. The 20/20 initiative of 1995, the 1996 Initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), and Objectives for Millennium 2000 Development (MDGs) are all initiatives aimed at reducing poverty and dealing with poor health, inequities and inequalities between the sexes, education, insufficient access to drinking water and environmental contamination.

The objectives are formed as an agreement with acknowledgement of the contributions which developed countries can make, in the shape of trade relations, development assistance, reduction of the burden of debt, improving access to essential medication and the transfer of technology. Three of the eight objectives are directly related to health, which has a considerable influence on various other objectives that interact to support each of the others within a structural framework, these are designed to increase human development globally. The eight Millennium Development Objectives (MDO) foresee a development vision based on health and education, thus affirming that development does not only refer (allude) to economic growth.

Various reports from the World Health Organization have underlined the opportunities and skills [or techniques] which are currently involved in bringing about significant improvements in health, as well as helping to reduce poverty and encourage growth. Additionally, the reports highlight the fact that it is of fundamental importance to reduce limitations on human resources, in order to increase the achievements of the public health system, a situation which requires urgent attention. These limitations are related to work, training and payment conditions, and play a substantial role in determining capacity for sustained growth of access to health services.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The World Medical Association urges National Medical Associations to:

1. Advocate that their governments should adhere to and promote the proposals to increase investment in the health sector; and to adhere to and promote initiatives to reduce the debt burden for the poorest countries on the planet.
2. Advocate [defend] the inclusion of public health factors in all fields of policy provision, since health is mostly determined by factors that are external to the area of healthcare, for example, housing and education. [Health is not only medicine, it also depends on living standards].
3. Encourage and support countries in the planning and implementation of investment plans, which invest in health for the poor; guarantee that more resources be used for health in general, with greater efficiency and impact; and reduce limitations for the most effective use of the additional investments.
4. Maintain vigilance to ensure that the investment plans focus maximum attention on generating capacity, that they promote leadership skills and promote incentives to retain and place qualified personnel, whilst it is taken into consideration that the limitations in relation to the previous matter currently constitute the greatest obstacle for progress.
5. Urge international financial institutions and other important donors to: i) Adopt the necessary measures to help the countries that have already organised mechanisms to prepare their investment plans, and provide assistance to those countries that have begun to take the necessary steps, with the support and participation of the international community; ii) Help countries to obtain funds to develop and implement their investment plans; iii) Continue providing technical assistance to the countries for their plans.
6. Exchange information in order to coordinate efforts to change policies in these areas.



## **WMA RESOLUTION ON MEDICAL WORKFORCE**

Adopted by the 50<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Ottawa, Canada, October 1998  
and amended by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

### **PREAMBLE**

The health of our countries depends upon keeping the population healthy. Health care is a key right of individuals. This care is dependent upon access to highly-trained medical and other healthcare professionals. Well-functioning health care systems depend upon these sufficient human resources. Comprehensive and extensive planning on a national level is required in order to ensure that a country has a medical workforce in all fields of medicine that meets the present and future health needs of the entire population of that country.

There are currently significant shortages in the area of health human resources. These shortages are present in all countries but are especially pronounced in developing countries where health human resources are more limited.

The problem is made more severe by the fact that many countries have not invested adequately in the education, training, recruitment and retention of their medical workforce. The ageing population in developed countries has also been reflected by an ageing medical workforce. Many developed countries address their medical workforce shortages by employing health care professionals from developing countries to bolster their own health care systems.

The migration of health care professionals from developing countries to developed countries has, over the past ten years, impaired the performance of health systems in developing countries. Economic realities of insufficient investments in health care and inadequate facilities and support for health care professionals have continued to be responsible for this migration.

The World Health Organization has recognized that the crisis of health workforce shortages is impeding the provision of essential, life-saving interventions. It has therefore established structures such as the Global Health Workforce Alliance, a partnership dedicated to identifying and implementing solutions to the health workforce problems. The WHO is promoting the development of a cadre of medical/clinical assistants who propose to join the medical workforce to partially address these shortages.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Recognizing that health care systems require adequate numbers of qualified and competent health care professionals, the World Medical Association asks all National Medical Associations to participate and be active in addressing these requirements and to:

1. Call on their respective governments to allocate sufficient financial resources for the education, training, development, recruitment and retention of physicians to meet the medical needs of the entire population in their countries.
2. Call on their respective governments to ensure that the education, training and development of healthcare professionals meets the highest possible standards including:
  - The training and development of medical/clinical assistants where this is applicable and appropriate and
  - Ensuring clear definitions of scope of practice and conditions for adequate support and supervision;
3. Call on governments to ensure that appropriate ratios are maintained between population and the medical workforce at all levels, including mechanisms to address reduced access to care in rural and remote areas, based on accepted international norms and standards where these are available;
4. Take measures to attract and support individuals within their countries to enter the medical profession and also call on their respective governments to take such action;
5. Actively advocate for programs that will ensure the retention of physicians within their respective countries and ensure governments' recognition of this need;
6. Call on governments to improve the health care working environment (including access to appropriate facilities, equipment, treatment modalities and professional support), physician remuneration, physician living environment and career development of the medical workforce at all levels;
7. Advocate for the development of transparent memoranda of understanding between countries where migration of trained health care professionals is an issue of concern and enlist where possible the NMA of origin and receiving NMA's to support these physicians.

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## **WMA RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE OTTAWA CONVENTION**

(Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production  
and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction)

Adopted by the 50<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Ottawa, Canada, October 1998  
and amended by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

The World Medical Association:

- expresses its support for the Ottawa Convention (also known as the landmine ban convention); and
- urges its member National Medical Associations to press their governments to sign and ratify the Convention.
- urges its member National Medical Associations to press their governments to cease manufacture, sale, deployment and use of landmines.

**WMA RESOLUTION  
ON  
THE INCLUSION OF MEDICAL ETHICS AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
IN THE CURRICULUM OF MEDICAL SCHOOLS WORLD-WIDE**

Adopted by the 51<sup>st</sup> World Medical Assembly, Tel Aviv, Israel, October 1999

1. Whereas Medical Ethics and Human Rights form an integral part of the work and culture of the medical profession, and
2. Whereas Medical Ethics and Human Rights form an integral part of the history, structure and objectives of the World Medical Association
3. It is hereby resolved that the WMA strongly recommends to Medical Schools world-wide that the teaching of Medical Ethics and Human Rights be included as an obligatory course in their curricula.

## WMA RESOLUTION ON EUTHANASIA

Adopted by the 53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington, DC, USA, October 2002  
and reaffirmed with minor revision by the 194<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session,  
Bali, Indonesia, April 2013

The World Medical Association's Declaration on Euthanasia, adopted by the 38<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Madrid, Spain, October 1987 and reaffirmed by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2005 states:

**"Euthanasia, that is the act of deliberately ending the life of a patient, even at the patient's own request or at the request of close relatives, is unethical. This does not prevent the physician from respecting the desire of a patient to allow the natural process of death to follow its course in the terminal phase of sickness."**

The WMA Statement on Physician-Assisted Suicide, adopted by the 44<sup>th</sup> World Medical Assembly, Marbella, Spain, September 1992 and editorially revised by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2005 likewise states:

**"Physicians-assisted suicide, like euthanasia, is unethical and must be condemned by the medical profession. Where the assistance of the physician is intentionally and deliberately directed at enabling an individual to end his or her own life, the physician acts unethically. However the right to decline medical treatment is a basic right of the patient and the physician does not act unethically even if respecting such a wish results in the death of the patient."**

The World Medical Association has noted that the practice of active euthanasia with physician assistance, has been adopted into law in some countries.

### **BE IT RESOLVED that:**

The World Medical Association reaffirms its strong belief that euthanasia is in conflict with basic ethical principles of medical practice, and

The World Medical Association strongly encourages all National Medical Associations and physicians to refrain from participating in euthanasia, even if national law allows it or decriminalizes it under certain conditions.

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON FEMALE FOETICIDE**

Adopted by the 53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington, DC, USA, October 2002  
and reaffirmed by the 191<sup>st</sup> WMA Council Session, Prague, Czech Republic, April 2012

1. Whereas there is grave concern that in certain countries female foeticide is commonly practised.
2. The WMA denounces female foeticide as a totally unacceptable example of gender discrimination.
3. The World Medical Association calls on National Medical Associations:
  1. To denounce the practice of female foeticide and the use of selective sex determination for that purpose and;
  2. To advise their governments accordingly.

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## **WMA RESOLUTION ON THE ABUSE OF PSYCHIATRY**

Adopted by the 53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington, DC, USA, October 2002  
and revised by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

The World Medical Association (WMA) notes with concern evidence from a number of countries that political dissidents, practitioners of various religions and social activists have been detained in psychiatric institutions and subjected to unnecessary psychiatric treatment as a punishment and not to treat a substantiated psychiatric illness.

The WMA:

- Declares that such detention and unwarranted treatment is abusive, unethical and unacceptable;
- Calls on physicians and psychiatrists to resist involvement in these abusive practices;
- Calls on member NMAs to support their physician members who resist involvement in these abuses, and
- Calls on governments to stop abusing medicine and psychiatry in this manner, and on non-governmental organizations and the World Health Organization to work to end these abuses; and
- Calls on governments to uphold the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that "all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law."







**WMA RESOLUTION  
ON  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO HEALTH CARE  
AND HOW THAT RELATES TO THE PREVENTION  
OF MOTHER-TO-CHILD HIV INFECTION**

Adopted by the 53<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Washington, DC, USA, October 2002  
and amended by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

**PREAMBLE**

In many parts of the world the prevalence of HIV infection continues to increase. One of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG 6), specifically targets combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, with 2015 being its target year to halt HIV/AIDS infection and to begin reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS. In addition, it was hoped that by 2010 universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those requiring it would be achieved. A December 2012 UN resolution declared that countries must develop programmes for Universal Health Access after 2015 when the MDGs end.

HIV/AIDS is a disease that disproportionately affects people in their reproductive years although today, due to better management of the condition, there are also many older people who are infected. In addition, many who were infected as infants are now reaching reproductive maturity.

In developed countries men who have sex with men and injection drug users constitute significant risk groups for contracting HIV. In many developing countries, women are at risk due to heterosexual contact with HIV infected partners. In 2011 approximately 58 percent of people living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa were women, equating to about 13.6 million women living with HIV and AIDS, compared to about 9.9 million men (UNAIDS 'Global Fact Sheet 2012: World AIDS Day 2012).

In the absence of HIV, maternal mortality worldwide would be significantly (20% ) lower (Murray et al. Maternal mortality for 181 countries, 1980~2008: [a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5](#)).

HIV infection increases the risk of invasive cervical cancer 2 to 22 fold. Some evidence exists that the use of antiretroviral therapy may decrease this risk. Hence, the appropriate management of patients infected with HIV may have a long-term impact on other aspects of women's health.

The WMA believes that access to healthcare, including both therapeutic and preventative strategies, is a fundamental human right. This imposes an obligation on government to

ensure that these human rights are fully respected and protected. Gender inequalities must be addressed and eradicated. This should impact every aspect of healthcare.

The promotion and protection of the reproductive rights of women are critical to the ultimate success of confronting and resolving the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Many of the MDGs address empowering women and promoting their role in society and specifically in healthcare. MDG 5B, in particular, promotes universal access to reproductive health including contraceptive access, reduction in adolescent birth rate, antenatal care coverage and addressing unmet needs for family planning. In addition, MDG 3 which promotes gender equality and empowers women, and MDGs 1 and 2 will influence women's status in society and therefore their access to healthcare and health promotion.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The WMA requests all national member associations to encourage their governments to undertake and promote the following actions:

- Develop empowerment programs for women of all ages to ensure that women are free from discrimination and enjoy universal and free access to reproductive health education and life skills training. It is recommended that campaigns be initiated and activated in the media, including social media and popular programmes on radio and television in order to eradicate myths, stigma and stereotypes that might degrade or dehumanise women. This must include campaigns against genital mutilation and forced adolescent marriages and unwanted pregnancies. In addition, promoting the availability and choice of contraception for women, without necessarily having to get input from their partners, and promoting the availability of HIV testing and treatment are essential for reproductive health. It is also important to provide for the economic means for the infected populations in terms of prevention, treatment and medical follow-up.
- Women must have the same access as men, without discrimination to education, employment, economic independence, information about healthcare and health services.
- Laws, policies and practices that facilitate the full recognition and respect of human rights and the fundamental freedom of women should be initiated or reviewed and revised where appropriate. It is essential that women are empowered to make decisions regarding their children, their financial status and their future.
- All governments should develop programmes to provide prophylactic treatment in the form of antiretrovirals to women who have been raped or sexually assaulted. Universal and free access to antiretroviral therapy must also be provided to all HIV infected women.
- HIV infected women who are pregnant should receive counselling and access to anti-retroviral prophylaxis or treatment in order to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV.





**WMA RESOLUTION  
ON  
THE DESIGNATION OF AN ANNUAL MEDICAL ETHICS DAY**

Adopted by the 54<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, September 2003  
and reaffirmed by the 194<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Bali, Indonesia, April 2013

Whereas the World Medical Association has a specific focus and function in the field of medical ethics, and came into being on 18 September 1947 during the first General Assembly, it is resolved that NMAs are encouraged to annually observe the 18<sup>th</sup> September as "Medical Ethics Day".

