

## ***AMA Code of Medical Ethics***

### ***2.1.5 Reporting Clinical Test Results***

Patients should be able to be confident that they will receive the results of clinical tests in a timely fashion. Physicians have a corresponding obligation to be considerate of patient concerns and anxieties and ensure that patients receive test results within a reasonable time frame.

When and how clinical test results are conveyed to patients can vary considerably in different practice environments and for different clinical tests. In some instances results are conveyed by the patient's treating physician, in others by other practice staff, or directly by the laboratory or other entity.

To ensure that test results are communicated appropriately to patients, physicians should adopt, or advocate for, policies and procedures to ensure that:

- (a) The patient (or surrogate decision maker if the patient lacks decision-making capacity) is informed about when he or she can reasonably expect to learn the results of clinical tests and how those results will be conveyed.
- (b) The patient/surrogate is instructed what to do if he or she does not receive results in the expected time frame.
- (c) Test results are conveyed sensitively, in a way that is understandable to the patient/surrogate, and the patient/surrogate receives information needed to make well-considered decisions about medical treatment and give informed consent to future treatment.
- (d) Patient confidentiality is protected regardless of how clinical test results are conveyed.
- (e) The ordering physician is notified before the disclosure takes place and has access to the results as they will be conveyed to the patient/surrogate, if results are to be conveyed directly to the patient/surrogate by a third party.

***AMA Principles of Medical Ethics: II,IV,V***