



3. Physical examinations by physicians of intimate parts of the patient's body

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The Israeli Association of Obstetrics and Gynecology wrote a charter on gynecological examinations. The chairman of the Association, Prof. Roni Maimon, and Dr. Lena Sagi Dain presented the document to the members of the Ethics Bureau.

In the discussion that took place in the Ethics Bureau, the members found it appropriate that the document apply to all intimate examinations, such as rectal examinations, breast examinations, examination of testicles and male genitalia, and invasive examinations such as colonoscopy. Some members of the Bureau even thought that every physical examination in which a doctor examines a patient deserves the same treatment.

As part of the discussion, the members of the Bureau felt that the doctor should, as much as possible, avoid distractions and preoccupation with matters that do not pertain to the examination.

In the introduction to the charter, the gynecologists wrote:

A gynecological examination is one of the most common procedures in gynecology. Its purpose is to assess the health of the reproductive organs and to diagnose disease or risk factors that may cause disease.

There is evidence that this examination may be accompanied by anxiety, embarrassment, and a sense of loss of control for the patient, as well as physical discomfort and sometimes pain. These feelings may cause a negative and even traumatic experience for the patient, to the point of her avoiding pelvic examinations in the future, with all the ramifications thereof. Therefore, these tests require a sensitive and respectful approach on the part of the doctor.

Medical studies have proven that one of the factors with a decisive impact on the patient's experience during a gynecological examination is the quality of communication between the examiner and the patient. Effective communication includes a preliminary explanation regarding the nature of the test, an explanation of what is done during the examination, including a warning before painful procedures, and an explanation of the findings at the end of the examination.

In addition, it is very important to pay strict attention to the patient's privacy, including directing her to a private place to remove her clothes. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada (SOGC) guidelines emphasize that in the absence of a suitable area, the therapist must leave the room before the patient undresses.

Also, several associations recommend appropriate coverage during the examination, as well as informing the patient of the possibility of the presence of an attendant during the examination.



The members of the Bureau of Ethics adopt the recommendations regarding an intimate physical examination:

Before the test:

- The doctor will explain the nature of the expected examination and its stages.
- The doctor will inform the patient of his or her right to the presence of an attendant on his or her behalf during the examination (staff member or other attendant).
- The doctor will ensure the patient's privacy during the preparation for the examination.
- The doctor will make sure that there is a suitable covering before the examination.

During the test:

- The doctor will ensure the patient's privacy during the examination (for example, by placing a curtain around the examination bed or closing the door).
- The doctor will respect the patient's right to request the termination of the examination.
- Care should be taken of the patient's comfort during and after the examination, if possible (for example, the presence of accessories for wiping or cleaning if required).
- The doctor will inform the patient before performing medical procedures that may cause pain.
- The doctor will avoid personal comments that may be perceived as offensive. Increased sensitivity should be employed when the patient is exposed.

At the end of the examination:

- The doctor will explain the examination findings to the patient when the patient is dressed and seated.
- Reasonable time must be allocated for the patient's questions.