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**WMA RESOLUTION  
ON  
THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PHYSICIANS IN THE DOCUMENTATION  
AND DENUNCIATION OF ACTS OF TORTURE OR CRUEL  
OR INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT**

Adopted by the 54<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, September 2003  
and amended by the 58<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Copenhagen, Denmark, October 2007

The World Medical Association,

1. Considering the Preamble to the United Nations Charter of 26 June 1945 solemnly proclaiming the faith of the people of the United Nations in the fundamental human rights, the dignity and value of the human person,
2. Considering the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948 which states that disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind,
3. Considering Article 5 of that Declaration which proclaims that no one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment,
4. Considering the American Convention on Human Rights, which was adopted by the Organization of American States on 22 November 1969 and entered into force on 18 July 1978, and the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture, which entered into force on 28 February 1987,
5. Considering the Declaration of Tokyo, adopted by the World Medical Association in 1975, which reaffirms the prohibition of any form of medical involvement or presence of a physician during torture or inhuman or degrading treatment,
6. Considering the Declaration of Hawaii, adopted by the World Psychiatric Association in 1977,
7. Considering the Declaration of Kuwait, adopted by the International Conference of Islamic Medical Associations in 1981,
8. Considering the Principles of Medical Ethics Relevant to the Role of Health Personnel, Particularly Physicians, in the Protection of Prisoners and Detainees Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1982, and particularly Principle 2, which states: "It is a gross contravention of medical ethics... for health personnel, particularly physicians, to engage, actively or passively, in acts which constitute participation in, complicity in, incitement to or attempts to commit torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment...",

## Denunciation of Acts of Torture

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9. Considering the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 1984 and entered into force on 26 June, 1987,
10. Considering the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which was adopted by the Council of Europe on 26 June 1987 and entered into force on 1 February 1989,
11. Considering the Resolution on Human Rights adopted by the World Medical Association in Rancho Mirage, in October 1990 during the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly and amended by the 45<sup>th</sup>, 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> General Assemblies,
12. Considering the Declaration of Hamburg, adopted by the World Medical Association in November 1997 during the 49<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, calling on physicians to protest individually against ill-treatment and on national and international medical organizations to support physicians in such actions,
13. Considering the Istanbul Protocol (Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 4 December 2000,
14. Considering the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by the United Nations on 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990, and
15. Considering the World Medical Association Declaration of Malta on Hunger Strikers, adopted by the 43<sup>rd</sup> World Medical Assembly Malta, November 1991 and amended by the WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October, 2006,

### RECOGNIZING

1. That careful and consistent documentation and denunciation by physicians of cases of torture and of those responsible contributes to the protection of the physical and mental integrity of victims and in a general way to the struggle against a major affront to human dignity,
2. That physicians, by ascertaining the sequelae and treating the victims of torture, either early or late after the event, are privileged witnesses of this violation of human rights,
3. That the victims, because of the psychological sequelae from which they suffer or the pressures brought on them, are often unable to formulate by themselves complaints against those responsible for the ill-treatment they have undergone,
4. That the absence of documenting and denouncing acts of torture may be considered as a form of tolerance thereof and of non-assistance to the victims,
5. That nevertheless there is no consistent and explicit reference in the professional codes of medical ethics and legislative texts of the obligation upon physicians to document, report or denounce acts of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment of which they are aware,



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**RECOMMENDS THAT NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

1. Attempt to ensure that detainees or victims of torture or cruelty or mistreatment have access to immediate and independent health care. Attempt to ensure that physicians include assessment and documentation of symptoms of torture or ill-treatment in the medical records using the necessary procedural safeguards to prevent endangering detainees.
2. Promote awareness of the Istanbul Protocol and its Principles on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment. This should be done at country level using different methods of information dissemination; including trainings, publications and web documents.
3. Disseminate to physicians the Istanbul Protocol.
4. Promote training of physicians on the identification of different modes of torture, in recognizing physical and psychological symptoms following specific forms of torture and in using the documentation techniques foreseen in the Istanbul Protocol to create documentation that can be used as evidence in legal or administrative proceedings.
5. Promote awareness of the correlation between the examination findings, understanding torture methods and the patients' allegations of abuse;
6. Facilitate the production of high-quality medical reports on torture victims for submission to judicial and administrative bodies;
7. Attempt to ensure that physicians observe informed consent and avoid putting individuals in danger while assessing or documenting signs of torture and ill-treatment;
8. Attempt to ensure that physicians include assessment and documentation of symptoms of torture or ill-treatment in the medical records using the necessary procedural safeguards to prevent endangering detainees.
9. Support the adoption in their country of ethical rules and legislative provisions:
  1. aimed at affirming the ethical obligation on physicians to report or denounce acts of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of which they are aware; depending on the circumstances, the report or denunciation would be addressed to medical, legal, national or international authorities, to non-governmental organizations or to the International Criminal Court. Doctors should use their discretion in this matter, bearing in mind paragraph 68 of the Istanbul Protocol.
  2. establishing, to that effect, an ethical and legislative exception to professional confidentiality that allows the physician to report abuses, where possible with the subject's consent, but in certain circumstances where the victim is unable to express him/herself freely, without explicit consent.
  3. cautioning physicians to avoid putting individuals in danger by reporting on a named basis a victim who is deprived of freedom, subjected to constraint or threat or in a compromised psychological situation

10. Place at their disposal all useful information on reporting procedures, particularly to the national authorities, nongovernmental organizations and the International Criminal Court.

Istanbul Protocol, paragraph 68: "In some cases, two ethical obligations are in conflict. International codes and ethical principles require the reporting of information concerning torture or maltreatment to a responsible body. In some jurisdictions, this is also a legal requirement. In some cases, however, patients may refuse to give consent to being examined for such purposes or to having the information gained from examination disclosed to others. They may be fearful of the risks of reprisals for themselves or their families. In such situations, health professionals have dual responsibilities: to the patient and to society at large, which has an interest in ensuring that justice is done and perpetrators of abuse are brought to justice. The fundamental principle of avoiding harm must feature prominently in consideration of such dilemmas. Health professionals should seek solutions that promote justice without breaking the individual's right to confidentiality. Advice should be sought from reliable agencies; in some cases this may be the national medical association or non-governmental agencies. Alternatively, with supportive encouragement, some reluctant patients may agree to disclosure within agreed parameters."

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON THE NON-COMMERCIALISATION OF HUMAN REPRODUCTIVE MATERIAL**

Adopted by the 54<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Helsinki, Finland, September 2003  
and revised by 65<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014

### **PREAMBLE**

The rapid advances in biomedical technologies have led to growth of the reproductive assistance industry, which tends to be poorly regulated. Despite the fact that many governments have laws prohibiting commercial transactions of reproductive material, most have not been successful in universally preventing the sale of human ova, sperm and embryos on the internet and elsewhere. The market value of human material, including cells, tissues, and cellular tissue can be lucrative, creating a potential conflict for physicians and others between economic interests and professional ethical obligations.

For the purposes of this resolution human reproductive material is defined as human gametes and embryos.

According to the WHO, transplant commercialism “is a policy or practice in which cells, tissues or organs are treated as a commodity, including by being bought or sold or used for material gain.”<sup>1</sup>

The principle that the “human body and its parts shall not, as such, give rise to financial gain”<sup>2</sup> is laid down in numerous international declarations and recommendations.<sup>3</sup> The 2006 WMA Statement on Human Organ Donation and Transplantation and the 2012 WMA Statement on Organ and Tissue Donation call for the prohibition of the sale of organs and tissues for transplantation. The WMA Statement on Assisted Reproductive Technologies (2006) also states that it is inappropriate to offer financial benefits to encourage donation of human reproductive material.

The same principles should be in place for the use of human reproductive material in the area of medical research. The International Bioethics Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO IBC) in its report on the ethical aspects of human embryonic stem cell research states that the transfer of human embryos must not be a commercial transaction and that measures should be taken to discourage any financial incentive.

It is important to distinguish between the sale of clinical assisted reproductive services, which is legal, and the sale of the human reproductive materials, which is usually illegal. Due to the special nature of human embryos, the commercialization of gametes is unlike that of other cells and tissues as sperm and eggs may develop into a child if fertilization is successful.

Before human reproductive material is donated, the donor must give informed consent that is free of duress. This requires that the individual donor is deemed fully competent and has been given all the available information regarding the procedure and its outcome. If research is to be conducted on the material, it is subject to a separate consent process that must be consistent with the provisions in the WMA's Declaration of Helsinki. There must not be any inducement or other undue pressure to donate or offers of compensation.

Monetary compensation given to individuals for economic losses, expenses or inconveniences associated with the retrieval of donated reproductive materials should be distinguished from payment for the purchase of reproductive materials.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. National Medical Associations (NMAs) should urge their governments to prohibit commercial transactions in human ova, sperm and embryos and any human material for reproductive purpose.
2. Physicians involved in the procurement and use of human ova, sperm, and embryos should implement protocol to ensure that materials have been acquired appropriately with the consent and authorization of the source individuals. In doing so, they can uphold the ethical principle of non-commercialization of human reproductive material.
3. Physicians should consult with potential donors prior to donation in order to ensure free and informed consent.
4. Physicians should adhere to the WMA Statement on Conflict of Interest when treating patients who seek reproductive services.

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<sup>1</sup> Global Glossary of Terms and Definitions on Donation and Transplantation, WHO, November 2009

<sup>2</sup> European convention of human rights and biomedicine - Article 21 – Prohibition of financial gain

<sup>3</sup> Declaration of Istanbul guiding principle 5

## WMA RESOLUTION ON WFME GLOBAL STANDARDS FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OF MEDICAL EDUCATION

Approved by the 55<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Tokyo, Japan, October 2004  
and reaffirmed by the 197<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Tokyo, Japan, April 2014

Whereas the WMA:

1. Recognizes the need and importance for sound global standards for quality improvement of medical education;
2. Acknowledges the WMA's special relationship with the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) as one of the founders of the Federation;
3. Recognizes that it is represented in the WFME Executive Council and in this capacity is co-responsible for the WFME Project on International Standards in Medical Education, conducted since 1997<sup>1</sup>;
4. Acknowledges the recent development of the WFME Trilogy of Documents of Global Standards in Medical Education for Quality Improvement, covering Basic Medical Education<sup>2</sup>, Postgraduate Medical Education<sup>3</sup> and the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Medical Doctors<sup>4</sup>;
5. Recognizes the endorsement<sup>5</sup> of the WFME Global Standards at the World Conference in Medical Education: Global Standards in Medical Education for Better Health Care, in Copenhagen, Denmark, March 2003<sup>6</sup>;

It hereby:

1. Expresses its encouragement and support of the ongoing work of implementing the Trilogy of WFME Documents on Global Standards in Medical Education.

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive Council, The World Federation for Medical Education: International standards in medical education: assessment and accreditation of medical schools' educational programmes. A WFME position paper. *Med Ed* 1998; 32: 549-558.

<sup>2</sup> World Federation for Medical Education: Basic Medical Education. WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement. WFME, Copenhagen 2003. <http://www.wfme.org>

<sup>3</sup> World Federation for Medical Education. Postgraduate Medical Education. WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement. WFME, Copenhagen 2003. <http://www.wfme.org>

<sup>4</sup> World Federation for Medical Education: Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Medical Doctors. WFME Global Standards for Quality Improvement. WFME Copenhagen 2003. <http://www.wfme.org>

<sup>5</sup> J.P. de V. van Niekerk. WFME Global Standards receive ringing endorsement. *Med Ed*, 2003; 37: 586-587.

<sup>6</sup> WFME website: <http://www.wfme.org>

## WMA RESOLUTION ON MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN AIR TRAVEL

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

1. Air travel is the preferred mode of long distance transportation for people across the world. The growing convenience and affordability of air travel has led to an increase in the number of air passengers, including older passengers and other individuals at increased risk for health emergencies. In addition, long-duration flights are common, increasing the risk of in-flight medical emergencies.
2. The environment in normal passenger planes is not conducive to the provision of quality medical care, especially in the case of medical emergencies. Noise and movement of the plane, a very confined space, the presence of other passengers who may be experiencing stress or fear as a result of the situation, the insufficiency or complete lack of diagnostic and therapeutic materials and other factors create extremely difficult conditions for diagnosis and treatment. Even the most experienced medical professional is likely to be challenged by these circumstances.
3. Most airlines require flight personnel to be trained in basic first aid. In addition, many provide some degree of training beyond this minimum level and may also carry certain emergency medicines and equipment on board. Some carriers even have the capacity to provide remote ECG reading and medical counselling services.
4. Even well-trained flight personnel are limited in their knowledge and experience and cannot offer the same assistance as a physician or other certified health professional. Currently, continuing medical education courses are available to physicians to train them specifically for in-flight emergencies.
5. Physicians are often concerned about providing assistance due to uncertainty regarding legal liability, especially on international flights or flights within the United States. While numerous airlines provide some kind of liability insurance for medical professionals and lay persons who will provide voluntary assistance during flight, this is not always the case and even where it does exist, the terms of the insurance cannot always be adequately explained and understood in a sudden medical crisis. The financial and professional consequences of litigation against physicians who offer assistance can be very costly.
6. Some important steps have been taken to protect the life and health of airline passengers, yet the situation is far from ideal and needs improvement. Many of the major problems could be mitigated by simple actions taken by both airlines and national legislatures, ideally in cooperation with one another and with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to arrive at coordinated and consensus-based international policies and programs.

