

# THE WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

## **WMA RESOLUTION ON DRUG PRESCRIPTION**

Adopted by the 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- Taking a history of the medications currently being administered successfully or previously withdrawn and also being aware of possible interactions.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.

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