

New WMA declaration on euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide

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The WMA reiterates its strong commitment to the principles of medical ethics and that utmost respect has to be maintained for human life. Therefore, the WMA is firmly opposed to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

For the purpose of this declaration, euthanasia is defined as a physician deliberately administering a lethal substance or carrying out an intervention to cause the death of a patient with decision-making capacity at the patient's own voluntary request. Physician-assisted suicide refers to cases in which, at the voluntary request of a patient with decision-making capacity, a physician deliberately enables a patient to end his or her own life by prescribing or providing medical substances with the intent to bring about death.

No physician should be forced to participate in euthanasia or assisted suicide, nor should any physician be obliged to make referral decisions to this end.

Separately, the physician who respects the basic right of the patient to decline medical treatment does not act unethically in forgoing or withholding unwanted care, even if respecting such a wish results in the death of the patient.