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7. National Medical Associations have an important leadership role to play in promoting measures to improve the availability and efficacy of in-flight medical care.
  8. Therefore the World Medical Association calls on its members to encourage national airlines providing medium and long range passenger flights to take the following actions:
    - a. Equip their airplanes with a sufficient and standardised set of medical emergency materials and drugs that:
      1. are packaged in a standardised and easy to identify manner;
      2. are accompanied by information and instructions in English as well the main languages of the countries of departure and arrival; and
      3. include Automated External Defibrillators, which are considered essential equipment in non-professional settings.
    - b. Provide stand-by medical assistance that can be contacted by radio or telephone to help either the flight attendants or to support a volunteering health professional, if one is on board and available to assist.
    - c. Develop medical emergency plans to guide personnel in responding to the medical needs of passengers.
    - d. Provide sufficient medical and organisational instruction to flight personnel, beyond basic first aid training, to enable them to better attend to passenger needs and to assist medical professionals who volunteer their services during emergencies.
    - e. Provide insurance for medical professionals and assisting lay personnel to protect them from damages and liabilities (material and non-material) resulting from in-flight diagnosis and treatment.
  9. The World Medical Association calls on its members to encourage their national aviation authorities to provide yearly summarised reports of in-flight medical incidents based on mandatory standardised incident reports for every medical incident requiring the administration of first aid or other medical assistance and/or causing a change of the flight.
  10. The World Medical Association calls on its members to encourage their legislators to enact legislation to provide immunity from legal action to physicians who provide emergency assistance in in-flight medical incidents.
  11. In the absence of legal immunity, the airline must accept all legal and financial consequences of providing assistance by a physician.
  12. The World Medical Association calls on its members to:
    - a. educate physicians about the problems of in-flight medical emergencies;
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- b. inform physicians of training opportunities or provide or promote the development of training programs where they do not exist; and
  - c. encourage physicians to discuss potential problems with patients at high risk for requiring in-flight medical attention prior to their flight.
13. The World Medical Association calls on IATA to further develop precise standards in the following areas and, where appropriate, work with governments to implement these standards as legal requirements:
- a. medical equipment and drugs on board medium and long range flights;
  - b. packaging and information materials standards, including multilingual descriptions and instructions in appropriate languages;
  - c. medical emergency organisation procedures and training programs for medical personal.



## **WMA RESOLUTION ON CHILD SAFETY IN AIR TRAVEL**

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

1. Whereas air travel is a common mode of transportation and is used by people of all ages every day;
2. Whereas high standards of safety for adult passengers in air travel have been achieved;
3. Whereas strict safety procedures are being followed in air travel that greatly increase the chance of survival during emergency situations for properly secured adults;
4. Whereas infants and children are not always guaranteed adequate and appropriate safety measures during emergency situations in aircraft;
5. Whereas restraint and safety systems for infants and children have been successfully tested to reduce the risk of suffering injuries during emergency situations in aircraft;
6. Whereas child restraint systems have been approved for usage in standard passenger aircrafts and successfully introduced by several airlines;

Therefore, the World Medical Association

1. Expresses grave concern regarding the fact that adequate safety systems for infants and children have not been generally implemented;
2. Calls on all airline companies to take immediate steps to introduce safe, thoroughly tested and standardized child restraint systems;
3. Calls on all airline companies to train their staff in the appropriate handling and usage of child restraint systems;
4. Calls for the establishment of a universal standard or specification for the testing and manufacturing of child restraint systems; and
5. Calls on national legislators and air transportation safety authorities to:
  - a. require for infants and children, as a matter of law, safe individual child restraint systems that are approved for use in standard passenger aircraft;

## Child Safety in Air Travel

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- b. ensure that airlines provide child restraint systems or welcome passengers using their own systems, if the equipment is qualified and approved for the specific aircraft;
- c. ban the usage of inappropriate "Loop Belts" frequently used to secure infants and children in passenger aircraft;
- d. provide appropriate information about infant and child safety on board of aircraft to all airline passengers.

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON COMBATING HIV/AIDS**

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

MINDFUL that the WMA Statement on HIV/AIDS and the Medical Profession was adopted at the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly in Pilanesberg, Republic of South Africa, on 14 October 2006; and

RECOGNIZING the alarming statistic from UNAIDS that some 37-38 million people worldwide are infected with HIV, with the number increasing daily, and that 60% percent of them live in sub-Saharan Africa; and

NOTING that there exist evidence-based methods for preventing the spread of the infection and also for life-prolonging treatment; therefore

The WMA urges governments to work closely with health professionals and their representative organizations to identify and implement the critical steps to ensure

1. that all efforts are made to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS;
2. that the diagnosis, counselling and treatment of patients for HIV/AIDS is undertaken only by appropriately trained physicians and other healthcare personnel, according to established evidence-based principles;
3. that patients be given accurate, relevant and comprehensive information to enable them to make informed decisions about their health care treatment; and
4. that barriers preventing people from coming forward for testing and treatment be identified and eliminated.

The WMA calls on National Medical Associations to use this resolution in their advocacy efforts to their governments, their patients and the public.

**WMA RESOLUTION  
ON  
NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR TESTING**

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

RECALLING the WMA Declaration on Nuclear Weapons that was adopted at the WMA General Assembly in Ottawa, Canada, in October 1998;

The WMA:

1. Denounces North Korean nuclear testing conducted at a time of heightened global vigilance on nuclear testing and arsenals;
2. Calls for the immediate abandonment of the testing of nuclear weapons; and
3. Requests all member National Medical Associations to urge their governments to understand the adverse health and environmental consequences of the testing and use of nuclear weapons.

## WMA RESOLUTION ON TUBERCULOSIS

Adopted by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

### PREAMBLE

1. According to the World Health Organization, tuberculosis is a problem affecting over 9 million people every year and ranks among the leading infectious diseases with an annual incidence rate of 1%. The Eastern European region is particularly affected.
2. In developing countries, the incidence of tuberculosis has risen dramatically due mainly to its prevalence in areas with a high rate of HIV/AIDS. The increased movement of populations has also exacerbated the problem.
3. The multi-resistant forms of tuberculosis, a by-product of original bacilli resistant to the action of the main tuberculosis medicines, also present great difficulties in controlling the disease.
4. Radiological detection and sputum examination targeted at high-risk subjects continues to be an essential element of tuberculosis prevention.
5. Among migrants, the homeless, prisoners and other high risk groups, such a strategy is particularly efficient in preventing epidemics.
6. The reactivation of screening and follow-up programmes and the application on a large scale of rapid and strictly supervised daily treatment should help address the epidemic.
7. The vaccination policy for BCG (bacille Calmette-Guérin) should be targeted at children from their first vaccination.

### RESOLUTIONS

1. The World Medical Association, in consultation with the WHO and national and international health authorities and organisations, will continue to work for the improvement of tuberculosis treatment and surveillance and will also promote surveys of individual cases, the reactivation of screening and surveillance programs, and the large-scale application of daily care delivery and treatment supervision.

2. The WMA supports calls for adequate financial, material and human resources for tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS prevention, including adequately trained health care providers and adequate public health infrastructure, and will participate with health professionals in providing information on tuberculosis and its treatment.
3. The WMA encourages continuing professional development for healthcare professionals in the field of tuberculosis. Specialized courses on multi-drug-resistant TB are particularly important.
4. The WMA calls on its National Member Associations to support the WHO in its DOTS strategy and in other work to promote the more effective management of tuberculosis.

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN ZIMBABWE**

Adopted by the 58<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Copenhagen, Denmark, October 2007

### **PREAMBLE**

Noting information and reports of systematic and repeated violations of human rights, interference with the right to health in Zimbabwe, failure to provide resources essential for provision of basic health care, declining health status of Zimbabweans, dual loyalties and threats to health care workers striving to maintain clinical independence, denial of access to health care for persons deemed to be associated with opposition political parties and escalating state torture, the WMA wishes to confirm its support of, and commitment to:

- Attaining the World Health Organization principle that the "enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being"
- Defending the fundamental purpose of physicians to alleviate distress of patients and not to let personal, collective or political will prevail against such purpose
- Supporting the role of physicians in upholding the human rights of their patients as central to their professional obligations
- Supporting physicians who are persecuted because of their adherence to medical ethics

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Therefore, the World Medical Association, recognizing the collapsing health care system and public health crisis in Zimbabwe, calls on its affiliated national medical associations to:

1. Publicly denounce all human rights abuses and violations of the right to health in Zimbabwe
2. Actively protect physicians who are threatened or intimidated for actions which are part of their ethical and professional obligations
3. Engage with the Zimbabwean Medical Association (ZiMA) to ensure the autonomy of the medical profession in Zimbabwe
4. Urge and support ZiMA to invite an international fact finding mission to Zimbabwe as a means for urgent action to address the health and health needs of Zimbabweans

In addition, the WMA encourages ZiMA, as a member organization of the WMA, to:

1. Uphold its commitment to the WMA Declarations of Tokyo, Hamburg and Madrid as well as the WMA Statement on Access to Health Care
2. Facilitate an environment where all Zimbabweans have equal access to quality health care and medical treatment, irrespective of their political affiliations
3. Commit to eradicating torture and inhumane, degrading treatment of citizens in Zimbabwe
4. Reaffirm their support for the clinical independence of physicians treating any citizen of Zimbabwe
5. Obtain and publicize accurate and necessary information on the state of health services in Zimbabwe
6. Advocate for inclusion in medical curricula, teachings on human rights and the ethical obligations of physicians to maintain full and clinical independence when dealing with patients in vulnerable situations

The WMA encourages ZiMA to seek assistance in achieving the above by engaging with the WMA, the Commonwealth Medical Association and the NMAs of neighboring countries and to report on its progress from time to time.



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**RESOLUTION  
IN  
SUPPORT OF THE MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS  
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Adopted by the 58<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Copenhagen, Denmark, October 2007

There are credible reports that arrangements between the Cuban government and certain Latin American and Caribbean governments to supply Cuban health workers as physicians to these countries are bypassing systems, established to protect patients, that have been set up to verify physicians' credentials and competence.

The World Medical Association is significantly concerned that patients are put at risk by unregulated medical practices.

There exist already duly constituted and legally authorized medical associations within this region that are charged with the registration of physicians and which should be consulted by their respective Ministries of Health.

Therefore, the WMA:

1. Condemns any actions by governments in policies and practices that subvert or bypass the accepted standards of medical credentialing and medical care;
2. Calls upon the governments in Latin America and the Caribbean to work with the medical associations on all matters related to physician certification and the practice of medicine and to respect the role and rights of these medical associations and the autonomy of the medical profession.
3. Urges, as a matter of utmost concern, that the governments in Latin America and the Caribbean respect the WMA International Code of Medical Ethics and the Declaration of Madrid that guide the medical practice of physicians all over the world.

**WMA RESOLUTION  
ON  
THE ECONOMIC CRISIS  
- IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH -**

Adopted by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

The current global economic crisis is affecting individuals as well as national and global economies and will have implications for health. Individuals face uncertainties about their future and psychological consequences are beginning to emerge. Governments facing economic downturns have to respond by cutting down national expenses. There is a risk that expenditure on health care will decrease nominally and proportionally in the coming years. Experience has shown that this response can have serious consequences on the health of individuals and on their contribution to the national economy. Any savings will therefore be reduced.

The WMA therefore urges NMAs to work with their governments to:

- Initiate programs for families and individuals needing medical and psychological support because of the current economic crisis.
- Preserve at least the current expenditure on health.

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## **WMA RESOLUTION ON POPIES FOR MEDICINE PROJECT FOR AFGHANISTAN**

Adopted by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

Whereas the World Health Organization (WHO) has indicated that a small number of countries in the world consume 80% of the opiates legally available worldwide, leaving significant unmet needs in the rest of the world, especially in developing countries;

Whereas morphine and diamorphine play an essential role in the treatment of moderate and severe pain, especially in meeting the pain needs of the growing number of end-stage HIV/AIDS and cancer patients;

Whereas the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) has asked the international community to promote the prescription of painkillers, especially in poor countries, as severe under-treatment is reported in more than 150 countries where hardly anyone in need of treatment is being treated, and in another 30 countries, where under-treatment is even more prevalent or where no data are available;

Whereas there exists an illegal opium crisis in Afghanistan, with growing poppy cultivation and opium production;

Therefore, the World Medical Association:

- Supports the investigation of possibilities for the controlled production of opium for medical purposes in Afghanistan through a scientific pilot project in Afghanistan; and
- Urges governments to support a scientific pilot project to investigate whether certain areas of Afghanistan could provide the right conditions for the strictly controlled production of morphine and diamorphine for medical purposes.

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON COLLABORATION BETWEEN HUMAN AND VETERINARY MEDICINE**

Adopted by the 59<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Seoul, Korea, October 2008

The majority of the emerging infectious diseases, including the bioterrorist agents, are zoonoses. Zoonoses can, by definition, infect both animals and humans. By their very nature, the fields of human medicine and veterinary medicine are complementary and synergistic in confronting, controlling and preventing zoonotic diseases from infecting across species.

Collaboration and communication between human medicine and veterinary medicine have been limited in recent decades, yet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century demand that these two professions work together.

An initiative, often called the "One Health" initiative, is being developed to improve the lives of all species-human and animal-through the integration of human and veterinary medicine.<sup>1</sup> "One Health" aims to promote and implement close meaningful collaboration and communication between human medicine, veterinary medicine and all allied health scientists with the goal of hastening human public health efficacy as well as advanced health care options for humans (and animals) via comparative biomedical research.

