

AMA Code of Medical Ethics

3.1.1 Privacy in Health Care

Protecting information gathered in association with the care of the patient is a core value in health care. However, respecting patient privacy in other forms is also fundamental, as an expression of respect for patient autonomy and a prerequisite for trust.

Patient privacy encompasses a number of aspects, including personal space (physical privacy), personal data (informational privacy), personal choices including cultural and religious affiliations (decisional privacy), and personal relationships with family members and other intimates (associational privacy).

Physicians must seek to protect patient privacy in all settings to the greatest extent possible and should:

- (a) Minimize intrusion on privacy when the patient's privacy must be balanced against other factors.
- (b) Inform the patient when there has been a significant infringement on privacy of which the patient would otherwise not be aware.
- (c) Be mindful that individual patients may have special concerns about privacy in any or all of these areas.
- (d) Be transparent with any inquiry about existing privacy safeguards for patient data but acknowledge that anonymity cannot be guaranteed and that breaches can occur notwithstanding best data safety practices.

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