American Hospital Association
Guidelines on Ethical Conduct and Relationships for Health Care Institutions*

Health care institutions are service organizations that provide patient care and a varying range of education, research, public health, and social services for their communities. These institutions carry public responsibilities for their own conduct, the well-being of their patients, and the health of their communities. This role places special obligations upon health care institutions and their representatives to adhere to ethical principles of conduct. The following guidelines are intended to assist members of the American Hospital Association in defining their institutional policies, ethical relationships, and practices.

1. Good health is of utmost importance to the nation, to the community, and to every individual. Health care institutions should be interested in the overall health status of people in addition to providing direct patient care services.

2. The public has accorded high priority to the availability of services to the sick and injured, but there are limits to the individual and collective resources available for this purpose. Recognizing this, health care institutions should:
   a. Support the most effective use of economic and other resources to ensure access to comprehensive services of high quality.
   b. Deliver services efficiently.

*Approved by the Board of Trustees of the American Hospital Association, April 1, 1974.

3. The community's health objectives are advanced when all health care providers and social, welfare, educational, and other agencies work together in planning and offering improved services. Health care institutions should promote and support cooperation among each other, all providers, and community agencies in efforts to increase the results they could achieve separately.

4. Patient care services are inherently personal in nature. Health care institutions should maintain organizational relationships, policies, and systems that produce an environment that is conducive to humane and individualized care for those being served.

5. Individual religious and social beliefs and customs are important to each person. Health care institutions should, wherever possible and consistent with ethical commitments of the institution, ensure respect and consideration for the dignity and individuality of patients, employees, physicians, and others.

6. Health care institutions should establish and maintain internal policies, practices, standards of performance, and systematic methods of evaluation that emphasize high quality, safety, and effectiveness of care.

7. Health care institutions, being dependent upon community confidence and support, should accept an ethical sense of public accountability; reflect fairness, honesty, and impartiality in all activities and relationships; manage their resources prudently; and ensure that reports to the public are factual and clear in interpreting institutional goals, status, and accomplishments.

8. Health care institutions should relate to their communities and to each other constructively and in ways that merit and preserve public confidence in them, both individually and collectively.