<u>Statement On Integrity And The Values
And Principles Embedded In The Tradition Of Medicine</u>

Integrity is a wholeness or bound-together-ness that provides the basis for identity of persons and institutions or groups. A physician with integrity has a reasonably full, relatively stable and coherent set of highly cherished personal and professional values and principles that identifies him/her as a professional and a person. By consistently and truthfully expressing and acting according to his/her values and principles and demonstration a commitment to them he/she provides a basis for others to know, respect, trust and rely on him/her. A medical society's commitment to the values and principles of the tradition of medicine provides a basis for society's respect, trust and reliance upon it.

Certain values and principles constitute the core of the tradition of medicine: EMPATHY and COMPASSION while relieving pain and suffering, ACCURACY and RELAIBILITY in applying scientific knowledge of the day to health problems, FIDELITY, and COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS SELF EDUCATION AND IMPROVEMENT.

As society became more complex, the ancient medical principle of FIDELITY changed from its initial focus on physicians' responsibilities to individual patients to include duties as advocates for public health and for fair and just provision of medical services to all who need them. Physicians' duties to indiviudal patients have also become more complex. Along with protecting patients' appropriate privacy and confidences and placing their medical interests and needs above our own personal interests we now also have a duty to empower patients to make autonomous, informed decisions about medical care, to respect their right to competently accept or reject medical therapy, and to help them plan and carry out appropriate therapy at the end of life. Discharging this duty requires openness, honesty, disclosure of relevant information and providing appropriate expert opinions and recommendations. Physicians providing primary care have additional duties to conscientiously coordinate complex care plans and arrange for continuity of care for their patients.

From their training individual physicians acquire professional values, principles and duties and augment them with their own set of personal values and principles. Personal and professional life brings inevitable conflicts among our values and principles, requiring their periodic modification and change. A full, completely integrated and static or stable set of personal moral values and principles is not possible.

A medical society has an educational duty to encourage and maintain the competence and continual self educational improvement of its members and an advocacy duty for the protection of the integrity of the physician-patient relationship from outside interference, for public health generally and the public health aspects of social issues, and for the just and fair provision of medical services to all who need them.

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