

Declaration of Standing Committee of Doctors of the EC

The Standing Committee of Doctors of the European Community (EC) adopted the following Declaration concerning the practice of medicine within the Community at its Plenary Assembly Session held in Nuremburg in November 1967 (Charter of Nuremburg (original in French)). The text is as published in The Handbook of Policy Statements 1959-1982, Standing Committee of Doctors of the EC.

1. Every man must be free to choose his doctor. Every man must be guaranteed that whatever a doctor's obligations vis-a-vis society, whatever he confides to his doctor and to those assisting him will remain secret.

Every man must have a guarantee that the doctor he consults is morally and technically totally independent and that he has free choice of therapy .

Human life from its beginning and the human person in its integrity, both material and spiritual, must be the object of total respect.

Guarantees of these rights for patients imply a health policy resulting from firm agreement between those responsible to the state and the organised medical profession.

2. The aim common to the health policy of states and medical practice is to protect the health of all its citizens.

It is the duty of states to take all precautions to ensure all social classes - without discrimination - have access to all the medical care they require. Every man has the right to obtain from the social institutions and the medical corps the help he needs to preserve, develop or recover his health: he has an obligation to contribute materially and morally to these objectives.

Economic expansion finds one of its principal human justifications in the advancement of resources allocated to health; the medical profession intends to do all in its power to increase, at equal costs, the human and social effectiveness of medicine.

3. The unusual necessary contact between the doctor and his patient take account of the fact that these two partners belong to one community, a condition of all health and social policy. But there must be reciprocal confidence between the patient and his doctor based on the certitude that in his treatment the doctor holds in the highest esteem and has consciously consecrated all his knowledge to the service of the human person. No matter what his method of practice or remuneration the doctor must have access to the existing resources necessary for medical intervention; he must have free choice of decision bearing in mind the interests of his patient and the concrete possibilities offered by the advancements of science and medical techniques.

Doctors must be free to organise their practice together in a manner complying with the technical and social need of the profession, on condition that moral and technical independence be respected and the personal responsibility of each practitioner maintained.

4. Whatever is method of practice the medical profession is one. These methods are complementary. They derive from the same deontology although they may be submitted to different organisation conditions. Respect for moral laws and for the basic principles of medical practice is assured by independent institutions, emanating from the medical corps and invested, particularly under the highest judicial processes in the country, with disciplinary and judicial power.

Every doctor has a moral obligation to actively participate in his professional organisation. Through this organisation he participates in the elaboration of the country's health policy. Members of the profession can and must fight for respect of basic principles in the practice of medicine, on condition that the rights of the patient are safeguarded.

5. Hospital equipment must be within the compass of its specific mission in the service of the whole population. Its establishment is the result of a planned policy in which the public powers and the organised profession participate, allocating to public power and private initiative fuller distribution of health establishments. It comprises a variety of establishments, graded and co-ordinated among themselves, meeting the task or several tasks given to it: prevention, care, rehabilitation, teaching, research.... The professional independence of the hospital doctor must be guaranteed by unquestionable criteria of nomination and a statute assuring him stability of function, economic independence and social protection.

'Technical progress, the basis of our industrial civilisation and economic expansion which is its fruit have for their natural end especially thanks to a health policy, to bring about full physical and spiritual development of man, of all men'.

[Rowe AJ et al: *Philosophy & Practice of Medical Ethics*. London: British Medical Association 1988.1