

The Hippocratic Oath Updated

In the name of suffering humanity; with humility, compassion and dedication to the welfare of the sick according to the best of my ability and judgement; I will keep this oath.

I will be honest with my patients in all medical matters. When this honesty reveals bad news I will deliver it with sympathy, understanding and tact.

I will attempt to provide whatever information my patients need so that I can care for them more effectively.

I will provide my patients with acceptable alternatives in diagnosis, medical and surgical treatment, explaining the risks and benefits of each alternative as best as I know them.

I will encourage my patients to seek medical opinions other than my own before accepting that offered by me.

I will allow my patients to make the ultimate decision about their own care. When they are incapable of making decisions, I will accept the decision of their family members or loved ones, encouraging these surrogates to decide as they believe the patient would have decided.

I will provide care to all patients regardless of sex, race, creed, sexual preference, lifestyle or economic status. In particular, I will volunteer some of my time to providing free care to the poor, the homeless, the disadvantaged, the dispossessed and the helpless.

I will not sit in moral judgement on any patient but will treat the illness to the best of my ability regardless of the circumstances. I will be empathetic to patients suffering from illnesses caused by alcohol, drugs or other forms of self-abuse.

I will turn away no patient, even those with dreaded, contagious diseases like AIDS.

Knowing my own inadequacies and those of medicine generally, I will strive to cure when possible, relieve and comfort always.

I shall perform medical tests only if there is a reasonable chance that the results will improve the outcome for my patients. I will not perform any tests or procedures or surgery solely to make money.

I will freely refer my patients to other physicians if I am convinced that their treatment is better than mine.

I will freely furnish copies of medical records to the patient or, when authorised by the patient, to the family, upon request. I will do unto patients and their families only what I would want done unto me or my family. I will not experiment upon patients unless they give truly informed consent. I will strive to instruct patients fully so that truly informed consent is possible.

I will remain a student all my professional life, attempting to learn not only from formal medical sources but from my patients as well. I will apply the lessons they provide to the care of other patients.

I will treat my professional colleagues with respect and honour; but I will not hesitate to testify openly about physicians and medical institutions that are guilty of malpractice, malfeasance, cupidity or fraud.

I will defend with equal fervor colleagues who are unjustly accused of malpractice, malfeasance, cupidity or fraud.

(We have made minor changes in the oath suggested by Dr. Eugene D. Robin, Emeritus Professor of Medicine and Physiology, Stanford, California. Dr. Robin's version was published in *BMJ*, 309, 96, 9 July 1994. He invites discussion.

Editor)