

ARCHIVED: WMA DECLARATION ON PHYSICIAN INDEPENDENCE AND PROFESSIONAL FREEDOM

*Adopted by the 38th World Medical Assembly Rancho Mirage, CA, USA, October 1986
and rescinded at the WMA General Assembly, Santiago 2005*

The World Medical Association, Inc., recognizing the importance of the physician's independence and professional freedom, hereby adopts the following declaration of principles:

Physicians must recognize and support the rights of their patients, particularly as set forth in the World Medical Association Declaration of Lisbon (1981).

Physicians must have the professional freedom to care for their patients without interference. The exercise of the physician's professional judgement and discretion in making clinical and ethical decisions in the care and treatment of patients must be preserved and protected.

Physicians must have the professional independence to represent and defend the health needs of patients against all who would deny or restrict needed care for those who are sick or injured.

Within the context of their medical practice and the care of their patients, physicians should not be expected to administer governmental or social priorities in the allocation of scarce health resources. To do so would be to create a conflict of interest with the physician's obligation to his patients, and would effectively destroy the physician's professional independence, upon which the patient relies.

While physicians must be conscious of the cost of medical treatment and actively participate in cost containment efforts within medicine, it is the physician's primary obligation to represent the interests of the sick and injured against demands by society for cost containment that would endanger patients' health and perhaps patients' life.

By providing independence and professional freedom for physicians to practice medicine, a community assures the best possible health care for its citizens, which in turn contributes to a strong and secure society.