

AMA Code of Medical Ethics

11.1.1 Defining Basic Health Care

Health care is a fundamental human good because it affects our opportunity to pursue life goals, reduces our pain and suffering, helps prevent premature loss of life, and provides information needed to plan for our lives. Society has an obligation to make access to an adequate level of care available to all its members, regardless of ability to pay.

Physicians regularly confront the effects of lack of access to adequate care and have a corresponding responsibility to contribute their expertise to societal decisions about what health care services should be included in a minimum package of care for all.

Individually and collectively as a profession, physicians should advocate for fair, informed decision making about basic health care that:

- (a) Is transparent.
- (b) Strives to include input from all stakeholders, including the public, throughout the process.
- (c) Protects the most vulnerable patients and populations, with special attention to historically disadvantaged groups.
- (d) Considers best available scientific data about the efficacy and safety of health care services.
- (e) Seeks to improve health outcomes to the greatest extent possible, in keeping with principles of wise stewardship.
- (f) Monitors for variations in care that cannot be explained on medical grounds to ensure that the defined threshold of basic care does not have discriminatory impact.
- (g) Provides for ongoing review and adjustment in consideration of innovation in medical science and practice to ensure continued, broad public support for the defined threshold of basic care.

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