

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

### ***2.3.3 Informing Families of a Patient's Death***

Informing a patient's family that the patient has died is a duty that is fundamental to the patient-physician relationship. When communicating this event, physicians should give foremost attention to the family's emotional needs and the integrity of the patient-physician relationship.

The following guidelines apply to communicating news of a patient's death:

- (a) Any physician informing a patient's family about the patient's death has a responsibility to:
  - (i) communicate this information compassionately;
  - (ii) disclose the death in a timely manner.
- (b) Ordinarily, the treating physician should take responsibility for informing the family. However, it may be appropriate to delegate the task of informing the family to another physician if the other physician has a previous close personal relationship with the patient or family and the appropriate skill.
- (c) Medical students should not be asked to inform family members of a patient's death. Medical students should be trained in communication skills relating to death and dying, and should be encouraged to accompany attending physicians when news of a patient's death is conveyed to family members.

***AMA Principles of Medical Ethics: I,IV***