The World Medical Association (WMA) recognizes the ways in which animals and animal care may affect human health and disease through its own current policies, particularly its statements on Animal Use in Biomedical Research, Resistance to Antimicrobial Drugs and Avian and Pandemic Influenza. The WMA already works with other health professions including dentists, nurses and pharmacists through the World Health Professions Alliance.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the World Medical Association:

- Support collaboration between human and veterinary medicine;
- Support the concept of joint educational efforts between human medical and veterinary medical schools;
- Encourage joint efforts in clinical care through the assessment, treatment, and prevention of cross-species disease transmission;
- Support cross-species disease surveillance and control efforts in public health, particularly the identification of early disease and outbreak trends;

- Support the need for joint efforts in the development, integration and evaluation of screening tools, diagnostic methods, medicines, vaccines, surveillance systems and policies for the prevention, management and control of zoonotic diseases;
- Engage in a dialogue with the World Veterinary Association to discuss strategies for enhancing collaboration between human and veterinary medical professions in medical education, clinical care, public health, and biomedical research.
- Encourage National Medical Associations to engage in a dialogue with their veterinary counterparts to discuss strategies for enhancing collaboration between human and veterinary medical professions within their own countries

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<sup>1</sup> J. Zinsstag, et al. Lancet 2005; 366: 2142-2145 and E.P.J. Gibbs. Veterinary Record 2005; 157:673-679

**WMA EMERGENCY RESOLUTION  
ON  
LEGISLATION AGAINST ABORTION IN NICARAGUA**

Adopted by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

WHEREAS,

Legislative changes in Nicaragua (Articles 143, 145, 148 and 149 Law No. 641, revised Penal Code) criminalise abortion in all circumstances; including any medical treatment of a pregnant woman which results in the death of or injury to an embryo or fetus; and

This legislation

- may have a negative impact on the health of women in Nicaragua country.
- could result in preventable deaths of women and the embryo or fetus they are carrying.
- places physicians at risk of imprisonment if they break this law, and at risk of suspension from medical practice if they fail to follow the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health's 2006 Obstetric Protocols, which sometimes requires treatment of a pregnant woman that is contrary to the legislation.

THEREFORE, the World Medical Association urges the Nicaraguan government to repeal the above legislation.

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## WMA RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE RIGHTS OF PATIENTS AND PHYSICIANS IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Adopted by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

WHEREAS,

Physicians in the Islamic Republic of Iran have reported:

Unsettling practices of injured persons being taken to prisons, without adequate medical treatment or the consensus of the attending physicians;

Physicians being hindered from treating patients;

Concern about the veracity of documentation related to the death of patients and physicians being forced to clinically inaccurate documentation; and

Corpses and badly injured political and religious prisoners who were admitted to hospitals with signs of brutal torture, including sexual abuse.

THEREFORE, the World Medical Association

1. Reaffirms its Declaration of Lisbon: Declaration on the Rights of the Patient, which states that whenever legislation, government action or any other administration or institution denies patients the right to medical care, physicians should pursue appropriate means to assure or to restore it.
2. Reaffirms its Declaration of Hamburg: Declaration Concerning Support for Medical Doctors Refusing to Participate in, or to Condone, the Use of Torture or Other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, which encourages doctors to honor their commitment as physicians to serve humanity and to resist any pressure to act contrary to the ethical principles governing their dedication to this task.
3. Reaffirms its Declaration of Tokyo: Guidelines for Physicians Concerning Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Relation to Detention and Imprisonment, which:
  - prohibits physicians from participating in, or even being present during the practice of torture or other forms of cruel or inhuman or degrading procedures;
  - requires that physicians maintain utmost respect for human life even under threat, and prohibits them from using any medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity.

4. Reaffirms its Resolution on the Responsibility of Physicians in the Documentation and Denunciation of Acts of Torture or Cruel or Inhuman or Degrading Treatment; which states that physicians should attempt to:
  - ensure that detainees or victims of torture or cruelty or mistreatment have access to immediate and independent health care;
  - ensure that physicians include assessment and documentation of symptoms of torture or ill-treatment in the medical records using the necessary procedural safeguards to prevent endangering detainees.
5. Refers to the WMA International Code of Medical Ethics, which states that physicians shall be dedicated to providing competent medical service in full professional and moral independence, with compassion and respect for human dignity.
6. Urges the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respect the International Code of Medical Ethics and the standards included in the aforementioned declarations to which physicians are committed.
7. Urges National Medical Associations to speak out in support of this resolution.



## **WMA RESOLUTION ON TASK SHIFTING FROM THE MEDICAL PROFESSION**

Adopted by the 60<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, New Delhi, India, October 2009

In health care, the term "Task Shifting" is used to describe a situation where a task normally performed by a physician is transferred to a health professional with a different or lower level of education and training, or to a person specifically trained to perform a limited task only, without having a formal health education. Task shifting occurs both in countries facing shortages of physicians and those not facing shortages.

A major factor leading to task shifting is the shortage of qualified workers resulting from migration or other factors. In countries facing a critical shortage of physicians, task shifting may be used to train alternate health care workers or laypersons to perform tasks generally considered to be within the purview of the medical profession. The rationale behind the transferring of these tasks is that the alternative would be no service to those in need. In such countries, task shifting is aimed at improving the health of extremely vulnerable populations, mostly to address current shortages of healthcare professionals or tackle specific health issues such as HIV. In countries with the most extreme shortage of physicians, new cadres of health care workers have been established. However, those persons taking over physicians' tasks lack the broad education and training of physicians and must perform their tasks according to protocols, but without the knowledge, experience and professional judgement required to make proper decisions when complications arise or other deviations occur. This may be appropriate in countries where the alternative to task shifting is no care at all but should not be extended to countries with different circumstances.

In countries not facing a critical shortage of physicians, task shifting may occur for various reasons: social, economic, and professional, sometimes under the guise of efficiency, savings or other unproven claims. It may be spurred, or, conversely, impeded, by professions seeking to expand or protect their traditional domain. It may be initiated by health authorities, by alternate health care workers and sometimes by physicians themselves. It may be facilitated by the advancement of medical technology, which standardizes the performance and interpretation of certain tasks, therefore allowing them to be performed by non-physicians or technical assistants instead of physicians. This has typically been done in close collaboration with the medical profession. However, it must be recognized that medicine can never be viewed solely as a technical discipline.

Task shifting may occur within an already existing medical team, resulting in a reshuffling of the roles and functions performed by the members of such a team. It may also create new types of personnel whose function is to assist other health professionals, specifically physicians, as well as personnel trained to independently perform specific tasks.

Although task shifting may be useful in certain situations, and may sometimes improve the level of patient care, it carries with it significant risks. First and foremost among these is the risk of decreased quality of patient care, particularly if medical judgment and decision making is transferred. In addition to the fact that the patient may be cared for by a lesser trained health care worker, there are specific quality issues involved, including reduced patient-physician contact, fragmented and inefficient service, lack of proper follow up, incorrect diagnosis and treatment and inability to deal with complications.

In addition, task shifting which deploys assistive personnel may actually increase the demand on physicians. Physicians will have increasing responsibilities as trainers and supervisors, diverting scarce time from their many other tasks such as direct patient care. They may also have increased professional and/or legal responsibility for the care given by health care workers under their supervision.

The World Medical Association expresses particular apprehension over the fact that task shifting is often initiated by health authorities, without consultation with physicians and their professional representative associations.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, the World Medical Association recommends the following guidelines:

1. Quality and continuity of care and patient safety must never be compromised and should be the basis for all reforms and legislation dealing with task shifting.
2. When tasks are shifted away from physicians, physicians and their professional representative associations should be consulted and closely involved from the beginning in all aspects concerning the implementation of task shifting, especially in the reform of legislations and regulations. Physicians might themselves consider initiating and training a new cadre of assistants under their supervision and in accordance with principles of safety and proper patient care.
3. Quality assurance standards and treatment protocols must be defined, developed and supervised by physicians. Credentialing systems should be devised and implemented alongside the implementation of task shifting in order to ensure quality of care. Tasks that should be performed only by physicians must be clearly defined. Specifically, the role of diagnosis and prescribing should be carefully studied.
4. In countries with a critical shortage of physicians, task shifting should be viewed as an interim strategy with a clearly formulated exit strategy. However, where conditions in a specific country make it likely that it will be implemented for the longer term, a strategy of sustainability must be implemented.
5. Task shifting should not replace the development of sustainable, fully functioning health care systems. Assistive workers should not be employed at the expense of unemployed and underemployed health care professionals. Task shifting also should not replace the education and training of physicians and other health care professionals. The aspiration should be to train and employ more skilled workers rather than shifting tasks to less skilled workers.

6. Task shifting should not be undertaken or viewed solely as a cost saving measure as the economic benefits of task shifting remain unsubstantiated and because cost driven measures are unlikely to produce quality results in the best interest of patients. Credible analysis of the economic benefits of task shifting should be conducted in order to measure health outcomes, cost effectiveness and productivity.
7. Task shifting should be complemented with incentives for the retention of health professionals such as an increase of health professionals' salaries and improvement of working conditions.
8. The reasons underlying the need for task shifting differ from country to country and therefore solutions appropriate for one country cannot be automatically adopted by others.
9. The effect of task shifting on the overall functioning of health systems remains unclear. Assessments should be made of the impact of task shifting on patient and health outcomes as well as on efficiency and effectiveness of health care delivery. In particular, when task shifting occurs in response to specific health issues, such as HIV, regular assessment and monitoring should be conducted of the entire health system. Such work is essential in order to ensure that these programs are improving the health of patients.
10. Task shifting must be studied and assessed independently and not under the auspices of those designated to perform or finance task shifting measures.
11. Task shifting is only one response to the health workforce shortage. Other methods, such as collaborative practice or a team/partner approach, should be developed in parallel and viewed as the gold standard. Task shifting should not replace the development of mutually supportive, interactive health care teams, coordinated by a physician, where each member can make his or her unique contribution to the care being provided.
12. In order for collaborative practice to succeed, training in leadership and teamwork must be improved. There must also be a clear understanding of what each person is trained for and capable of doing, clear understanding of responsibilities and a defined, uniformly accepted use of terminology.
13. Task shifting should be preceded by a systematic review, analysis and discussion of the potential needs, costs and benefits. It should not be instituted solely as a reaction to other developments in the health care system.
14. Research must be conducted in order to identify successful training models. Work will need to be aligned to various models currently in existence. Research should also focus on the collection and sharing of information, evidence and outcomes. Research and analysis must be comprehensive and physicians must be part of the process.
15. When appropriate, National Medical Associations should collaborate with associations of other health care professionals in setting the framework for task shifting. The WMA shall consider establishing a framework for the sharing of information on this topic where members can discuss developments in their countries and their effects on patient care and outcomes.

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON DRUG PRESCRIPTION**

Adopted by the 61<sup>st</sup> WMA General Assembly, Vancouver, Canada, October 2010

### **PREAMBLE**

From the beginning of their studies and throughout their professional careers, doctors acquire the knowledge, training and competence required to treat their patients with the utmost skill and care.

Physicians determine the most accurate diagnosis and the most effective treatment to cure illness, or alleviate its effects, taking into consideration the overall condition of the patient.

Pharmaceutical products are often an essential part of the treatment approach. In order to make the right decisions in accordance with the ethical and professional principles of medical practice, the doctor must have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the principles of pharmacology and possible interactions among different drugs and their effects on the health of the patient.

The prescribing of medication is a significant clinical intervention, which should be preceded by multiple, integrated processes to assess the patient and determine the correct clinical diagnosis. These processes include:

- Taking a history of the current condition and past medical history;
- The ability to make differential diagnosis;
- Understanding any multiple chronic and complex illnesses involved;
- Taking a history of the medications currently being administered successfully or previously withdrawn and also being aware of possible interactions.

Inappropriate drug prescription without proper knowledge and accurate diagnosis may cause serious adverse effects on the patient's health. In view of the possible serious consequences that may result from an inappropriate therapeutic decision, the WMA affirms the following principles on high quality treatment and ensuring patient safety:

### **PRINCIPLES**

Prescription of drugs should be based on a correct diagnosis of the patient's condition and should be performed by those who have successfully completed a curriculum on disease mechanisms, diagnostic methods and medical treatment of the condition in question.

Prescriptions issued by physicians are vital for ensuring patient safety, which in turn is critical for maintaining the relationship of trust between patients and their physicians.

Although nurses and other healthcare workers cooperate in the overall treatment of patients, the physician is the best qualified individuals to prescribe independently. In some countries, laws may allow for other professionals to prescribe drugs under specific circumstances, generally with extra training and education and most often under medical supervision. In all cases, the responsibility for the patient's treatment must remain with the physician. Each country's medical system should ensure the protection of public interest and safety in the diagnosis and treatment of patients. If a system fails to comply with this basic framework due to social, economical or other compelling reasons, it should make every effort to improve the situation and to protect the safety of the patients.

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Adopted by the 61<sup>st</sup> WMA General Assembly, Vancouver, Canada, October 2010

Violence is a worldwide, institutionalised phenomenon, and a complex issue, which includes many manifestations. The nature of the violence experienced by victims is at least partly dependent upon the social, cultural, political and economic contexts within which the victims and their abusers live. Some violence is deliberate, systematic and widespread while others will experience it in covert circumstances; this is especially true of domestic violence in settings where women enjoy legislated equal and protected rights to those of men but culturally still have an increased likelihood of experiencing life-threatening domestic violence.

There is clear evidence in most countries that men can be and are often the victims of violence, including intimate partner violence. They are also statistically far more likely to be the victims of random violence on the streets. Research shows that while men frequently experience such events, they are not associated with systemic abuse in terms of denial of rights, which makes the experience of women so much worse in many cultures. Nothing in this paper suggests that violence against men including boys should be condoned. Actions to protect women and girls are likely to reduce everyone's experience of violence.

### **DEFINING VIOLENCE**

Definitions of violence vary (see footnote), but it is essential that the various forms violence may take are recognised by policy makers. Violence against women and girls includes violence within the family, within the community and violence perpetrated by (or condoned by) the state. Many excuses are given for violence generally and specifically; in cultural and societal terms these include tradition, beliefs, customs, values and religion. Although rarely cited the traditional power differential between men and women is also a major cause.

Within the family and domestic settings violence includes the denial of rights and freedoms enjoyed by boys and men. This includes female feticide and infanticide, systematic and deliberate neglect of girls, including poor nutrition and denial of educational opportunities<sup>1</sup> as well as direct physical, psychological and sexual violence. Specific cultural practices that harm women, including female genital mutilation, forced marriages, dowry attacks and so-called "honour" killings are all practices that may occur within the family setting.

