

Conflict of Interest

Contact(s):

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(Reaffirmed, November 2009)

Physician ownership interest in a commercial venture with the potential for abuse is not in itself unethical. Physicians are free to enter lawful contractual relationships, including the acquisition of ownership interests in health facilities or equipment or pharmaceuticals. However, the potential conflict of interest must be addressed by the following:

1. the physician has an affirmative ethical obligation to disclose to the patient or referring colleagues his or her ownership interest in the facility or therapy prior to utilization
2. the physician may not exploit the patient in any way, as by inappropriate or unnecessary utilization
3. the physician's activities must be in strict conformance with the law
4. the patients should have free choice either to use the physician's proprietary facility or therapy or to seek the needed medical services elsewhere, and
5. when a physician's commercial interest conflicts so greatly with the patient's interest as to be incompatible, the physician should make alternative arrangements for the care of the patient.

(Adopted from the American Medical Association's position on conflicts of interest)