

29 May 2017

Dr Otmar Kloiber, Secretary General
and
Dr Ramin Parsa-Parsi, Chair, WMA Declaration of Geneva Workgroup

World Medical Association
13 chemin du Levant
Bâtiment A
01210 Ferney-Voltaire,
France

By email: DoG@wma.net

Draft revised version of the Declaration of Geneva

Dear Dr Kloiber and Dr Parsa-Parsi

Thank you for inviting the New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) to provide feedback on the above consultation. The NZMA is a member of the WMA, and is New Zealand's largest medical organisation, with over 5,500 members from all areas of medicine. The NZMA aims to provide leadership of the medical profession, and to promote professional unity and values, and the health of all New Zealanders. Our submission has been informed by feedback from our Board, Advisory Councils and Ethics Committee.

We congratulate the World Medical Association for the work it has done to develop this revised draft. We note that the draft being presented is at an advanced stage, reflecting the working group's careful analysis of earlier feedback as well as several discussions with WMA ethics advisors. We also note that during the revision process, the working group agreed that the unique character of the Declaration of Geneva should be maintained and that the revised version should retain the same format and general length.

The NZMA is fully supportive of all the changes that are being proposed, which we have included as an appendix for the benefit of our members. We particularly welcome the addition of a clause relating to physician well-being. The NZMA appreciates the opportunity to have been instrumental in securing this addition.

Furthermore, we would be grateful if the WMA would consider including in the revised Declaration, reference to doctors' wider responsibilities to populations and communities beyond

individual patients; and to their duty to advocate on key issues affecting the profession, patients and public health. A succinct new clause could be “I WILL ADVOCATE for my patients, the social and environmental determinants of their health, and for health equity”.

During our internal consultation process, for instance, we have received suggestions for the revised Declaration to include specific clauses outlining doctors’ broader responsibilities to advocate for patient rights; more broadly, to advocate for population health, health equity, and the social and environmental determinants of health; and to stand against bullying and sexual harassment. We acknowledge these wider responsibilities to the health of all people are already expressed in other WMA policies and guidelines, and agree the Declaration should remain short and focused. However, doctors’ wider responsibilities to the health of all people are vital and integral to the profession, and we consider this issue important enough to add to the Declaration, perhaps by using the new clause suggested above (and to show how this might look, we have included this in the appendix).

As an aside, the NZMA has submitted a draft policy on bullying and harassment to the WMA. We understand that this is in the process of being finalised by the secretariat before being forwarded to the WMA Medical Ethics Committee. We believe that it is very important for the WMA to have a specific policy on bullying and harassment and we look forward to the publication of this policy.

We hope that our feedback on this important consultation is helpful and look forward to seeing the finalised version of the revised Declaration of Geneva.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kate Baddock
NZMA Chair

Appendix. Proposed changes

The specific changes to the revised version of the Declaration of Geneva, proposed by the WMA, are:

- The addition of a subtitle, “**The Physicians’ Oath**”, to improve discoverability (particularly online) of the Declaration of Geneva.
- The addition of a reference to reciprocal respect between teachers and students of medicine and the inclusion of a reference to respect for colleagues in order to replace the line “MY COLLEAGUES will be my sisters and brothers”, which has been removed by the workgroup in the current draft as the tone was considered outdated.
- The relocation of the clause “I WILL MAINTAIN by all means in my power, the honour and noble traditions of the medical profession” from line 7 to line 4 to improve the flow of the document.
- The amendment of the following clause to more sufficiently reflect the principle of professional autonomy: “I WILL PRACTISE my profession with conscience and dignity **and in accordance with good medical practice**”.

- The addition of the following amendment to improve consistency with other relevant literature: “THE HEALTH **AND WELL-BEING** OF MY PATIENT will be my first consideration”.
- The addition of a clause highlighting the importance of respecting patient autonomy.
- The addition of a clause reflecting the obligation of the physician to share medical knowledge for the benefit of the patient and the advancement of healthcare.
- The addition of a clause expressing the need for physicians to foster their own health and ability to provide care of the highest standard (i.e. physician well-being).

Therefore, the revised version would/will read (with the WMA’s changes marked **in yellow highlight**) as follows; this also includes an additional clause the NZMA is suggesting (in *italics*):

WMA DECLARATION OF GENEVA

The Physicians’ Oath

At the time of being admitted as a member of the medical profession:

I SOLEMNLY PLEDGE to consecrate my life to the service of humanity

I WILL GIVE to my teachers, **colleagues and students** the respect and gratitude that is their due

I WILL MAINTAIN by all the means in my power, the honour and the noble traditions of the medical profession

I WILL PRACTISE my profession with conscience and dignity **and in accordance with good medical practice**

THE HEALTH **AND WELL-BEING** of my patient will be my first consideration

I WILL RESPECT the autonomy and dignity of my patient

I WILL RESPECT the secrets that are confided in me, even after the patient has died

~~**MY COLLEAGUES will be my sisters and brothers**~~

I WILL SHARE my medical knowledge for the benefit of the patient and the advancement of healthcare

I WILL FOSTER my own health and ability to provide care of the highest standard

I WILL ADVOCATE for my patients, the social and environmental determinants of their health, and for health equity

I WILL NOT PERMIT considerations of age, disease or disability, creed, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, social standing or any other factor to intervene between my duty and my patient

I WILL MAINTAIN the utmost respect for human life

I WILL NOT USE my medical knowledge to violate human rights and civil liberties, even under threat

I MAKE THESE PROMISES solemnly, freely and upon my honour