Within society, attitudes towards rape, sexual abuse and harassment, intimidation at work or in education, modern slavery, trafficking and forced prostitution, are all forms of violence condoned by some societies. One extreme form of such violence is sexual violence used as a weapon of war. In several recent conflicts (e.g. the Balkans, Rwanda) rape was both associated with ethnic cleansing and specifically, in some cases, used to introduce widespread AIDS into a community. The ICRC has examined this issue, and recognises that sexual violence of this sort may be commonly perpetrated against women and girls.<sup>2</sup>

Sexual violence or the threat of it can also be used against men, but culturally, women are more vulnerable and more likely to be targeted. Current conflicts are not based upon battles fought in far away places, but are increasingly concentrated around dense centres of population increasing the exposure of women to soldiers and armed groups. In war and in immediate post-conflict situations, societal fabric can collapse, making women increasingly vulnerable to group attacks.

Lack of economic independence, and of basic education, also mean that women who survive abuse are more likely to be or to become more dependent upon the state or society and less able to support themselves and contribute to that society. Biologically and behaviourally, women are likely to outlive men; denial of the opportunity to be economically independent leaves society with a cohort of older, economically dependent women.

All these forms of violence may be condoned by the state, or it may remain silent on them, refusing to condemn or act against them. In some cases the state may legislate to allow violent practices (for example rape within marriage) and itself become a perpetrator.

All human beings enjoy certain fundamental human rights; the examples listed above of violence against women and girls involve denial of many of those rights, and each abuse can be examined against the UN convention on human rights (and for children the Convention on the Rights of the Child).<sup>3</sup>

In health terms, the denial of rights and the violence itself have health consequences to the girls and women and to the society of which they are a part. In addition to the specific and direct physical and health consequences, the general way in which girls and women are treated can lead to an excess of mental health problems; suicide is the second leading cause of premature death in women.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE**

The direct health consequence of the violence depends upon the nature of the act. Female genital mutilation for example may kill the woman at the time of infliction, may lead to difficulty in voiding the body of waste products including those of menses, and will give rise to difficulties in childbearing. It also reinforces the ideological concept of women as the possessions of men (on its own, a form of abuse) who control their sexuality. Gang rape or other forms of sexual violence may result in long-term gynaecological, urological and intestinal difficulties including the development of fistulae and incontinence, which further diminishes societal support for the abused female.



The short and long term mental health consequences of violence may severely influence later wellbeing, enjoyment of life, function in society and the ability to provide appropriate care for dependants.

Gathering evidence is an important role for doctors. Currently many countries do not have mandatory registration of all births, making evidence about infanticide or the effects of neglect difficult to document. Equally, some countries allow marriage at any age, exposing girls to the high risks associated with childbearing before their own bodies are fully mature, let alone the mental health risks involved. The health consequences of such policies and their relationship to other health costs must be better documented.

Denial of good nutritional opportunities leads to generations of women with poorer health, poorer growth and development leading to women who are less fit to survive pregnancy and childbirth or to rear their families. Denial of educational opportunities leads to poorer health for all the family members; good education is a major factor in the mother providing optimal care for all her family. In addition to being wrong in and of itself, violence against women is also socially and economically damaging to the family and to society. There are direct and indirect economic consequences to violence against women that are far greater than the direct health sector costs.

The costs and consequences of violence, including neglect, against women have been reported in many fora including by WHO<sup>4</sup>. The health consequences to the women, their children and thus to society are clear and need to be made explicit to policy makers.

## **WHAT CAN THE WMA DO?**

The WMA has a number of policies on violence including the WMA Statement on Violence and Health and the WMA Statement on Family Violence. This current (Statement/resolution/ declaration) brings some of these policies together with a coordinated set of action points for the WMA, NMAs and individual physicians.

As most human beings look first for the advantages to themselves, their families and their societies in enabling change, making the benefits of change obvious from the beginning creates a “win:win” solution. Concentrating first on the health aspects, for women, their children, and the broad family is therefore a useful way to enter the debate.

Doctors have a unique insight into the combined effects upon wellbeing of social, cultural, economic and political environments. If all persons are to achieve health and wellbeing, all these factors need to operate positively. The holistic view from doctors can be used to influence society and politicians. Gaining societal support for improving the rights, freedom and status of women is essential.

## **ACTIONS**

### **The WMA:**

- Asserts that violence is not only about physical, psychological and sexual violence but includes abuses such as harmful cultural and traditional practices, and actions such as complicity in trafficking of women, and is a major public health crisis.



- Recognizes the linkage between better education and other rights for women with family and societal health and wellbeing and emphasizes that equality in civil liberties and human rights is a health issue.
- Will prepare briefing and advocacy materials for NMAs to use with national governments and intergovernmental groups addressing the health and wellbeing implications of discrimination against women and girls, including adolescents. This material will include relevant references about the impact of violence on family wellbeing and on societal financial sustainability.
- Will work with others to prepare and distribute to physicians and other health workers briefing and advocacy materials dealing with harmful traditional and cultural practices, including female genital mutilation, dowry, and honour killings, and emphasizing the health impact as well as the violations of human rights.
- Prepare practical examples of the impact of violence and strategies for reducing it, such as consensus guidelines that are based upon the best available evidence.
- Will advocate at WHO, other UN agencies and elsewhere for ending discrimination and violence against women.
- Will work with others to prepare templates of educational materials for use by individual practitioners for documenting and reporting individual cases of abuse.
- Encourages others to develop free educational materials online to provide guidance to front line health care workers on abuse and its effects, and on prevention strategies.
- Encourage legislation that classifies gang rape used as a weapon of war as a crime against humanity that is eligible for litigation through the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court system.

**NMAs should:**

- Use and promote the available materials on preventing and treating the consequences of violence against women and girls and act as advocates within their own country.
- Seek to ensure that those devising and delivering education to doctors and other health care workers are aware of the likelihood of exposure to violence, its consequences, and the evidence on preventative strategies that work, and place appropriate emphasis on this in undergraduate, graduate and continuing education of health care workers.
- Recognise the importance of more complete reporting of the sequelae of violence and encourage the development of training that emphasises violence awareness and prevention, in addition to using better reporting and research into incidence, prevalence and health impact of all forms of violence.
- Encourage medical journals to publish more of the research on the complex interactions in this area, thus keeping it in the professions' awareness and contributing to the development of a solid research base and ongoing documentation of types and incidence of violence.
- Encourage medical journals to consider publishing theme issues on violence including neglect of women and girls.
- Advocate for universal registration of births, and a higher age limit for marriage.
- Advocate for effective implementation of universal human rights.
- Advocate for parental education and support on the care, nurturing, development, education and protection of children, especially girls.

- Advocate for the monitoring of statistics on children, including both positive and negative indicators of health and well-being, and social determinants of health.
- Advocate for legislation against specific harmful practices including female feticide, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and corporal punishment.
- Advocate for the criminalisation of rape in all circumstances including within marriage.
- Condemn the use of gang rape as a weapon of war and work with others to document and report it.
- Advocate for the development of research data on the impact of violence and neglect upon primary and secondary victims and upon society, and for increased funding for such research.
- Advocate for the protection of those who speak out against abuse, including physicians and other health workers.

**Physicians should:**

- Use the material developed for their education to better inform themselves about the effects of abuse and the successful strategies for prevention.
- Provide health care and protection to children, (especially in times of crisis) and document and report all cases of violence against children, taking care to safeguard the patient's privacy as much as possible.
- Treat and reverse, where possible, the complications and adverse effects of female genital mutilation and refer the patient for social support services.
- Oppose the publication or broadcast of victims' names, addresses or likenesses without the explicit permission of the victim.
- Assess for risk of family violence in the context of taking a routine social history.
- Be alert to the association between current alcohol or drug dependence among women and a history of abuse.
- Support colleagues who become personally involved in work to end abuse.
- Work to establish the necessary relationship of trust with abused women and children including respect for confidentiality.
- Support global and local action to better understand the health consequences both of abuse and of the denial of rights, and advocate for increased services for victims.

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<sup>1</sup> At first glance neglect does not seem to equate with violence. But the acceptance of neglect and the lesser rights given to women and girls are major factors in reinforcing an acceptance of causal and systematic violence. In that it denies basic rights, many would classify neglect as a form of violence in and of itself.

<sup>2</sup> Rape is considered to be a method of warfare when armed forces or groups use it to torture, injure, extract information, degrade, displace, intimidate, punish or simply to destroy the fabric of the community. The mere threat of sexual violence can cause entire communities to flee their homes. from Women and War, ICRC 2008

<sup>3</sup> Women's Health and Human Rights: the Promotion and Protection of Women's Health through International Human Rights Law. Rebecca Cook. Presented at the 1999 Adapting to Change Core Course

<sup>4</sup> Women and Health: Today's Evidence, Tomorrow's Agenda. WHO November 2009. ISBN 978 92 4 156385 7

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON THE ACCESS TO ADEQUATE PAIN TREATMENT**

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

### **PREAMBLE**

Around the world, tens of millions of people with cancer and other diseases and conditions experience moderate to severe pain without access to adequate treatment. These people face severe suffering, often for months on end, and many eventually die in pain, which is unnecessary and almost always preventable and treatable. People who may not be able to adequately express their pain - such as children and people with intellectual disabilities or with consciousness impairments - are especially at risk of receiving inadequate pain treatment.

It is important to acknowledge the indirect consequences of inadequate pain treatment, such as a negative economic impact, as well as the individual human suffering directly resulting from untreated pain.

In most cases, pain can be stopped or relieved with inexpensive and relatively simple treatment interventions, which can dramatically improve the quality of life for patients.

It is accepted that some pain is particularly difficult to treat and requires the application of complex techniques by, for example, multidisciplinary teams. Sometimes, especially in cases of severe chronic pain, psycho-emotional factors are even more important than biological factors.

Lack of education for health professionals in the assessment and treatment of pain and other symptoms, and unnecessarily restrictive government regulations (including limiting access to opioid pain medications) are two major reasons for this treatment gap.

### **PRINCIPLES**

The right to access to pain treatment for all people without discrimination, as laid down in professional standards and guidelines and in international law, should be respected and effectively implemented.

Physicians and other health care professionals have an ethical duty to offer proper clinical assessments to patients with pain and to offer appropriate treatment, which may require prescribing medications - including opioid analgesics - as medically indicated. This also applies to children and other patients who cannot always adequately express their pain.

Instruction on pain management, including clinical training lectures and practical cases, should be included in mandatory curricula and continuing education for physicians and other health professionals. Such education should include evidence-based therapies effective for pain, both pharmacological and non-pharmacological. Education about opioid therapy for pain should include the benefits and risks of the therapy. Safety concerns regarding opioid therapy should be emphasized to allow the use of adequate doses of analgesia while mitigating detrimental effects of the therapy. Training should also include recognition of pain in those who may not be able to adequately express their pain, including children, and cognitively impaired and mentally challenged individuals.

Governments must ensure the adequate availability of controlled medicines, including opioids, for the relief of pain and suffering. Governmental drug control agencies should recognize severe and/or chronic pain as a serious and common health care issue and appropriately balance the need to relieve suffering with the potential for the illegal use of analgesic drugs. Under the right to health, people facing pain have a right to appropriate pain management, including effective medications such as morphine. Denial of pain treatment violates the right to health and may be medically unethical.

Many countries lack necessary economic, human and logistic resources to provide optimal pain treatment to their population. The reasons for not providing adequate pain relief must therefore be fully clarified and made public before accusations of violating the right to health are made.

International and national drug control policies should balance the need for adequate availability and accessibility of controlled medicines like morphine and other opioids for the relief of pain and suffering with efforts to prevent the misuse of these controlled substances. Countries should review their drug control policies and regulations to ensure that they do not contain provisions that unnecessarily restrict the availability and accessibility of controlled medicines for the treatment of pain. Where unnecessarily or disproportionately restrictive policies exist, they should be revised to ensure the adequate availability of controlled medicines.

Each government should provide the necessary resources for the development and implementation of a national pain treatment plan, including a responsive monitoring mechanism and process for receiving complaints when pain is inadequately treated.

## WMA RESOLUTION ON BAHRAIN

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

### **The WMA General Assembly notes that**

A number of doctors, nurses and other health care professionals in the Kingdom of Bahrain were arrested in March 2011 after the civil unrest in that country and tried under emergency powers before a special court, led by a military judge. Twenty of this group were found guilty of a number of charges, on 29 September 2011 and sentenced to fifteen, ten or five years imprisonment.

These trials failed to meet international standards for fair trials, including the accused not being allowed to make statements in their own defence, and their lawyers not being allowed to question all the witnesses. Allegations from the accused and their lawyers of mistreatment, abuse and other human right violations during arrest and while in detention have not been investigated.

While various criminal charges were brought it appears that the major offence was treating all the patients who presented for care, including leaders and members of the rebellion. Other charges appear to be closely related to providing such treatment and were, in any case, not proven to the standard expected in court proceedings. In treating patients without considering the circumstances of their injury these health care professionals were honouring their ethical duty as set out in the Declaration of Geneva.

The WMA welcomes the announcement by the government of Bahrain of 6 October 2011 that all twenty will be re-tried before a full civil court.

Therefore, the WMA requires that no doctor or other health care professional be arrested, accused or tried for treating patients, regardless of the origins of the patient's injury or illness.

The WMA demands that all states understand, respect and honour the concept of medical neutrality. This includes providing working conditions which are as safe as possible, even under difficult circumstances, including armed conflict or civil unrest.

