

# ***Ethical Guidelines for Catholic Doctors***

A Catholic doctor shall be guided by a code of ethics based on the nature and dignity of the human person and the principles of human justice. . .

A Catholic doctor will therefore keep in mind that the medical practitioner as well as the research worker has the responsibility to protect life, prevent and treat disease, relieve suffering and promote health in all its dimensions - physical, mental, spiritual and social. This responsibility extends to the patient both as an individual and also as a member of society, whatever the culture and religious beliefs held.

The Catholic Doctor...

- . . .is obliged to be informed of advances in the medical field together with their ethical implications...
- must always maintain and foster the honour, dignity and noble ideals of the medical profession; be truthful and never bear false witness
- must, in matters of health, be at the service of the individual and the community
- must strive to maintain the highest level of professional competence mindful of the resources of the patient and the community
- should cooperate with other doctors and health professionals in the best interests of the patient and society...
- will protect human life from the moment of conception with the greatest care, regarding as gravely immoral any procedure that is directly intended to terminate life of the unborn which should be accorded the status and value of a human person...
- will respect human life in all situations and will regard the direct termination of life, even on demand, as always morally wrong. All means to preserve life should be used which are appropriate to the patient's situation.
- must, in matters of health, serve all individuals with dedication irrespective of social class or economic means, race, nationality, ideology or religious affiliation
- must not, under any circumstances, act in a manner that may adversely affect the physical or mental integrity of a patient except for strictly medical purposes; provided this is in keeping with the patient's basic rights
- will not countenance, condone or participate in the practice of torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading procedures
- should be motivated primarily by a concern for the patient's well-being, without prejudice to the right of a just compensation
- is bound to maintain confidentiality in all matters that have been revealed directly or indirectly in the course of professional work
- should respect the patient's religious beliefs, provide the needed spiritual and moral support...
- ...must exercise extreme caution in ensuring the ethical conduct of organ transplant procedures. with the avoidance of commercialisation and the exercise of extreme care in the precise determination of death of donors involved in the transplantation of cadaveric organs
- in dealing with a terminally ill patient should collaborate with others of the health team...to enable the patient to have a peaceful and dignified death without recourse to any means of killing the patient
- while taking the appropriate precautions must treat all patients irrespective of the illness, however dangerous, even if the illness is a threat to the doctor

[The F.I.A.M.C.' So-Medical Ethics Centre (St. Pius X College, Aarey Road, Goregaon East, Bombay 400063) has formulated this code in conjunction with theologians, ethicists and others. It has been accepted by the *Federation Internationale des Associations Medicales Catholique* for world-wide use. We have reproduced this abridged version with the kind permission of Dr. Eustace de Souza, the Executive Director. The complete version is available from F.I.A.M.C.]

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