

Virtual Mentor

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THE CODE SAYS

AMA Code of Medical Ethics' Opinion on Respect for All Patients

Opinion 9.123 - Disrespect and Derogatory Conduct in the Patient-Physician Relationship

The relationship between patients and physicians is based on trust and should serve to promote patients' well-being while respecting their dignity and rights. Trust can be established and maintained only when there is mutual respect.

Derogatory language or actions on the part of physicians can cause psychological harm to those they target. Also, such language or actions can cause reluctance in members of targeted groups to seek or to trust medical care and thus create an environment that strains relationships among patients, physicians, and the health care team. Therefore, any such conduct is profoundly antithetical to the Principles of Medical Ethics.

Patients who use derogatory language or otherwise act in a prejudicial manner toward physicians, other health care professionals, or others in the health care setting, seriously undermine the integrity of the patient-physician relationship. Such behavior, if unmodified, may constitute sufficient justification for the physician to arrange for the transfer of care.

Issued December 2003, based on the report [Disrespect and Derogatory Conduct in the Patient-Physician Relationship](#).

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