



Responsibility of a Department Head in the Residency Admission Process

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“Increase wisdom and do not relent, for it is your life and from it comes the outcome of life”
(from the “Oath of the Hebrew Physician”).

From time immemorial to this day, physicians have viewed medical education and the teaching of medicine as part of their professional role.

Medical education is a great privilege—it brings intellectual engagement, continuity to the profession, and encourages constant learning and professionalization. However, it also carries a profound responsibility toward medical trainees and society at large. Within the medical community, the instruction of residents is considered the pinnacle of professionalism, as it represents the teaching of medicine at its highest level.

The State of Israel, through the Scientific Council of the Israeli Medical Association (IMA), has committed to maintaining high standards in residency training programs, and considerable resources are invested in these programs.

The process of admitting physicians to residency is carried out by department heads whose departments have been accredited for residency training. Naturally, some departments and specialties are more in demand than others, which can at times create pressure on department heads during the admission process.

The Ethics Bureau has received reports of improper conduct by administrators in HMOs (who are not physicians), who conditioned a resident’s acceptance into a residency program on “bringing in new clients to the HMO.”

These reports are compounded by similar concerns from hospitals, where department heads in high-demand departments face immense pressure to accept “well-connected” candidates into their residency programs. These pressures come both from within the healthcare system and from external sources.

In response, and with the encouragement of the IMA’s Scientific Council, the Ethics Bureau convened to formulate guidelines reinforcing the responsibility of department heads to make residency admission decisions based solely on professional criteria.

Position Statement:

1. Every physician has an ethical duty to participate in the education of the next generation of doctors, to the best of their ability.
2. The department head bears sole responsibility for accepting a physician into the residency program and has a duty to ensure the quality of education in their department.



3. When accepting a resident into a training program, the department head must rely exclusively on professional criteria, including the needs of the specialty and the quality of the future specialist—without external or irrelevant considerations.
4. Physicians must not exert pressure on a department head, or anyone else, to accept a specific resident based on non-professional considerations.
5. Residency acceptance must not be conditioned upon the recruitment, transfer, or enlistment of HMO enrollees.