

Medicine Ahead Economics

The medical profession is facing increasing pressure to adapt its patient care to optimize the economic benefit for hospitals and practices.

This growing tendency makes it vital to resist these economic forces with principles based firmly on medical ethics and values in everyday practice.

This Codex of physicians is intended to help physicians to reflect critically on the effects of such economic incentives on their personal field of work and to help guide medical decisions for the patients entrusted to their care. As responsible physicians we use available health care resources as efficiently as possible. However, patients' welfare will always be the centre of our doing.

In formulating this Codex, the German Society of Internal Medicine (DGIM) is fulfilling its professional, ethical, and social duties by outlining the principles for providing patient-oriented healthcare. The objective is to oblige ethical values of the medical profession, which justify the trust of the patients. Physicians can therefore also be reassured that they are not isolated and alone in their attitude, but rather that it is based on the principles set out in the Codex.

Physicians' duty is to provide healthcare to the patient, regardless of their age, denomination, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or social status.

We are aware that our medical decisions may be influenced by non-medical factors, particularly monetary considerations and commercial incentives. As responsible physicians, however, we strive to recognise such factors and direct our medical decisions first and foremost to the well-being of the patients entrusted to us.

As physicians, we:

- must meet the natural professional and ethical expectations of the patient, their family, and society.

- will help all patients to receive care, using all of our knowledge and medical expertise.
- recognise that our medical decisions, made on the basis of quality-assured medicine, have considerable effects on the healing and health of patients as well as economic impacts. Therefore, we hereby declare that we will always plan and implement appropriate and effective care for patients, keeping in mind that medical arguments should always have unconditional priority over economic considerations.
- will not make any medical decisions, implement any medical measures, nor omit any services that due to economic considerations could either compromise the well-being of the patient or cause them harm.
- will receive all those who come to us with sympathy and understanding, support them in confronting their health concerns, strive to win their trust, and assure them that we will never subject them to any procedure that is not medically sound due to economic considerations.
- reject all performance, financial, resource, and behavioural requirements that in any way restrict our medical activities, impair our medical-ethical self-image, or may endanger the well-being of the patient.
- will, where necessary, explain our treatment decisions to the responsible commercial management committees, respecting medical, patient-oriented, and ethical reasoning.
- encourage young physicians to look critically at the economic guidelines laid down by the commercial management and to be conscious of all attempts to restrict the well-being of patients for non-medical reasons.

We will practice our medical art of healing without being induced to betray our professional ethics and common humanity by economic pressures, financial incentive systems, or economic threats.