

Code of Medical Ethics: Consent, communication & decision making

To enable patients to participate meaningfully in decisions about health care, physicians have a responsibility to provide information and help patients understand their medical condition and options for treatment.

Informed consent & shared decision making

Informed consent to medical treatment is fundamental in both ethics and law. It helps patients make well-considered decisions about their care and treatment.

Code of Medical Ethics Opinions: Informed consent & shared decision making

- Informed consent: Opinion E-2.1.1
- Decisions for adult patients who lack capacity: Opinion E-2.1.2
- Withholding information from patients: Opinion E-2.1.3
- Use of placebo in clinical practice: Opinion E-2.1.4
- Reporting clinical test results: Opinion E-2.1.5
- Substitution of surgeon: Opinion E-2.1.6

Decisions for minors

Minor children are not considered to have the capacity to make health care decisions on their own. Nonetheless, physicians have a responsibility to engage minor patients in making decisions about their own care in keeping with the child's ability to participate.

Code of Medical Ethics Opinions: Decisions for minors

- Pediatric decision making: Opinion E-2.2.1
- Confidential health care for minors: Opinion E-2.2.2
- Mandatory parental consent to abortion: Opinion E-2.2.3

- Treatment decisions for seriously ill newborns: Opinion E-2.2.4
- Genetic testing of children: Opinion E-2.2.5

Communication with patients

Whether they are using electronic communication or social media, expressing political views or engaging in charitable endeavors, physicians must uphold professional standards of behavior to sustain the trust that is the foundation of the patient-physician relationship.

Code of Medical Ethics Opinions: Communication with patients

- Electronic communication with patients: Opinion E-2.3.1
- Professionalism in the use of social media: Opinion E-2.3.2
- Informing families of a patient's death: Opinion E-2.3.3
- Political communications: Opinion E-2.3.4
- Soliciting charitable contributions from patients: Opinion E-2.3.5
- Surgical co-management: Opinion E-2.3.6

Code of Medical Ethics Opinions: Chapter 2 (PDF)

AMA Code of Medical Ethics

Visit the Code of Medical Ethics page to access additional Opinions, the Principles of Medical Ethics and a list of CME courses that are available.

These Opinions are offered as ethics guidance for physicians and are not intended to establish standards of clinical practice or rules of law.