

Virtual Mentor examines third-party intrusions into the exam room

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Contributors to the April issue of *Virtual Mentor*, the AMA's online medical ethics journal, take a look at how regulations and other third-party activities affect the physician-patient relationship and delivery of care.

Articles in this issue highlight the ethical ramifications of such mandated actions as reporting possible child neglect, such prohibited actions as discussing gun safety with parents and drug pricing practices that put certain medications out of financial reach for large numbers of people.

- In “Physician ‘gag laws’ and gun safety,” author Mobeen Rathore, MD, notes that “physicians can and should play an important role” in efforts to stem the gun violence epidemic “by advising their patients about the dangers posed by firearms in the home and counseling them about best safety practices.” The patient-physician conversation should be exempt from political interference, Dr. Rathore writes.
- In “Consent and rights in comparative effectiveness trials,” Collin O’Neil, PhD, emphasizes that patients must not be enrolled in clinical research without their specific, fully informed consent—no matter how low the risk or how little the research protocol differs from standard clinical treatment.
- In “Inappropriate obstructions to access: The FDA’s handling of Plan B,” Susan F. Wood, PhD, looks at the politicization of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s approval process for over-the-counter sales of emergency contraception. Wood writes that the process obstructed access to a safe and effective drug, and could set a dangerous precedent for future decisions.

Read this month’s issue of *Virtual Mentor*, and follow the journal on Twitter.