



## **AMA Ethics Policy**

### **E-9.0305 Physician Health and Wellness**

To preserve the quality of their performance, physicians have a responsibility to maintain their health and wellness, construed broadly as preventing or treating acute or chronic diseases, including mental illness, disabilities, and occupational stress. When health or wellness is compromised, so may the safety and effectiveness of the medical care provided. When failing physical or mental health reaches the point of interfering with a physician's ability to engage safely in professional activities, the physician is said to be impaired.

In addition to maintaining healthy lifestyle habits, every physician should have a personal physician whose objectivity is not compromised. Physicians whose health or wellness is compromised should take measures to mitigate the problem, seek appropriate help as necessary, and engage in an honest self-assessment of their ability to continue practicing.

Those physicians caring for colleagues should not disclose without the physician-patient's consent any aspects of their medical care, except as required by law, by ethical and professional obligation (Opinion E-9.031), or when essential to protect patients from harm. Under such circumstances, only the minimum amount of information required by law or to preserve patient safety should be disclosed.

The medical profession has an obligation to ensure that its members are able to provide safe and effective care. This obligation is discharged by:

- promoting health and wellness among physicians; - supporting peers in identifying physicians in need of help; - intervening promptly when the health or wellness of a colleague appears to have become compromised, including the offer of encouragement, coverage or referral to a physician health program; - establishing physician health programs that provide a supportive environment to maintain and restore health and wellness; - establishing mechanisms to assure that impaired physicians promptly cease practice; - assisting recovered colleagues when they resume patient care; - reporting impaired physicians who continue to practice, despite reasonable offers of assistance, to appropriate bodies as required by law and/or ethical obligations. This may entail reporting to the licensing authority. (I, II) Issued June 2004 based on the report "Physician Health and Wellness," adopted December 2003.