

## *Virtual Mentor*

American Medical Association Journal of Ethics  
November 2000, Volume 2, Number 11: 107.

### IN THE LITERATURE

#### **Physicians' Attitudes about Involvement in Lethal Injection**

Faith Lagay, PhD

**Farber N, Davis EB, Weiner J, Jordan J, Boyer G, Ubel PA. Physicians' attitudes about involvement in lethal injection for capital punishment. *Arch Intern Med.* 2000;160(19):1912-2916.**

Contrary to established medical society policies prohibiting physician involvement in the administration of lethal injections (see, for example, AMA Policy H-140.950 On Physician Participation in Capital Punishment), physicians do participate in such activities. In addition, a majority of physicians surveyed in this study who do not participate in such activities "condoned the actions of their colleagues in participating in cases of lethal injection for the purpose of capital punishment."

#### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Should physicians engage in practices prohibited by professional guidelines?
2. If so, what does it mean to be part of a profession?
3. The practice of lethal injection is directly contrary to the medical profession's aim of serving the patient's best interest, although it serves the aim of the state and, perhaps, the best interest of the larger community. Does the medical profession have a social responsibility to be involved in lethal executions?
4. How should the medical profession define and balance its responsibilities to individuals and to society?

Faith Lagay, PhD is managing editor in of *Virtual Mentor*.

*The viewpoints expressed on this site are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the AMA.*

Copyright 2000 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.