The WMA expects that if any individual, including health care professionals, are subject to trial that there is due process of law including during arrest, questioning and trial in accordance with the highest standards of international law.

The WMA demands that states investigate any allegations of torture or cruel and inhuman treatment by prisoners against its agents, and act quickly to stop such abuses.

The WMA recommends that independent international assessors are allowed to observe the trials and meet privately with the accused, so that the state of Bahrain can prove to the watching world that the future legal proceedings follow fair process.

The WMA recognises that health care workers and health care facilities are increasingly under attack during wars, conflicts and civil unrest. We demand that states throughout the world recognise, respect and honour principles of medical neutrality and their duty to protect health care institutions and facilities for humanitarian reasons.

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## WMA RESOLUTION REAFFIRMING THE WMA RESOLUTION ON ECONOMIC EMBARGOES AND HEALTH

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

The World Medical Association is deeply concerned about reports of potential serious health impacts resulting from economic sanctions imposed by the European Union against Ivory Coast leader, Laurent Gbagbo, and numerous individuals and entities associated with his regime, including two major ports linked to Gbagbo's government. The sanctions aim to severely restrict EU-registered vessels from transacting business with these ports, which could inhibit the delivery of necessary and life-saving medicines.

The WMA General Assembly reiterates the following position from the *WMA Resolution on Economic Embargoes and Health*:

- *All people have the right to the preservation of health; and,*
- *the Geneva Convention (Article 23, Number IV, 1949) requires the free passage of medical supplies intended for civilians;*

The WMA therefore urges the European Union to take steps immediately to ensure the delivery of medical supplies to the Ivory Coast, in order to protect the life and health of the population.





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## **WMA RESOLUTION ON THE INDEPENDENCE OF NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Adopted by the 62<sup>nd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

National medical associations are established to act as representatives of their physicians, and to negotiate on their behalf, sometimes as a trade union or regulatory body but also as a professional association, representing the expertise of medical doctors in relation to matters of public health and wellbeing.

They represent the views of the medical profession, including attempting to ensure the practice of ethical medicine, the provision of good quality medical care, and the adherence to high standards by all practitioners.

These associations may also campaign or advocate on behalf of their members, often in the field of public health. Such advocacy is not always welcomed by governments who may consider the advocacy to have oppositional politics attached, when in reality it is based upon an understanding of the medical evidence and the needs of patients and populations.

The WMA is aware that because of those advocacy efforts some governments attempt to silence the medical association by placing its own nominated representatives into positions of authority, to subvert the message into one they are better able to tolerate.

The WMA denounces such action and demands that no government interferes with the independent functioning of national medical associations. It encourages governments to understand better the reasons behind the work of their national medical association, to consider the medical evidence and to work with physicians to improve the health and wellbeing of their populations.



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**WMA RESOLUTION  
ON  
A MINIMUM UNIT PRICE FOR ALCOHOL**

Adopted by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

Evidence from epidemiological and other research demonstrates a clear link between the price of alcohol and levels of consumption, especially amongst young drinkers and those who are heavy alcohol users.

Setting a minimum unit price at a level that will reduce alcohol consumption is a strong public health measure, which will both reduce average alcohol consumption throughout the population and be especially effective in heavy drinkers and young drinkers.

Some states are intending to set a minimum unit price in order to reduce the medical and social effects of excessive alcohol consumption.

The WMA supports states seeking to use such innovative measures to combat the serious public and individual health effects of excessive and problem drinking.



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## **WMA RESOLUTION ON PLAIN PACKAGING OF CIGARETTES**

Adopted by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

The WMA recognises that:

- Cigarettes offer a serious threat to the life and health of individuals that use them, and a considerable cost to the health care services of every country;
- Those who smoke predominantly start to do so while adolescents;
- There is a proven link between brand recognition and likelihood of starting to smoke;
- Brand recognition is strongly linked to cigarette packaging;
- Plain packaging reduces the impact of branding, promotion and marketing of cigarettes.

The WMA encourages national governments to support moves to introduce plain packaging of cigarettes, initially by the Federal Government of Australia, to break the brand recognition / smoking cycle and commends adoption of this policy to other national governments and deplores the legal moves being taken by the tobacco industry to oppose this policy.



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**WMA RESOLUTION  
TO REAFFIRM  
THE WMA'S PROHIBITION OF PHYSICIAN PARTICIPATION  
IN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**

Adopted by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

There is universal agreement that physicians must not participate in executions because such participation is incompatible with the physician's role as healer. The use of a physician's knowledge and clinical skill for purposes other than promoting health, well-being and welfare undermines a basic ethical foundation of medicine---first, do no harm.

The WMA Declaration of Geneva states: "I will maintain the utmost respect for human life"; and, "I will not use my medical knowledge to violate human rights and civil liberties, even under threat."

As citizens, physicians have the right to form views about capital punishment based on their individual moral beliefs. As members of the medical profession, they must uphold the prohibition against participation in capital punishment.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED that:

- Physicians will not facilitate the importation or prescription of drugs for execution.
- The WMA reaffirms: "that it is unethical for physicians to participate in capital punishment, in any way, or during any step of the execution process, including its planning and the instruction and/or training of persons to perform executions", and
- The WMA reaffirms: that physicians "will maintain the utmost respect for human life and will not use [my] medical knowledge to violate human rights and civil liberties, even under threat."





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## **WMA RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PROFESSOR CYRIL KARABUS**

Adopted by the 63<sup>rd</sup> WMA General Assembly, Bangkok, Thailand, October 2012

The WMA welcomes the bail granted on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October to the retired South African paediatric haematologist, 78-year-old Professor Cyril Karabus, as a positive step given his state of health; he has cardiac disease. Dr Karabus had been detained in an Abu Dhabi, UAE prison since August 18<sup>th</sup> 2012. He was arrested in Dubai, whilst in transit to South Africa, owing to alleged charges emanating from a brief period that he worked in the UAE in 2002.

Professor Karabus was neither informed of the charges leveled against him nor the subsequent trial that was held in absentia relating to the unfortunate death of a child with acute leukemia under his care during his tenure in the UAE in 2002. His defense lawyer has also been unable to access any documents or files relating to the case that may assist in providing a fair defense.

Therefore,

The WMA General Assembly urgently calls on the authorities of the United Arab Emirates to ensure that Professor Karabus:

- Is guaranteed a fair trial according to international standards;
- Has access to the relevant documents or information he may require to prepare his defense.



## **WMA RESOLUTION ON CRIMINALISATION OF MEDICAL PRACTICE**

Adopted as a Council Resolution by the 194<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Bali, Indonesia,  
April 2013  
and adopted by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

### **PREAMBLE**

Doctors who commit criminal acts which are not part of patient care must remain as liable to sanctions as all other members of society. Serious abuses of medical practice must be subject to sanctions, usually through professional regulatory processes.

Numerous attempts are made by governments to control physicians' practice of medicine at local, regional and national levels worldwide. Physicians have seen attempts to:

- Prevent medically indicated procedures;
- Mandate medical procedures that are not indicated; and
- Mandate certain drug prescribing practices.

Criminal penalties have been imposed on physicians for various aspects of medical practice, including medical errors, despite the availability of adequate non-criminal redress. Criminalizing medical decision making is a disservice to patients.

In times of war and civil strife, there have also been attempts to criminalize compassionate medical care to those injured as a result of these conflicts.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Therefore, the WMA recommends that its members:

1. Oppose government intrusions into the practice of medicine and in healthcare decision making, including the government's ability to define appropriate medical practice through imposition of criminal penalties.
2. Oppose criminalizing medical judgment.
3. Oppose criminalizing healthcare decisions, including physician variance from guidelines and standards.
4. Oppose criminalizing medical care provided to patients injured in civil conflicts.

5. Implement action plans to alert opinion leaders, elected officials and the media about the detrimental effects on healthcare that result from criminalizing healthcare decision making.
6. Support the principles set forth in the WMA's Declaration of Madrid on Professional Autonomy and Self-Regulation.
7. Support the guidance set forth in the WMA's Regulations in Times of Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence.

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON THE HEALTHCARE SITUATION IN SYRIA**

Adopted by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

### **PREAMBLE**

During wars and armed conflicts, hospitals and other medical facilities have often been attacked and misused and patients and medical personnel have been killed or wounded. Such attacks are a violation of the Geneva Conventions (1949), Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions (1977) and WMA policies, in particular, the WMA Statement on the Protection and Integrity of Medical Personnel in Armed Conflicts and Other Situations of Violence (Montevideo 2011) as well as WMA Regulations in Times of Armed Conflicts and Other Situations of Violence (Bangkok 2012).

The World Medical Association (WMA) has been active in condemning documented attacks on medical personnel and facilities in armed conflicts, including civil wars. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are designed to protect medical personnel, medical facilities and their patients in international and non-international armed conflicts. The parties on both sides of the conflict have legal and moral duties not to interfere with medical care for wounded or sick combatants and civilians, and to not attack, threaten or impede medical functions. Physicians and other health care personnel must act as and be considered neutral and must not be prevented from fulfilling their duties.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The WMA calls upon all parties in the Syrian conflict to ensure the safety of healthcare personnel and their patients, as well as medical facilities and medical transport.
- The WMA calls upon its members to approach local governments in order to facilitate international cooperation in the United Nations, the European Union or other international body with the aim of ensuring the safe provision of health care to the Syrian people.



## **WMA RESOLUTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

Adopted by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

### **PREAMBLE**

It has been recognised for centuries that certain chemical agents can affect consciousness, or other factors influencing the ability of an individual to take part in fighting, predominantly during warfare. More recently some agents have been used to temporarily disable participants in civil unrest, protests or riots. In warfare such agents have, historically, had a significant morbidity and mortality and included nerve gases and related agents.

Despite widespread condemnation such weapons were extensively used in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. A global movement to outlaw the use of such weapons led to the development of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which entered into force in 1997 having been opened to signature in 1993. Currently only six countries have not ratified or acceded to the CWC.

The production, stockpiling and use of CW is prohibited. Despite this, such weapons have been used by state forces and by non-state actors in a number of countries. By their nature such weapons are indiscriminate. This use has led to deaths, injuries and human suffering in those countries.

Chemical agents used in policing actions, including by the military acting in a policing role, are allowed under the CWC. There is a significant international dialogue underway on the definition of such agents and the situations in which they can be used. It should be noted that the CWC appears to assume such agents will not be lethal, but the use of any agent might have fatal consequences. Those using them, or authorising their use, must seek to ensure that they are not used in a manner which risks death or serious injury to targeted persons.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The WMA notes that the development, production, stockpiling and use of Chemical Weapons is banned under the CWC, and that use of such weapons is regarded by some to be a crime against humanity, regardless of whether the target populations are civilian or military.

The WMA urges all relevant parties to make active efforts to abide by the CWC ban on the development, production, stockpiling and use of Chemical Weapons.

## Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

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The WMA urges support from all states party to the CWC for the safe destruction of all stockpiles of Chemical weapons.

The WMA supports UN initiatives to identify anyone who is responsible for the use of Chemical Weapons and to bring them to justice.

The WMA urges states using chemical agents in riot control and related situations to carefully consider and minimise the risks and to, wherever possible, refrain from such use. Any use must follow the establishment of the necessary procedures to reduce the risk of death or serious injury. They should not be used in a manner, which deliberately increases the risk of injury, harm or death to their targets.



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**WMA RESOLUTION  
ON  
STANDARDISATION IN MEDICAL PRACTICE  
AND PATIENT SAFETY**

Adopted as a Council Resolution by the 194<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Bali, Indonesia,  
April 2013  
and adopted by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

Ensuring patient safety and quality of care is at the core of medical practice. For patients, a high level of performance can be a matter of life or death. Therefore, guidance and standardisation in healthcare must be based on solid medical evidence and has to take ethical considerations into account.

Currently, trends in the European Union can be observed to introduce standards in clinical, medical care developed by non-medical standardisation bodies, which neither have the necessary professional ethical and technical competencies nor a public mandate.

The WMA has major concerns about such tendencies which are likely to reduce the quality of care offered, and calls upon governments and other institutions not to leave standardisation of medical care up to non-medical self selected bodies.



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## **WMA RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE BRAZILIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

Adopted by the 64<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Fortaleza, Brazil, October 2013

There are credible reports that the Brazilian Government program “Mais Médicos” to create more medical schools, extend the duration of the medical course, compulsorily place last years medical students to work in public services and attract foreign physicians to work in remote areas of the country and in the poorest outskirts of big cities, was proposed without the appropriate consultation to the medical community and medical schools, and departs from a wrong diagnosis about the causes of the insufficient health care provided to the Brazilian population. The program as proposed bypass systems established to verify physicians' credentials, medical competence and language skills in order to protect patients.

The World Medical Association is concerned that patients are put at risk by unregulated medical license, inadequate medical competence and potential misunderstanding of patient communication and of drugs and medical supplies labels.

Therefore, the WMA:

- Condemns any policy and practice that disrupt the accepted standards of medical credentialing and medical care;
- Calls upon the Brazilian government to work with the medical community and medical schools on all matters related to medical education, physician certification and the practice of medicine, and to respect the role of the Brazilian Medical Association on behalf of the Brazilian physicians and population;
- Urges, as a matter of utmost concern, that the Brazilian government respect the WMA International Code of Medical Ethics that guides the medical practice of physicians all over the world.



## **WMA RESOLUTION ON EBOLA VIRAL DISEASE**

Adopted by the 65<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014

### **BACKGROUND**

A number of viral diseases have caused occasional health emergencies in parts of Africa, with local or wider spread epidemics. These include Lassa, Marburg and Ebola Viral Diseases (EVD). The 2013-14 outbreak of EVD in West Africa has proven far more difficult to control than previous epidemics and is now present in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea with more than 2000 deaths. This epidemic appears to have a case related mortality of approximately 55% against a range for EVD of 50~95%.

