

AMA Code of Medical Ethics

8.9 Expedited Partner Therapy

Expedited partner therapy seeks to increase the rate of treatment for partners of patients with sexually transmitted infections through patient-delivered therapy without the partner receiving a medical evaluation or professional prevention counseling.

Although expedited partner therapy has been demonstrated to be effective at reducing the burden of certain diseases, such as gonorrhea and chlamydia, it also has ethical implications. Expedited partner therapy potentially abrogates the standard informed consent process, compromises continuity of care for patients' partners, encroaches upon the privacy of patients and their partners, increases the possibility of harm by a medical or allergic reaction, leaves other diseases or complications undiagnosed, and may violate state practice laws.

Before initiating expedited partner therapy, physicians should:

- (a) Determine the legal status of expedited partner therapy in the jurisdiction in which they practice.
- (b) Seek guidance from public health officials.
- (c) Engage in open discussions with patients to ascertain partners' ability to access medical services.
- (d) Initiate expedited partner therapy only when the physician reasonably believes that a patient's partner(s) will be unwilling or unable to seek treatment within the context of a traditional patient-physician relationship.

When initiating expedited partner therapy, physicians should:

- (e) Instruct patients regarding expedited partner therapy and the medications involved.
- (f) Answer any questions the patient has.
- (g) Provide to patients educational materials to share with their partners that:
 - (i) encourage the partner to consult a physician as a preferred alternative to expedited partner therapy;
 - (ii) disclose the risk of potential adverse drug reactions;
 - (iii) disclose the possibility of dangerous interactions between the medication delivered by the patient and other medications the partner may be taking;
 - (iv) disclose that the partner may be affected by other sexually transmitted diseases that may be left untreated by the medication delivered by the patient.
- (h) Make reasonable efforts to refer the patient's partner(s) to appropriate health care professionals.