

WMA STATEMENT ON THE ROLE OF PHYSICIANS IN PREVENTING EXPLOITATION IN ADOPTION PRACTICES

Adopted by the 68th General Assembly, Chicago, October 2017

PREAMBLE

1. UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child calls in article 21 for a transparent and proper adoption process in which the best interests of the child are the principal concern.
2. The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention) establishes safeguards to ensure that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of the child. Its principles should form the basis for global intercountry adoption practices.
3. Physicians may be in touch with children who are going to be adopted, with parents and/or legal guardians of those children, and with parents who are going to adopt a child. Because physicians may confront the consequences of exploitation in adoptive practices, their role is crucial in seeking to ensure adherence to children's' rights, and in particular to article 21 of UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child. Professional awareness of the legal adoption process is necessary to protect the rights and health of the child.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. The WMA condemns all forms of exploitation in child adoption practices. Unacceptable practices may include criminal acts, including trafficking and sexual crimes.
5. WMA calls on National Medical Associations and physicians to actively participate in preventing exploitation in adoption practices.
6. Physicians should be educated about the nature and importance of their role during the adoption process. Physicians should become knowledgeable about exploitative adoption practices and should be aware of resources to help them identify and address the needs of victims.
7. Physicians having contact with families who are adopting minors, should strongly encourage them to verify that the adoption practices meet all legal and regulatory requirements in their jurisdiction.
8. The WMA supports providing information to families who are considering adoption about the existence of networks that may engage in exploitation in adoption practices, especially when adoption will take place across legal jurisdictions.
9. Physicians who have justifiable reason to suspect that a child or adult patient may be involved in exploitative adoption practices should, according to national regulations, notify appropriate authorities.
10. Physicians should be educated about the existence of tools that may help identify family members of adopted children, including DNA identification testing.
11. The WMA encourages scientific and professional activities that could support local authorities' efforts to deter exploitation in adoption practices.