

## **AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, Chicago, Illinois.**

CIRP Note: This is the older version of the AMA Principles of Medical Ethics. Spool down for the current version.]

### **AMA Principles of Medical Ethics (1980)**

The medical profession has long subscribed to a body of ethical statements developed primarily for the benefit of the patient. As a member of this profession, a physician must recognize responsibility not only to patients, but also to society, to other health professionals, and to self. The following Principles adopted by the American Medical Association are not laws, but standards of conduct which define the essentials of honorable behavior for the physician.

- I. A physician shall be dedicated to providing competent medical service with compassion and respect for human dignity.
- II. A physician shall deal honestly with patients and colleagues, and strive to expose those physicians deficient in character or competence, or who engage in fraud or deception.
- III. A physician shall respect the law and also recognize a responsibility to seek changes in those requirements which are contrary to the best interest of the patient.
- IV. A physician shall respect the rights of patients, of colleagues, and of other health professionals, and shall safeguard patient confidences within the constraints of the law.
- V. A physician shall continue to study, apply and advance scientific knowledge, make relevant information available to patients, colleagues, and the public, obtain consultation, and use the talents of other health professionals when indicated.
- VI. A physician shall, in the provision of appropriate patient care, except in emergencies, be free to choose whom to serve, with whom to associate, and the environment in which to provide medical services.
- VII. A physician shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to an improved community.

The American Medical Association House of Delegates adopted a revised version of the Principles of Medical Ethics in June 2001. The revised version has two additional articles and reads as follows. The words and articles in red are new.

### **AMA Principles of Medical Ethics (2001)**

Preamble:

The medical profession has long subscribed to a body of ethical statements developed primarily for the benefit of the patient. As a member of this profession, a physician must recognize responsibility to patients first and foremost, as well as to society, to other health professionals, and to self. The following Principles adopted by the American Medical Association are not laws, but standards of conduct which define the essentials of honorable behavior for the physician.

- I. A physician shall be dedicated to providing competent medical care, with compassion and respect for human dignity **and rights**.
- II. A physician shall uphold the standards of professionalism, be honest in all professional interactions, and strive to report physicians deficient in character or competence, or engaging in fraud or deception, **to appropriate entities**.
- III. III. A physician shall respect the law and also recognize a responsibility to seek changes in those requirements which are contrary to the best interests of the patient.
- IV. IV. A physician shall respect the rights of patients, colleagues, and other health professionals, and shall safeguard patient confidences and privacy within the constraints of the law.
- V. A physician shall continue to study, apply, and advance scientific knowledge, **maintain a commitment to medical education**, make relevant information available to patients, colleagues, and the public, obtain consultation, and use the talents of other health professionals when indicated.
- VI. A physician shall, in the provision of appropriate patient care, except in emergencies, be free to choose whom to serve, with whom to associate, and the environment in which to provide medical care.
- VII. A physician shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community **and the betterment of public health**.
- VIII. **A physician shall, while caring for a patient, regard responsibility to the patient as paramount.**
- IX. **A physician shall support access to medical care for all people.**

The Principles of Medical Ethics constitute the Preamble to the much longer *Code of Medical Ethics*. The Code of Medical Ethics and opinions of the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs (CEJA) may be found on the [Code of Medical Ethics and CEJA Reports](#) page.

*American Medical Association  
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For an application of these principles to non-therapeutic male neonatal circumcision, see:

- [Denniston GC](#). Circumcision and the code of ethics. *Humane Health International* 1996;12(2):

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