

Code of Medical Ethics: Patient-physician relationships

Building relationships of trust with patients is fundamental to ethical practice in medicine.

Responsibilities of physicians & patients

The relationship between a patient and a physician is based on trust, which gives rise to physicians' ethical responsibility to place patients' welfare above the physician's own self-interest.

Code of Medical Ethics Opinions: Responsibilities of physicians & patients

- Patient-physician relationships: Opinion E-1.1.1
- Prospective patients: Opinion E-1.1.2
- Patient rights: Opinion E-1.1.3
- Patient responsibilities: Opinion E-1.1.4
- Terminating a patient-physician relationship: Opinion E-1.1.5
- Quality: Opinion E-1.1.6
- Physician exercise of conscience: Opinion E-1.1.7
- Physician responsibilities for safe patient discharge from health care facilities: Opinion E-1.1.8

Special issues in patient-physician relationships

In general, physicians should not treat themselves or members of their own families. Physicians who are employed by businesses or insurance companies, or who provide their medical expertise in sports should protect the health and safety of participants.

Code of Medical Ethics Opinions: Special issues in patient-physician relationships

- Treating self or family: Opinion E-1.2.1
- Discrimination and disruptive behavior by patients: Opinion 1.2.2
- Consultation, referral & second opinions: Opinion E-1.2.3
- Use of chaperones: Opinion E-1.2.4
- Sports medicine: Opinion E-1.2.5

- Work-related & independent medical examinations: Opinion E-1.2.6
- Use of restraints: Opinion E-1.2.7
- Gifts from patients: Opinion E-1.2.8
- Use of remote sensing & monitoring devices: Opinion E-1.2.9
- Political action by physicians: Opinion E-1.2.10
- Ethically sound innovation in medical practice: Opinion E-1.2.11
- Ethical practice in telemedicine: Opinion E-1.2.12
- Medical tourism: Opinion E-1.2.13

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Code of Medical Ethics Opinions: Chapter 1 (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.