

Code of Ethics

Introduction

The Physician Assistant Profession evolved in response to a need for access to quality medical care for all people regardless of sex, race, creed, religion, sexual preference, social standing or geographic location. Member of the medical profession began educational programs for the Physician Assistant to extend the capabilities of the Physician to deliver quality health care in a more uniform manner to all people. The Physician Assistant is unique in that he or she is educated as a member of a team and not as an autonomous professional. The Physician, not the Physician Assistant, assumes ultimate responsibility for decisions regarding care of the patient. In this relationship, it is possible that ethical principles of the Physician Assistant may sometimes differ from those of the supervising Physician. The following principles are intended as guidelines to be used as a resource when trying to decide the morally proper behavior in a given situation.

It is expected that the Physician Assistant will function in an ethical manner consistent with the rights of all individuals to quality health care. The Physician Assistant should demonstrate respect for the dignity and individuality of his or her patients, colleagues, and other members of the health professions. Above all the Physician Assistant must maintain the utmost respect for human life.

The Responsibilities of Physician Assistants to Patients

The Physician Assistant must minister to the sick with due respect for their state, attending every case with concern, steadiness, and humanity. A Physician Assistant must indicate to his or her patients that he or she is an assistant and identify the Physician responsible for their care. A Physician Assistant may not reveal the confidences entrusted in the course of medical attention unless required to do so by law or unless it becomes obviously necessary for the health of the patient or for the physical safety of other individuals.

A Physician Assistant should not seek to abandon a patient deemed incurable. A Physician Assistant must respect the conscience or religious beliefs of the patient or the patient's representative. A Physician Assistant must provide the patient or representative

with the necessary information needed to make an informed decision concerning the patient's health care as directed by the Physician. A Physician Assistant should be guided by the dictum "Do no harm".

Relationship of Physician Assistant and Physician

The Physician Assistant is directly responsible to a designated supervising Physician who will provide adequate and responsible supervision for the Physician Assistant both academically and clinically. Supervision must include continuing communication between the Physician and the Physician Assistant regarding the care of all patients. The Physician should be involved in the care of each patient seen by the Physician Assistant, and there should be no agreements between the Physician Assistant and the patient which would exclude the Physician.

The Physician Assistant should accept delegation of only those responsibilities and functions which he or she knows that he or she is competent to perform by virtue of education, training or experience. The Physician Assistant must function within the scope of practice of the supervising Physician. If the Physician Assistant is to perform his or her functions during periods when the supervising Physician is unavailable to the practice, another Physician must assume the supervisory capacity.

The Physician Assistant should carry out the directives of the supervising Physician. If the Physician Assistant questions these directives, he or she should communicate these concerns to the Physician. After discussion, the Physician Assistant should refuse to carry out directives, which he or she considers to be unethical.

The Physician Assistant should give adequate notice of termination of employment to the Physician and to his or her employer if other than the Physician. In determining his or her final date of employment, consideration must be given to the Physician Assistant's degree of responsibility for patient care and the adequate time required to obtain a suitable replacement.

Responsibilities of Physician Assistants to the Profession

The Physician Assistant should relate to his or her colleagues in a professional manner. To accomplish this goal the Physician Assistant should practice in accordance with all laws, uphold the integrity of the medical profession, and accept its self-imposed limitations. The Physician Assistant should report all unethical conduct of fellow members of the profession as stipulated by the bylaws. The Physician Assistant should

not voluntarily associate professionally with those who violate the principles of ethical medical practice. Further, the Physician Assistant should not falsely represent the profession.

Evaluation of performance by peers is a hallmark of professionalism. The Physician Assistant should cooperate with the ongoing development of evaluation criteria. The mechanisms developed for such evaluation are to be utilized in an effort to upgrade performance and improve patient care. These include peer review, ongoing continuing academic and clinical education, and participation in research activity to further the standards of the Physician Assistant profession and of medical practice as a whole.

Responsibilities of the Physician Assistant to the Public

The Physician Assistant should safeguard the public from colleagues who practice in an unethical manner by reporting such individuals as stipulated in the bylaws.

The honored ideals of the medical profession imply that the responsibilities of the Physician Assistant extend not only to the individual but also to society. These responsibilities require the Physician Assistant's interest and participation in activities which have the purpose of improving the health and well-being of the individual and the community.

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