



**International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics**



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# **PROFESSIONALISM IN OBSTETRIC AND GYNECOLOGIC PRACTICE**



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# **COMMITTEE ON ETHICAL ASPECTS OF HUMAN REPRODUCTION AND WOMEN'S HEALTH**



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- Frank A. Chervenak, USA, Chair
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# Consultants

- Ralph Hale, USA
- Lord Naren Patel, United Kingdom



# Introduction

- FIGO is committed to a professional ethics for obstetrics and gynecology that is transcultural, transreligious, and transnational.
- Ethics is the disciplined study of morality
  - Ethical obligations identified on the basis of ethical principles and virtues



# Ethical Principles

- Deliberative clinical judgment:
  - Evidence-based, rigorous, transparent, and accountable.
- The ethical principle of beneficence obligates the physician to identify and provide clinical management in deliberative clinical judgment that is expected to result in clinical benefit.



# Ethical Principles

- The ethical principle of respect for autonomy obligates the physician to empower the patient to make informed decisions about clinical management of her condition by providing her with information about the beneficence-based alternatives for the management of her condition.





# Professional Virtues

- Self-effacement calls for the physician to put aside and not be influenced by sources of bias that might distort the commitment to scientific and clinical competence.
- Self-sacrifice requires the physician to accept reasonable limits on the physician's self-interest in order to fulfill the commitment to putting the patient's interests first.



# Professional Virtues

- Compassion requires the physician to recognize, prevent, and appropriately manage pain, distress, and suffering of patients.
- Integrity is a key professional virtue that requires the physician to provide clinical care to standards of intellectual and moral excellence.



# Professional Responsibility Model of Obstetric and Gynecologic Ethics

- The professional responsibility model of ethics in obstetrics and gynecology identifies the ethical obligations of obstetrician-gynecologists to:
  - Patients
  - Other physicians and healthcare professionals
  - Healthcare organizations that provide patient care
  - Insurance companies and governments that pay for patient care
  - Society



# Professional Responsibility Model of Obstetric and Gynecologic Ethics

- Introduced into the history of medical ethics by two physician-ethicists
  - Dr. John Gregory (1724-1773) of Scotland
  - Dr. Thomas Percival (1740-1804) of England



# Professional Responsibility Model of Obstetric and Gynecologic Ethics

- Three commitments:
  - To clinical competence
  - To the primacy of the health-related interests of the patient and the secondary status of the physician's self-interest and group self-interest
  - To medicine as a public trust that exists for the common good



# Ethical Obligations to Patients

- Improve the safety and quality of patient care
- Support the patient in the informed decision-making process



# Ethical Obligations to Physicians and Other Healthcare Professionals

- Create healthcare teams with a focus on safety and quality of patient care



# Ethical Obligations to Healthcare Organizations

- Professionally responsible resource management, focused on patient safety and quality





# Ethical Obligations to Insurance Companies and Governments that Pay for Patient Care

- Provide and document clinically competent patient care



# Ethical Obligations to Society

- Advocate for women and children



# Conclusion

- Professionalism is an essential component of obstetric and gynecologic practice.
- FIGO is committed to a professional ethics for obstetrics and gynecology that is transcultural, transreligious, and transnational.



# Suggested Readings

- Blackmer J. Professionalism and the Medical Association. Ferney-Voltaire, France: World Medical Association, 2007
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