How physicians’ duties grow when they serve in government

MAR 15, 2023

Staff News Writer

Physicians serving all levels of government are accountable in ways that transcend typical duties to patients, with myriad responsibilities as regulators, policymakers, communicators and more.

The March issue of AMA Journal of Ethics® (@JournalofEthics) features numerous perspectives on the complex ethical and legal considerations that physicians and other clinicians in government face.

This issue of the journal also considers questions in the context of a public health “infodemic” during times of crisis and the physician’s obligation to correct misinformation. The March issue of AMA Journal of Ethics includes the following articles:

1. “How Should State Licensing and Credentialing Boards Respond When Government Clinicians Spread False or Misleading Health Information?”
   The spread of health misinformation by health professionals who also hold government positions represents a long-standing problem that intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. “What Should Be Clinicians’ Roles in Regulatory Assessment of Prospective Interventions’ Risks of Exacerbating Inequity?”
   When regulatory decisions express overconfidence, one risk is that the costliness or misinformation will exacerbate health inequity.


Copyright 1995 - 2021 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.
“AMA Code of Medical Ethics’ Opinions Related to Clinicians in Government”
This summary of guidance from the AMA Code of Medical Ethics on physicians’ interactions with governments considers their nonclinical roles, political actions, and communications.

“Holding Clinicians in Public Office Accountable to Professional Standards”
Physicians and other health professionals using governing authority to make public health policy are ethically obliged to draw upon scientific and clinical information that accords professional standards.

Listen and learn
The journal’s March “Ethics Talk” podcast features a discussion with Paula Lantz, PhD, MS, MA, professor of health policy at the University of Michigan Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. She discussed how medicalization of public health undermines effective community-based governance responses.

The March issue also features seven author-interview podcasts. Listen to previous episodes of the podcast, “Ethics Talk,” or subscribe in iTunes or other services.

Also, CME modules drawn from this month’s issue are collected at the AMA Ed Hub™ AMA Journal of Ethics webpage.

Submit manuscripts and artwork
The journal’s editorial focus is on commentaries and articles that offer practical advice and insights for medical students and physicians. Submit a manuscript for publication. The journal also invites original photographs, graphics, cartoons, drawings and paintings that explore the ethical dimensions of health or health care.

Copyright 1995 - 2021 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.
A look ahead

Upcoming issues of the journal will focus on meat and health, along with a separate examination of patient-centered transgender surgical care. Sign up to receive email alerts when new issues are published.