AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: (Assigned by HOD)
(I-26)

Introduced by: Organized Medical Staff Section

Subject: Joint Commission Standards for Medical Staff Self-Governance

Referred to: Reference Committee (Assigned by HOD)

Whereas, autonomy and independence of the medical staff of a healthcare facility forms the backbone of quality care delivery; and

Whereas, when the independence of the medical staff and its leadership is compromised, the ability of medical staff to fulfill their responsibility to provide quality patient care is jeopardized; and

Whereas, selection of medical staff leadership and control over medical staff duties by a healthcare facility's board or other leadership is diametrically opposed to self-governance and threatens patient safety and physician professionalism; and

Whereas, the Joint Commission revised its hospital accreditation standards effective January 2025, significantly reducing references to medical staff self-governance and autonomy that appear to weaken support for these vital components of care delivery; and

Whereas, Joint Commission standards affect accredited hospitals but also influence national policy and practices in other care facilities throughout the healthcare industry; and

Whereas, AMA policy strongly supports medical staff self-governance to protect patients and preserve physician professionalism; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that our American Medical Association, through its appointees to the Joint Commission Board of Commissioners and other appropriate channels, advocate for restoring clear accreditation standards affirming medical staff self-governance and physician-led oversight of credentialing, privileging, peer review, professional competence, quality improvement, patient safety, and other matters involving the professional practice of medicine (Directive to Take Action).

Fiscal Note: (Assigned by HOD)

RELEVANT AMA POLICY

Hospital Medical Staff Self-Governance H-235.980

1. Our AMA: supports essentials of self-governance for hospital medical staffs which, at a minimum include the right to: (a) initiation, development and adoption of medical staff bylaws, rules and regulations; (b) approval or disapproval of amendments to the medical staff bylaws, rules and regulations; (c) selection and removal of medical staff officers; (d) establishment and enforcement of criteria and standards for medical staff membership; (e) establishment and maintenance of patient care standards; (f) accessibility to and use of independent legal counsel; (g) credentialing and delineation of clinical privileges; (h) medical staff control of its funds; and (i) successor-in-interest rights.

2. Our AMA opposes any attempts to reengineer or otherwise amend medical staff bylaws or split the bylaws into a variety of separate and unincorporated manuals or policies, thereby eliminating the control and approval rights of the medical staff as required by the principles of medical staff self-governance.

3. Our AMA will ask its Commissioners to the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations to require that JCAHO medical staff standards require the following components to be an integral part of the medical staff bylaws, and not separate "governance documents," requiring approval by the entire medical staff. The medical staff is responsible for the following:
(a) Application, reapplication, credentialing and privileging standards;
(b) Fair hearing and appeal process;
(c) Selection, election and removal of medical staff officers;
(d) Clinical criteria and standards which manage quality assurance, utilization review;
(e) Structure of the medical staff organization;
(f) Rules and regulations that affect the entire medical staff.

4. Our AMA recognizes that hospital non-compliance with JCAHO Standard MS 1.20 will be treated in the same way as hospital non-compliance with any other standard.

Citation: Sub. Res. 201, A-89; Reaffirmed: Sub. Res. 808, A-94; Reaffirmed, Amended, and Appended: Sub. Res. 817, I-01; Reaffirmed: A-05; Appended: Res. 730, A-05; Reaffirmed: CMS Rep. 1, A-15; Reaffirmed; CMS Rep. 01, A-25