

New Mexico Resolution 20:

RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association Council on Judicial and Ethical Affairs be strongly encouraged to remove from the Code of Medical Ethics Opinion E-5.7 “Physician-Assisted Suicide” judgmental, stigmatizing language that is not evidence based, is at odds with the conclusions of CEJA Report 2 in recognizing shared values of care, compassion, respect and dignity, and creates an ethical conflict with the Code of Medical Ethics Opinion E-1.1.7 “Physician Exercise of Conscience”; specifically by:

1. Deleting all references to “suicide”, including “Physician-assisted suicide” and replacing such language by referring to “Physician-assisted dying (PAD)”;
2. Deleting language that suggests that PAD is a form of doing harm and is therefore antithetical to the admonition to “do no harm”, such as “assisted suicide would ultimately cause more harm than good”;
3. Deleting language that characterizes PAD as a choice by a patient “that death is preferable to life” and replacing that language with a description of PAD as giving a terminally ill patient the option of being in control of the manner of his or her death, without assigning a value judgment to that option;
4. Deleting language that characterizes PAD as “fundamentally incompatible with the physician’s role as healer”, and instead recognizing that a physician who participates in PAD is doing so as an act of compassion and caring for patients who have no prospect of healing their fatal illness;
5. Delete language that suggests that PAD is not compatible with “responding to the needs of patients at the end of life” or that PAD is “abandonment” (Directive to Take Action); and be it further

RESOLVED, In recognition of the fact that highly ethical physicians may have differing opinions on Physician Assisted Dying (PAD), but also in recognition of our respect for patient autonomy and the growing numbers of patients who wish to exercise choice over the manner of imminent death, that our American Medical Association’s Council on Judicial and Ethical Affairs (CEJA) be strongly encouraged to modify Code of Medical Ethics Opinion E-5.7 “Physicians-Assisted Suicide” to follow the lead of a number of state and national medical societies by adopting the ethical position of “Engaged Neutrality”, defined as neither in favor of nor or in opposition to PAD, while providing reassurance that our AMA will be a resource to lawmakers, physicians and the public to ensure compliance with standards of lawful medical practice, and to protect physicians’ freedom to participate or not participate in PAD in accordance with their personal beliefs and our AMA’s Opinion E-1.1.7 “Physician Exercise of Conscience”. (Directive to Take Action)