

## With abortion under attack, doctors push back on criminalizing care

JUN 14, 2022

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Responding to the growing threat of over-policing and surveillance of reproductive health services, the nation's physicians and medical students at the 2022 AMA Annual Meeting in Chicago adopted policy recognizing that it is a violation of human rights when government intrudes into medicine and impedes access to safe, evidence-based reproductive health services, including abortion and contraception.

In accordance with the new policy, the AMA will seek expanded legal protections for patients and physicians against government systems of control and punishment that criminalize reproductive health services.

“A growing number of current and pending laws insert government into the patient-physician relationship by dictating limits or bans on reproductive health services and while also aiming to criminally punish patients for their health decisions,” said Jack Resneck Jr., MD, who will be inaugurated as AMA president today.

“The new policy also calls for AMA to seek legal protections for patients who cross state lines to receive reproductive health services, as well as legal protections for physicians and others who support or provide reproductive health services or referrals to patients who cross state lines.”

The AMA House of Delegates adopted new policy to:

- Recognize that health care, including reproductive health services like contraception and abortion, is a human right.
- Oppose limitations on access to evidence-based reproductive health services, including fertility treatments, contraception and abortion.
- Work with interested state medical societies and medical specialty societies to vigorously advocate for broad, equitable access to reproductive health services, including fertility treatments, contraception and abortion.

- Support shared decision-making between patients and their physicians regarding reproductive health care.
- Oppose any effort to undermine the basic medical principle that clinical assessments, such as viability of the pregnancy and safety of the pregnant person, are determinations to be made only by health care professionals with their patients.
- Oppose the imposition of criminal and civil penalties or other retaliatory efforts against patients, patient advocates, physicians, other health care workers, and health systems for receiving, assisting in, referring patients to, or providing reproductive health services.
- Advocate legal protections for patients who cross state lines to receive reproductive health services, including contraception and abortion, or who receive medications for contraception and abortion from across state lines, and legal protections for those that provide, support or refer patients to these services.

Delegates also directed the AMA to review its policy compendium and recommend those “which should be amended or rescinded to reflect these core values.” The AMA will report back to the House of Delegates at the 2022 AMA Interim Meeting.

The newly adopted policy strengthens the AMA’s long-held position opposing political intrusions into the practice of medicine that infringe on the patient-physician relationship and compromise patient access to safe, evidence-based medical care.

In an amicus brief (PDF) filed to U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, the AMA—along with dozens of leading medical organizations—stated that abortion is safe medical care that is a decision to be made between the patient and the physician, subject to the physician’s clinical judgment, and the patient’s informed consent.

An AMA Leadership Viewpoints column, “Unconstitutional attack on reproductive health must not stand,” was published last fall in advance of the Supreme Court oral arguments.

Read about the other highlights from the 2022 AMA Annual Meeting.