



14. Termination of the physician-patient relationship on the physician's initiative

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Background

The professional connection between the physician and the patient requires cooperation based on full mutual trust. Unfortunately, this connection does not always conform to reality. In most cases, it is the patient who expresses dissatisfaction with the physician - his character, professional conduct, personal behavior or even the very medical treatment given by him. Sometimes, the physician wishes to terminate the professional connection with the patient. In contrast to the freedom given to the patient to choose the physician who will treat him, the freedom of choice given to the physician in selection of his patients is more limited. Consequently, the need arises to balance this asymmetry by the formulation of ethical rules that permit the physician, in special and justified circumstances, to terminate on his own initiative the professional connection with the patient.

Position paper

- The physician is obligated to give medical aid to the patient as long as the patient needs this aid.
- In emergencies, this obligation is absolute.
- Circumstances exist in which the physician is entitled to terminate an existing medical connection with a patient.
- Such circumstances include, for example, a violent patient, a patient who does not obey medical orders, or a patient who makes excessive demands on the physician.
- Termination of the connection is also possible when the physician retires, when the physician moves to a different geographic region, or when the physician changes his field of occupation in medicine.
- The patient's health must not be affected during termination of the medical connection.
- The patient must be notified in advance of termination of the relationship and be permitted to make alternative arrangements.
- As far as possible, the patient must be helped to find an alternative physician.
- The medical record must be transferred, with the patient's consent, to the alternative physician.