

REPORT OF THE COUNCIL ON ETHICAL AND JUDICIAL AFFAIRS*

CEJA Report 1 - I-05

Subject: The Use of Quarantine and Isolation as Public Health Interventions

Presented by: Priscilla Ray, MD, Chair

Referred to: Reference Committee on Amendments to Constitution and Bylaws
(Charles J. Hickey, MD, Chair)

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

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3 The Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs recommends that the following be adopted and the
4 remainder of this report be filed:

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6 Quarantine and isolation to protect the population's health potentially conflict with the
7 individual rights of liberty and self-determination. The medical profession, in collaboration
8 with public health colleagues, must take an active role in ensuring that those interventions are
9 based on science and are applied according to certain ethical considerations.

10
11 (1) To this end, the medical profession should:

- 12
- 13 (a) seek an appropriate balance of public needs and individual restraints so that quarantine
14 and isolation use the least restrictive measures available that will minimize negative
15 effects on the community through disease control while providing protections for
16 individual rights;
 - 17
 - 18 (b) help ensure that quarantine and isolation are based upon valid science and do not
19 arbitrarily target socioeconomic, racial, or ethnic groups;
 - 20
 - 21 (c) advocate for the highest possible level of confidentiality of personal health information
22 whenever clinical information is transmitted in the context of public health reporting;
 - 23
 - 24 (d) advocate for access to public health services to ensure timely detection of risks and
25 prevent undue delays in the implementation of quarantine and isolation;
 - 26
 - 27 (e) help to educate patients and the public about quarantine and isolation through the
28 development of educational materials and participation in educational programs;
 - 29
 - 30 (f) advocate for the availability of protective and preventive measures for physicians and
31 others caring for patients with communicable diseases.

32
33 (2) Individual physicians should participate in the implementation of appropriate quarantine
34 and isolation measures as part of their obligation to provide medical care during epidemics
35 (see Opinion E-9.067, "Physician Obligation in Disaster Preparedness and Response."). In

* Reports of the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs are assigned to the reference committee on Constitution and Bylaws. They may be adopted, not adopted, or referred. A report may not be amended, except to clarify the meaning of the report and only with the concurrence of the Council.

1 doing so, advocacy for their individual patients' best interests remains paramount. (see
2 Opinion E-10.015, "The Patient-Physician Relationship.") Accordingly, physicians
3 should:

4
5 (a) encourage patients to adhere voluntarily to scientifically grounded quarantine and
6 isolation measures by educating them about the nature of the threat to public health,
7 the potential harm that it poses to the patient and others, and the personal and public
8 benefits to be derived from quarantine or isolation. If the patient fails to comply
9 voluntarily with such measures, the physician should support mandatory quarantine
10 and isolation for the non-compliant patient;

11
12 (b) comply with mandatory reporting requirements and inform patients of such reports;

13
14 (c) minimize the risk of transmitting infectious diseases from physician to patient and
15 ensure that they remain available to provide necessary medical services by using
16 appropriate protective and preventive measures, seeking medical evaluation and
17 treatment if they suspect themselves to be infected, and adhering to mandated public
18 health measures.

19
20 (3) Frontline physicians have an increased ethical obligation to avail themselves of safe and
21 effective protective and preventive measures (for example, influenza vaccine).

22
23 (New HOD/CEJA Policy)