

FOREWORD

The **Asociación Médica Argentina** [the Argentine Medical Association] was founded on September 5th, 1891 as a non-profit non-governmental organization to develop Postgraduate Health Education. The Association's early bylaws established that medical doctors and other health professionals could become members of the institution. The AMA principles, which have been maintained until today, point to its political independence, religious and racial freedom, and sexual equality. Since its inception, the Argentine Medical Association has been a bastion of democracy despite the many national and world vicissitudes of the Twentieth Century.

At the beginning of the 21st Century, after two years of hard intellectual work, the Executive Committees of the **Asociación Médica Argentina** and its AMA Section, the **Sociedad de Ética en Medicina** [the Society for Ethics in Medicine], have the pleasure to present this **Code of Ethics for the Health Team** as a guideline and aid for all members who perform their activities and for all the Health Team Members and/or Health Organizations who wish to abide by it. This is an open Code in that it is perfectible and its contents may be completed. It is also dynamic in that it may be modified over time in line with Man's and Society's evolution. The important thing is to reap the benefits of pain produced by an error in the field of Health.

The 20th Century was amazing in terms of Health Sciences evolution based on their own contributions and the support provided by developments from other professional fields. Underlying the marvelous astounding advances in knowledge that confer an increasingly scientific foundation to our activity and help to solve the problem of man's health more accurately, there is an irrevocable effort to safeguard the true values of Being. The objective of Health is met when the individual's and the community's physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being are fully balanced. It is the Health Team's responsibility to achieve this state. And the only way to take on responsibility is by becoming stronger in every sphere of our daily routine. Hence the importance of highlighting the social and humanistic role that the Health Team will continue to assume in view of the great problems Humanity has to face: wars, poverty, hunger, overcrowding, ignorance, and so on. The spiritual essence of this role is made up of respect for life, the

human being's rights and privileges, and his or her context (the environment). Health, together with Education, Work, Justice, Safety and Faith, is one of the fundamental mainstays of civilization. In the interrelation with each of these forces is where the postulates of our career are fulfilled.

For the **Asociación Médica Argentina** and the **Sociedad de Ética en Medicina** the ethical road in Health Care is a permanent, responsible search for Truth in Freedom. Amid the overflowing technological world, mere technical and scientific knowledge is not enough for the "medical act". Something volitive is required from the Health Team Member in every decision making process that reflects the "maturity" and "experience" she or he has acquired in the course of her or his career and existential evolution as a person. This "something" allows incorporating those advances within the boundaries of Social Values. This Code of Ethics is another contribution from AMA members to the entire Community in the year our institution celebrates its 110th anniversary (1891-2001).

Some articles have been borrowed from other local and foreign codes that are still valid despite the passage of time. The debate they will probably spark off will at the same time enrich this Code of Ethics.

We wish to thank all those who have helped prepare our Code, those who for chronological reasons could not participate, and those who have inspired it with their everyday exemplary actions. We would also like to thank the Executive Committees of the **Asociación Médica Argentina** and the **Sociedad de Ética en Medicina** for promoting the initiative for our institution to have its First Code of Ethics, and the first code comprising the entire Health Team.

My deep respect for Drs. Horacio Dolcini and Jorge Yansenson who, with their ideas, devotion and clear guidance allowed this project to materialize after manifold meetings to gather consensus from the different opinions each expert offered on her or his particular field of knowledge. I thank my daughter Andrea for her contributions in the conceptual philosophical field. In particular, I wish to acknowledge Ana María Kaplan's cooperation; her secretarial work expressed the moral commitment she holds with our institution.

Last but not least, we would like to underline our family's understanding and support, as well as those of AMA members who always share our enterprises. With their stimulus we can continue searching for what is best for the human race.

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