Following infection, patients remain asymptomatic for a period of 2~21 days, and during this time tests for the virus will be negative, and patients are not infectious, posing no public health risk. Once the patient becomes symptomatic, EVD is spread through contact with body fluids including blood. Symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting and bleeding, and all these body fluids are potentially sources of infection.

Management is primarily through infection control, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by health care workers and those disposing of body fluids and of bodies, and supportive care for sick patients including using IV fluids and inotropes. Contact tracing is also important but may be difficult in many of the communities currently affected. Vaccines are in development as are some antivirals, but they will arrive late in this epidemic if they are proven successful.

Evidence from those treating patients in affected communities is that a shortage of resources, including health care workers and PPE, as well as poor infection control training of health care workers, caregivers and others at risk are making epidemic control difficult.

Some governments have indicated that they will build new treatment centres in affected areas as a matter of urgency, while others are directly providing personal protective equipment and other supplies.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The WMA honours those working in these exceptional circumstances, and strongly recommends that national governments and international agencies work with health care providers on the ground and offer stakeholders training and support to reduce the risks that they face in treating patients and in seeking to control the epidemic.

2. The WMA commends those countries that have committed resources for the urgent establishment of new treatment and isolation centres in the most heavily burdened countries and regions. The WMA calls upon all nations to commit enhanced support for combatting the EVD epidemic.
3. The WMA calls on the international community, acting through the United Nations and its agencies as well as aid agencies, to immediately provide the necessary supplies of PPE to protect health care workers and ancillary staff and reduce the risk of cross infection. This must include adequate supplies of gloves, masks and gowns, and distribution must include treatment centres at all levels.
4. The WMA calls on all those managing the epidemic, including local and national governments and agencies such as WHO, to commit to adequate training in infection control measures, including PPE for all staff and caregivers who might come into contact with infective materials.
5. The WMA calls on national and local governments to increase public communication about basic infection control practices.
6. The WMA calls upon WHO to facilitate research into the timeliness and effectiveness of international interventions, so that planning and interventions in future health emergencies can be better informed.
7. The WMA strongly urges all countries, especially those not yet affected, to educate health care providers about the current case definition in addition to strengthening infection control methodologies and contact tracing in order to prevent transmission within their countries.
8. The WMA calls for NMAs to contact their national governments to act as described in this document.

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## **WMA RESOLUTION ON MIGRANT WORKERS' HEALTH AND SAFETY IN QATAR**

Adopted by the 65<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014

### **PREAMBLE**

Reliable reports indicate that migrant workers in Qatar suffer from exploitation and violation of their rights. Workers basic needs, e.g. access to sufficient water and food, are not met. Less than half of the workers are entitled to health care. Hundreds of workers have already died in the construction sites since 2010 as the country prepares to host the 2022 FIFA1 World Cup. Workers are not free to leave when they see their situation hopeless or health endangered since their passports are confiscated.

Despite the pleas of international labour and human rights organizations, such as ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation) and Amnesty International, the response of the Qatar government to solve the situation has not been adequate. FIFA has been inefficient and has not taken the full responsibility to facilitate the improvements to the worker's living and working conditions.

The World Medical Association reminds that health is a human right that should be safeguarded in all situations.

The World Medical Association is concerned that migrant workers are continuously put at risk in construction sites in Qatar, and their right to freedom of movement and right to health care and safe working conditions are not respected.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The WMA calls upon the Qatar government and construction companies to ensure the health and safety of migrant workers;
2. The WMA demands the FIFA as the responsible organization of the World Cup to take immediate action by changing the venue as soon as possible;
3. The WMA calls upon its members to approach local governments in order to facilitate international cooperation with the aim of ensuring the health and safety of migrant workers in Qatar.

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<sup>1</sup> Fédération Internationale de Football Association





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## **WMA RESOLUTION ON UNPROVEN THERAPY AND THE EBOLA VIRUS**

Adopted by the 65<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Durban, South Africa, October 2014

In the case of Ebola virus, the WMA strongly supports the intention of Paragraph 37 of the 2013 revision of the Declaration of Helsinki, which reads:

In the treatment of an individual patient, where proven interventions do not exist or other known interventions have been ineffective, the physician, after seeking expert advice, with informed consent from the patient or a legally authorized representative, may use an unproven intervention if in the physician's judgement it offers hope of saving life, re-establishing health or alleviating suffering. This intervention should subsequently be made the object of research, designed to evaluate its safety and efficacy. In all cases, new information must be recorded and, where appropriate, made publicly available.

**WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION  
ON  
THE RELATION OF LAW AND ETHICS**

Adopted by the 164<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2003

Ethical Values and legal principles are usually closely related, but ethical obligations typically exceed legal duties. In some cases, the law mandates unethical conduct. The fact that a physician has complied with the law does not necessarily mean that the physician acted ethically.

When law is in conflict with medical ethics, physicians should work to change the law. In circumstances of such conflict, ethical responsibilities supersede legal obligations.

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**WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION  
ON  
CHRONIC NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

Adopted by the 171<sup>st</sup> WMA Council Session, Santiago, Chile, October 2005

Chronic non-communicable diseases are a rapidly growing problem worldwide. They have major adverse health, social and economic effects especially in poor nations.

The WMA Council welcomes the work of the WHO on “Preventing Chronic Diseases, a vital investment” and recommends that all NMAs work with health professional organizations, interested stakeholders and their governments to prevent and relieve the increasing burden of chronic disease.

## WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON THE HEALTHCARE SKILLS DRAIN

Adopted by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2005

**Recognising** that the lack of healthcare workers in developing countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, is one of the most serious global problems of today and that the impact of healthcare worker migration from developing to developed countries is a significant component in the crisis,

Therefore, **be it resolved:**

1. That the WMA reaffirms its 2003 Statement on Ethical Guidelines for the International Recruitment of Physicians, particularly para. 14: "Every country should do its utmost to educate an adequate number of physicians, taking into account its needs and resources. A country should not rely on immigration from other countries to meet its need for physicians"; and para. 15: "Every country should do its utmost to retain its physicians in the profession as well as in the country by providing them with the support they need to meet their personal and professional goals, taking into account the country's needs and resources."
2. That developed countries must assist developing countries to expand their capacity to train and retain physicians and nurses, to enable developing countries to become self-sufficient.
3. That action to combat the skills drain in this area must balance the right to health of populations (Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 25.1; International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1976), Article 12.1.) and other individual human rights.
4. That the WMA reconvene the expert working group on physician resources to coordinate development of WMA input to WHO preparations for the decade on human resources for health.
5. That the WMA commend WHO for taking a leadership role in the global challenges of human resources for health; commend to WHO the afore-mentioned principles (1, 2 and 3); and call upon WHO to convene a global roundtable to discuss HHR issues.

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## **WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON GENOCIDE IN DARFUR**

Adopted by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2005  
and reaffirmed by the 176<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Berlin, Germany, May 2006

**WHEREAS**, a reported 300,000 Darfurians have been killed and one million refugees displaced since early 2003, on the basis of racial or ethnic origins; and

**WHEREAS**, there have been official reports of savage killing, torture, rape and mutilation of men, women and children by the Government of Sudan and its allied militia; and

**WHEREAS**, many of these reports, including that of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Darfur, have only recently been publicized; and

**WHEREAS**, genocide, as defined by the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, is the killing or destroying of populations on the basis of their racial or ethnic identity; and

**WHEREAS**, the WMA, as an international medical organization committed to the protection of health and human rights for all, has expressed its support for human rights in statements and resolutions, among them the Resolution on Human Rights, adopted by the WMA in Rancho Mirage during the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly and amended by the 45<sup>th</sup>, 46<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> General Assemblies,

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the WMA condemns the genocide in Darfur and calls upon its member NMA's to urge their governments and the international community to take immediate action to stop the mass killings, expulsions, rape and destruction in Darfur and to protect the health and safety of refugees in the region.

**WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION  
ON  
OBSERVER STATUS FOR TAIWAN TO THE  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)  
AND INCLUSION AS PARTICIPATING PARTY TO THE  
INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS (IHR)**

Adopted by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2005

**PREAMBLE**

1. The ethical obligation of health professionals is to serve all human beings irrespective of their political or religious affiliation or any other factor. The goal of all nations must be the protection of health of all human beings without any discrimination. Protection of human health can only be achieved if all people and health care systems collaborate. WHO must be able to invite all people and health care systems to participate in the fight against disease and premature death. Protection of human health must be separated from politics.
2. A burning example of discrimination in the recent years has been Taiwan. There are 23 million people living in Taiwan, of which a significant number required medical assistance or help from international relief organizations in the aftermath of the 1999 earthquake. In addition, Taiwan was significantly affected and suffered several deaths due to the SARS epidemic during 2002 and 2003 and is under threat by the current outbreak of Avian Flu in South East Asia.
3. There are 23 million people who are willing and take pride in contributing to international relief efforts when other people are in need, as demonstrated again by generous donations and significant humanitarian aid support in the aftermath of the tsunami disaster during 2004.
4. 23 million people should not be excluded from the work of the World Health Organization, but without taking a stand as to the legal status of Taiwan.

**RESOLUTION**

5. The World Medical Association (WMA), as a non-governmental organization in official relations with WHO, calls on WHO to grant Taiwan observer status to WHO;
6. The WMA calls on WHO and all its Member States to ensure that Taiwan is included as a participating party to the WHO International Health Regulations;
7. The World Medical Association further urges its members to call on their national governments to advocate for observer status for Taiwan at WHO, as well as inclusion as a participating party to the WHO International Health Regulations.

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**WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION  
ON  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION  
ON TOBACCO CONTROL**

Adopted by the 170<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2005

The World Medical Association

**Welcomes** the recognition of the essential role of health professionals in tobacco control as the focus of World No Tobacco Day, 31 May 2005;

**Recognises** the importance of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in furthering the campaign to protect people from exposure and addiction to tobacco;

**Encourages** national medical associations to work assiduously and energetically to get their governments to ratify and implement the FCTC;

**Urges** governments to introduce regulation and other measures as set out in the FCTC. Governments should also introduce a ban on smoking in enclosed public places and work places as an urgent public health intervention;

**Recognises** the vital role of health professionals in public health education and in support for smoking cessation;

**Commits**, with the other members of the World Health Professions Alliance, to mobilise health professionals in the fight to implement the FCTC and to reduce the human cost of tobacco.

## **WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE BOLIVIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

Adopted by the 174<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006

There are credible reports that arrangements between the Cuban government and the Bolivian government to supply Cuban physicians to Bolivia are bypassing systems, established to protect patients, that have been set up to verify physicians' credentials and competence.

The World Medical Association is significantly concerned that patients are put at risk by unregulated medical practices, including the provision of drugs and medical supplies that are improperly labeled and of uncertain origin.

There exists already a duly constituted and legally authorized Bolivian Medical Association, which is charged with the registration of physicians and which is required to be consulted by the Bolivian Ministry of Health.

Therefore, the WMA:

1. Condemns any collusion of two countries in policies and practices that disrupt the accepted standards of medical credentialing and medical care;
2. Calls upon the Bolivian government to work with the Bolivian Medical Association on all matters related to physician certification and the practice of medicine and to respect the role and rights of the Bolivian Medical Association;
3. Urges, as a matter of utmost concern, that the Bolivian government respect the WMA International Code of Medical Ethics that guides the medical practice of physicians all over the world.



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## **WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON ORGAN DONATION IN CHINA**

Adopted by the 173<sup>rd</sup> WMA Council Session, Divonne-les-Bains, France, May 2006

**WHEREAS**, the WMA Statement on Human Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation stresses the importance of free and informed choice in organ donation; and

**WHEREAS**, the statement explicitly states that prisoners and other individuals in custody are not in a position to give consent freely, and therefore their organs must not be used for transplantation; and

**WHEREAS**, there have been reports of Chinese prisoners being executed and their organs harvested for donation;

**THEREFORE**, the WMA reiterates its position that organ donation be achieved through the free and informed consent of the potential donor.

The WMA demands that the Chinese Medical Association condemn any practice in violation of these ethical principles and basic human rights and ensure that Chinese doctors are not involved in the removal or transplantation of organs from executed Chinese prisoners.

The WMA demands that China immediately cease the practice of using prisoners as organ donors.

## **WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS OF MEDICAL NEUTRALITY**

Adopted by the 182<sup>nd</sup> WMA Council Session, Tel Aviv, Israel, May 2009

### **WHEREAS:**

Recent international conflicts, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza, the conflict in Sri Lanka, the conflict in Darfur, and the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, have led to loss of life and the impairment of living conditions; and International standards of medical neutrality must be upheld throughout such conflicts;

### **THEREFORE, the WMA**

1. Reaffirms its policy, "Regulations in Time of Armed Conflict" and the obligations of physicians stated in this document. The WMA calls on its members to act in accordance with all internationally accepted principles of healthcare delivery in times of conflict.
2. Reiterates its commitment to the universal right to health, and access to the highest attainable standard of health care. This universal right is not conditional on peaceful existence, although a peaceful existence accommodates greater ability to provide health to all.
3. Reaffirms the obligation incumbent on all parties involved in conflict situations to abide by the rules of international medical ethics, as well as the provisions of international humanitarian law, as expressed in the Geneva Conventions, particularly their common article 3, and, specifically, to assure the provision of medical care and/or evacuation of the trapped and wounded and to refrain from targeting medical personnel and medical facilities.

