

The Gdansk Declaration of the XIth Congress of FEAMC

14 September 2008

The Gdansk Declaration of the XIth Congress of the European Federation of Catholic Medical Associations

Conscious of the trust placed in us as physicians and defenders of life, of the progress in medical knowledge and technologies, and of the ever better understanding gained into the physical, psychological, educational, spiritual, religious and existential needs of our patients and our society,

- while aware of the dangers of ethical relativism and of moral permissiveness around us and in our midst;
- in view of ongoing debates over the permissibility of abortion, euthanasia, the use of human embryos for research and so-called therapeutic purposes, human cloning, the creation of human-animal hybrid embryos, contraceptive and sterilization procedures and artificial reproductive technologies;
- faced with the silent assumption that those carrying out the above procedures will be doctors;

authorized by the Christian traditions and ethos of European and world medicine, in dialogue with all doctors who believe in the dignity and freedom of the human being,

1. We affirm that ethical norms and principles precede enacted laws and should influence their contents in accordance with natural law and the teaching of the Church.
2. We affirm that in making decision on the medical treatment of the patients who place in us so great a trust, we should be guided above all by our conscience. Moral evaluation of medical practice must not be based upon superficial opinions or passing trends but on the sensitivity of a conscience formed according to objective ethical norms common to all people and consistently defended by the Church.
3. In order to guarantee the freedom of practice of the profession, we have to uphold the right to conscientious objection
4. We believe that one of the basic demands made of doctors should be ongoing personal development in both practical know-how and in moral stature.
5. The special vocation of the doctor to serve the life and health of others requires a clear formulation of the principles of an objective and universal ethics.
6. We affirm that the source and basis for all ethical norms is the inalienable dignity of the human person throughout the course of his or her life – from conception to natural death.
7. Just as human dignity requires the protection of human life, it also demands special concern for its initial phases and respect for human procreation and sexuality.
8. We promote activities which permits the protection of patients from procedures that violate their human dignity:
 - Decisively rejecting euthanasia, we support the development of palliative medicine;
 - Refusing to agree to abortion, we aim to ensure proper all-round care for the family and the sick child both before and after birth;
 - We choose the treatment of the underlying causes of infertility and not successive techniques of artificial reproduction;
 - We support the development of research into the use of stem cells taken from adults and umbilical cord blood, rejecting the use of human embryos for this purpose.
9. We affirm and emphasize that medical practice with respect to matters as genetic manipulation and the end of life has to be realized without intentional loss of human life.
10. We want to protect our children and young people from neglect, abuse and other threats to their health and dignity. We have to ensure proper education for all aspects of life.
11. Aware of the number of people in our midst who are subject to abject poverty or under threats caused by misfortune, we uphold the tradition of the freedom of physicians to offer humanitarian and charitable aid, especially in neglected areas of the world, on the basis of principles and criteria lying beyond economics.

12. Taking into account the responsibility doctors carry for the health and life of patients, we are convinced that medicine must be practiced in dignified conditions, which are due both to patients and to doctors, and we consistently affirm that in our activities the good of patients should have priority over other obligations.

Signed by:

Prof. Josef Marek (in substitution signed by Dr Francois Blin), *President of the XI Congress of the European Federation of Catholic Medical Associations*

Dr Anna Gręziak, *President of the Catholic Association of Polish Doctors*

Dr Hans Stevens, *Secretary of the European Federation of Catholic Medical Associations*