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**WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION  
ON  
PROHIBITION OF PHYSICIAN PARTICIPATION IN TORTURE**

Adopted by the 182<sup>nd</sup> WMA Council Session, Tel Aviv, Israel, May 2009

**WHEREAS:**

Reports worldwide have alluded to deeply unsettling practices by health professionals, including direct participation in the infliction of ill-treatment, monitoring specific methods of ill-treatment, and participation in interrogation processes;

**THEREFORE, the WMA**

1. Reaffirms its Declaration of Tokyo: Guidelines for Physicians Concerning Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in Relation to Detention and Imprisonment, which prohibits physicians from participating in, or even being present during, the practice of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading procedures, and urges National Medical Associations to inform physicians and governments of the Declaration and its contents.
2. Reaffirms its Declaration of Hamburg: Support for Medical Doctors Refusing to Participate in or to Condone the use of Torture or other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment.
3. Reaffirms its Resolution: Responsibility of Physicians in the Denunciation of Acts of Torture or Cruel or Inhuman or Degrading Treatment of Which they are Aware.
4. Urges national medical associations to speak out in support of this fundamental principle of medical ethics and to investigate any breach of these principles by association members of which they are aware.



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**WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION  
ON  
DANGER IN HEALTH CARE IN SYRIA AND BAHRAIN**

Adopted by the 191<sup>st</sup> WMA Council Session, Prague, Czech Republic, April 2012

The WMA recognises that attacks on health care facilities, health care workers and patients are an increasingly common problem and the WMA Council denounces all such attacks in any country.

These often occur during armed conflict and also in other situations of violence, including protests against the state. Patients, including those injured during protests, often come from the poorest and most marginalised parts of the community and suffer a higher proportion of serious health problems than those from wealthier backgrounds.

Governments have an obligation to ensure that health care facilities and those working in them can operate in safety and without interference either from state or non-state actors, and to protect those receiving care.

Where services are not available to patients due to government action or inaction, the government, not the health practitioners, should be held responsible.

Noting that recent and ongoing conflicts in Bahrain and Syria have seen physicians, other health care personnel and their patients attacked while in health care facilities, the WMA demands:

1. That states fulfill their obligations to all their citizens and residents, including political protestors, patients and health care workers, and protect health care facilities and their occupants from interference, intimidation or attack.
2. That governments enter into meaningful negotiations wherever such attacks are possible, likely or already occurring to stop the attacks and protect the institutions and their occupants, and
3. That governments consider how they can contribute positively to the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross on promoting the safety of health care provision through awareness of the concepts within their project Health Care in Danger.



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## **WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON THREATS TO PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY AND SELF-REGULATION IN TURKEY**

Adopted by the 191<sup>st</sup> WMA Council Session, Prague, Czech Republic, April 2012

### **INTRODUCTION**

The WMA is extremely concerned about recent actions by the Turkish government that drastically reduce the self-governing authority and professional autonomy of the medical profession in Turkey. In particular, the newly enacted Government Decree 663 on the Organization and Duties of the Ministry of Health and its Associated Organizations establishes a Health Professions Board, controlled by the Ministry of Health, and delegates authority to this Board for certain critical functions that should remain with the Turkish Medical Association in keeping with the principles of professional autonomy and physician self governance. The Turkish Medical Association was established by the Turkish Parliament in 1953, while Decree 663 was passed by the government ministers of Turkey in an extraordinary process that bypassed the Parliament.

Of grave concern is the fact that the Turkish Medical Association no longer has the authority to:

- Establish and issue ethical guidelines concerning physician conduct
- Conduct investigations regarding alleged malpractice by physicians
- Determine disciplinary sanctions against physicians in cases of malpractice
- Develop core curricula for medical education, post-graduate medical specialty curricula, and content and accreditation for continuing medical education (all of which were previously done in partnership between the TMA and universities)

In addition, Decree 663 amends Article 1 of the Constituting Law of the Turkish Medical Association (originally drafted and adopted by the Parliament) by removing the following language in the TMA's mandate: "ensuring that medical profession is practiced and promoted in line with public and individual well-being and benefit". As a result of this restriction of its mandate, the TMA no longer has the right to legally challenge actions and regulations that adversely affect the right to health, the provision of health care, public health, and individual patient well-being. Examples might include, for instance, efforts against restrictions on which medical procedures would be reimbursed under the national health system or initiation of action to address public health hazards such as the use of cyanide in silver and gold mining and processing. The narrowing of the TMA's mandate in this regard not only diminishes the independence of physicians, but also jeopardizes the health of their patients.

**THEREFORE:**

Reaffirming its unequivocal commitment to the independence and professional self-governance of the medical profession, as defined in the WMA Declaration of Madrid on Professional Autonomy and Self-Regulation, and the WMA Resolution on the Independence of National Medical Associations, the WMA Council:

1. Urges the Turkish government to rescind Decree 663 and restore to the Turkish Medical Association its duties and responsibilities for professional autonomy and self regulation, properly established by the Parliament in 1953 through the legitimate and transparent national democratic process.
2. Urges all physician members of Parliament, regardless of political affiliation, to recall their duties as physician leaders and support the right of the medical profession to autonomy and self-regulation.
3. Supports and commends the Turkish Medical Association and those members of the Turkish Parliament who have challenged these recent actions and requested a legal review of this Decree by the Constitutional Court.
4. Calls on all physicians in Turkey and around the world to join actively in advocacy efforts to promote and support professional independence, the right to health, and the health of the people of Turkey.



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**WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION  
ON  
THE AUTONOMY OF PROFESSIONAL ORDERS IN WEST AFRICA**

Adopted by the 191<sup>st</sup> WMA Council Session, Prague, Czech Republic, April 2012

**PREAMBLE**

The Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine; UEMOA) brings together eight countries of West Africa using CFA Franc as a currency. This tool of integration advocates for the free circulation and settlement of physicians in the countries of UEMOA.

There is a College of the Orders of Physicians, bringing together the Orders of member countries of the Union. The Orders are often under the supervision of the health ministries. This situation often confines the technical and administrative autonomy and impedes the good management of the medical mapping of the region, undermining access to health care for the populations.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Reiterating its [Declaration of Madrid on Professional Autonomy and Self-Regulation](#) and its [Resolution on the Independence of National Medical Associations](#), the WMA requests that the independence, professional autonomy and self-regulation be guaranteed within the countries of the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa.



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## **WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON PROFESSOR CYRIL KARABUS**

Adopted by the 194<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Bali, April 2013

The World Medical Association is extremely concerned that Professor Cyril Karabus, a retired paediatric oncologist remains remanded on bail in the UAE despite a long and slow judicial process, which has absolved him of all the charges against him.

The WMA notes that the expert medical panel, appointed by the court to advise it whether there was any evidence against Professor Karabus, has advised the judge that Professor Karabus has no case to answer. Consequently the judge dismissed all charges and a ruling of not guilty was given. It also notes with concern that the prosecutors have indicated they will appeal the courts ruling meaning that Professor Karabus needs to remain in the UAE indefinitely.

Given the findings of the medical panel, the WMA believes that Professor Karabus is being treated in a manner, which fails to meet international fair trial standards and should be allowed to return home immediately.

In light of the above experience, the WMA will publish an advisory notice in the WMJ and on the WMA website to advise doctors thinking of working in the UAE to note the working conditions and the legal risks of employment there. The WMA will encourage member NMAs to publish similar advisory notices in their national publications.



## **WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON CRIMINALISATION OF MEDICAL PRACTICE**

Adopted by the 194<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Bali, April 2013

### **PREAMBLE**

Doctors who commit criminal acts which are not part of patient care must remain as liable to sanctions as all other members of society. Serious abuses of medical practice must be subject to sanctions, usually through professional regulatory processes.

Numerous attempts are made by governments to control physicians' practice of medicine at local, regional and national levels worldwide. Physicians have seen attempts to:

- Prevent medically indicated procedures;
- Mandate medical procedures that are not indicated; and
- Mandate certain drug prescribing practices.

Criminal penalties have been imposed on physicians for various aspects of medical practice, including medical errors, despite the availability of adequate non-criminal redress. Criminalizing medical decision making is a disservice to patients.

In times of war and civil strife, there have also been attempts to criminalize compassionate medical care to those injured as a result of these conflicts.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Therefore, the WMA recommends that its members:

1. Oppose government intrusions into the practice of medicine and in healthcare decision making, including the government's ability to define appropriate medical practice through imposition of criminal penalties.
2. Oppose criminalizing medical judgment.
3. Oppose criminalizing healthcare decisions, including physician variance from guidelines and standards.
4. Oppose criminalizing medical care provided to patients injured in civil conflicts.

5. Implement action plans to alert opinion leaders, elected officials and the media about the detrimental effects on healthcare that result from criminalizing healthcare decision making.
6. Support the principles set forth in the WMA's Declaration of Madrid on Professional Autonomy and Self-Regulation.
7. Support the guidance set forth in the WMA's Regulations in Times of Armed Conflict and Other Situations of Violence.

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**WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION  
ON  
STANDARDISATION IN MEDICAL PRACTICE AND PATIENT SAFETY**

Adopted by the 194<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Bali, April 2013

Ensuring patient safety and quality of care is at the core of medical practice. For patients, a high level of performance can be a matter of life or death. Therefore, guidance and standardisation in healthcare must be based on solid medical evidence and has to take ethical considerations into account.

Currently, trends in the European Union can be observed to introduce standards in clinical, medical care developed by non-medical standardisation bodies, which neither have the necessary professional ethical and technical competencies nor a public mandate.

The WMA has major concerns about such tendencies which are likely to reduce the quality of care offered, and calls upon governments and other institutions not to leave standardisation of medical care up to non-medical self selected bodies.





## **WMA COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON TRADE AGREEMENTS AND PUBLIC HEALTH**

Adopted by the 200<sup>th</sup> WMA Council Session, Oslo, Norway, April 2015

### **PREAMBLE**

Trade agreements are sequelae of globalization and seek to promote trade liberalization. They can have a significant impact on the social determinants of health and thus on public health and the delivery of health care.

Trade agreements are designed to produce economic benefits. Negotiations should take account of their potential broad impact especially on health and ensure that health is not damaged by the pursuit of potential economic gain.

Trade agreements may have the ability to promote the health and wellbeing of all people, including by improving economic structures, if they are well constructed and protect the ability of governments to legislate, regulate and plan for health promotion, health care delivery and health equity, without interference.

### **BACKGROUND**

There have been many trade agreements negotiated in the past. New agreements under negotiation include the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP),<sup>1</sup> Trans Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)<sup>2</sup> the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).<sup>3</sup>

These negotiations seek to establish a global governance framework for trade and are unprecedented in their size, scope and secrecy. A lack of transparency and the selective sharing of information with a limited set of stakeholders are anti-democratic.

Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provides a mechanism for investors to bring claims against governments and seek compensation, operating outside existing systems of accountability and transparency. ISDS in smaller scale trade agreements has been used to challenge evidence-based public health laws including tobacco plain packaging. Inclusion of a broad ISDS mechanism could threaten public health actions designed to effect tobacco control, alcohol control, regulation of obesogenic foods and beverages, access to medicines, health care services, environmental protection/climate change and occupational / environmental health improvements. This especially in nations with limited access to resources.

Access to affordable medicines is critical to controlling the global burdens of communicable and non-communicable diseases. The World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) established a set of common international rules governing the protection of intellectual property including the patenting of pharmaceuticals. TRIPS safeguards and flexibilities including compulsory licensing seek to ensure that patent protection does not supersede public health.<sup>4</sup>

TiSA may impact on eHealth provision by changing rules in licensing and telecoms. Its impact on the delivery of eHealth could be substantial and damage the delivery of comprehensive, effective, cost-effective efficient health care.

The WMA Statement on Patenting Medical Procedures states that patenting of diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical techniques is unethical and “poses serious risks to the effective practice of medicine by potentially limiting the availability of new procedures to patients.” The WMA Statement on Medical Workforce states that the WMA has recognized the need for investment in medical education and has called on governments to “...allocate sufficient financial resources for the education, training, development, recruitment and retention of physicians to meet the medical needs of the entire population...”

The WMA Declaration of Delhi on Health and Climate Change states that global climate change has had and will continue to have serious consequences for health and demands comprehensive action.

### RECOMMENDATION

Therefore the WMA calls on national governments and national member associations to:

1. Advocate for trade agreements that protect, promote and prioritize public health over commercial interests and ensure wide exclusions to secure services in the public interest, especially those impacting on individual and public health. This should include new modalities of health care provision including eHealth, Tele-Health, mHealth and uHealth.
2. Ensure trade agreements do not interfere with governments' ability to regulate health and health care, or to guarantee a right to health for all. Government action to protect and promote health should not be subject to challenge through an investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) or similar mechanism.
3. Oppose any trade agreement provisions which would compromise access to health care services or medicines including but not limited to:
  - Patenting (or patent enforcement) of diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical techniques;
  - “Evergreening”, or patent protection for minor modifications of existing drugs;
  - Patent linkage or other patent term adjustments that serve to as a barrier to generic entry into the market;
  - Data exclusivity for biologics;

- Any effort to undermine TRIPS safeguards or restrict TRIPS flexibilities including compulsory licensing;
  - Limits on clinical trial data transparency.
4. Oppose any trade agreement provision which would reduce public support for or facilitate commercialization of medical education.
  5. Ensure trade agreements promote environmental protection and support efforts to reduce activities that cause climate change.
  6. Call for transparency and openness in all trade agreement negotiations including public access to negotiating texts and meaningful opportunities for stakeholder engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> TPP negotiations currently include twelve parties: the United States, Canada, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and Vietnam.

<sup>2</sup> TTIP negotiations currently include the European Union and the United States.

<sup>3</sup> CETA negotiations currently include European Union and Canada.

<sup>4</sup> See World Trade Organization, Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health (“Doha Declaration”) (2001)