

# German Medical Association

Federation of the German Chambers of Physicians



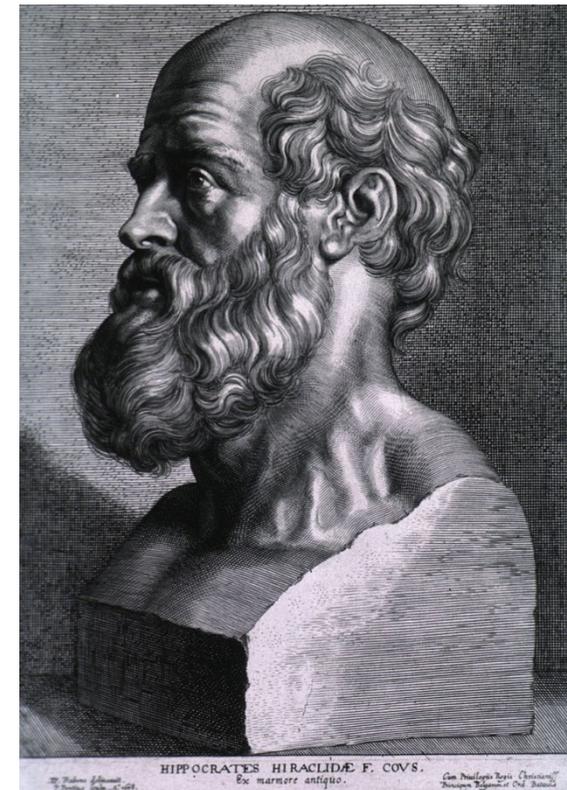
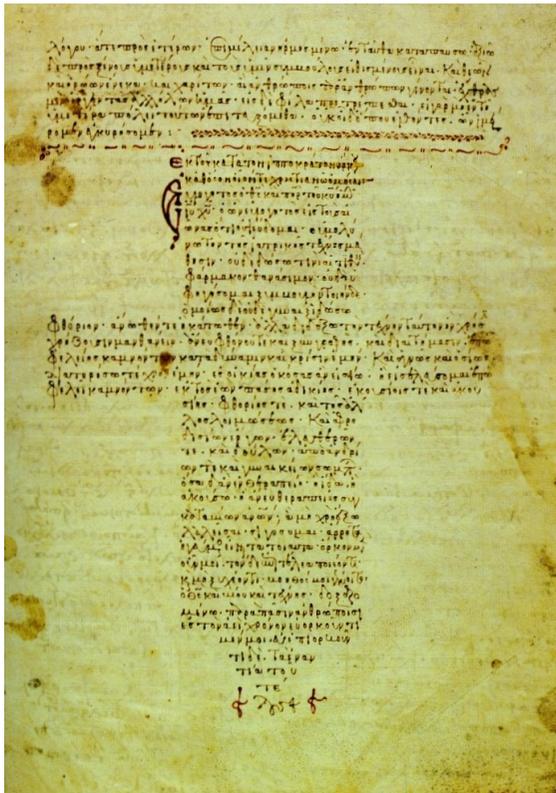
## The revision of the Declaration of Geneva of the World Medical Association and its impact on the German State Chambers of Physicians

Meeting of the Central and Eastern European Chambers of Physicians  
Ljubljana, 15 September, 2017

## The Declaration of Geneva

# The modern Hippocratic Oath

- Adopted at the second General Assembly of the World Medical Association in 1948
- Henceforth conceived as a modern Hippocratic Oath



World Medical Association (WMA)

## The global organization of physicians



- The global federation of National Medical Associations founded in 1947 in Paris
- Represents over 9 million physicians worldwide
- 109 National Medical Associations as members
- Serves as the global voice for physicians
- Mission:
  - to ensure the highest possible standard of medical ethics
  - to foster best medical practice
  - to promote health-related human rights for all people
  - to safeguard the independence of physicians



# The Declaration of Geneva

## The history



- An oath in response to the crimes committed by doctors during the Nazi era
  - Exemplified a moral commitment in the face of moral failure
  - Meant to reestablish trust in the medical profession
  - Intended to be sworn by physicians upon admission to the medical profession
- The extent to which the Declaration of Geneva is used as an oath by physicians entering the medical profession varies greatly from country to country

## The Declaration of Geneva

# The German State Chambers of Physicians



- The Declaration on Geneva prefaces the (Model) Professional Code of the German Medical Association and the Professional Codes of the State Chambers of Physicians
- It is not legally binding, but gives the Professional Code a universal ethical frame.
- As part of the registration procedure, each physician is handed out a copy of the Professional Code of the relevant State Chamber of Physicians which is legally binding for the individual physicians.
- No standardised procedure to use the oath: In some federal states of Germany the medical vow is read aloud as part of the graduation ceremony in a medical faculty and/or the registration procedure in the competent State Chamber of Physicians.
- Current version in the Professional Codes is a translation of an older version of the Declaration of Geneva.
- The revision gives the GMA the chance to update it to a more modern version.

# The Declaration of Geneva 2006 version



AT THE TIME OF BEING ADMITTED AS A MEMBER OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION:

I SOLEMNLY PLEDGE to consecrate my life to the service of humanity;

I WILL GIVE to my teachers the respect and gratitude that is their due;

I WILL PRACTISE my profession with conscience and dignity;

THE HEALTH OF MY PATIENT will be my first consideration;

I WILL RESPECT the secrets that are confided in me, even after the patient has died;

I WILL MAINTAIN by all the means in my power, the honour and the noble traditions of the medical profession;

MY COLLEAGUES will be my sisters and brothers;

I WILL NOT PERMIT considerations of age, disease or disability, creed, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, social standing or any other factor to intervene between my duty and my patient;

I WILL MAINTAIN the utmost respect for human life;

I WILL NOT USE my medical knowledge to violate human rights and civil liberties, even under threat;

I MAKE THESE PROMISES solemnly, freely and upon my honour.

# The Declaration of Geneva

## Current revision process



- In 2016, the Declaration of Geneva was once again scheduled for revision.
- An international workgroup composed of members from different continents, cultures and religious backgrounds was established.
- Countries represented in the workgroup:
  - Germany (chair)
  - India
  - Israel
  - Sweden
  - Turkey
  - United States

→ Observers from France, New Zealand, Japan and CPME



# The Declaration of Geneva

## Current revision process



### Is the Declaration comprehensive enough? Does it require a major update?

- The Declaration of Geneva should be revised extremely carefully.
  - All amendments must be supported by strong arguments.
    - No strong argument – no change
  - What should **not** be changed:
    - The basic ethical principles
    - The overall character of the DoG
    - The structure
    - The length
- The objective is to develop an updated, more adequate oath which outlines the basic ethical principles for physicians

# The Declaration of Geneva

## Current revision process



- Conduct a survey among WMA members
- Engage in continuous discussions in the workgroup and the WMA Ethics Committee
- Foster a public debate
- Raise this topic at international conferences
- Carry out a public consultation
- Circulate a revised version among WMA members

→ Objective: To present a final version of a revised DoG to the WMA General Assembly in Chicago in October 2017

# The Declaration of Geneva

## Improving discoverability



### WMA Declaration of Geneva

### WMA Declaration of Geneva A Physician's Pledge

- In terms of the global reach of the DoG, there is still room for improvement.
- To increase discoverability (particularly online) of the DoG, the workgroup unanimously agreed to suggest adding the subtitle “A Physician’s Pledge” to the document.

# The Declaration of Geneva

## Patient well-being



**THE HEALTH OF MY PATIENT will be my first consideration;**

**THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MY PATIENT will be my first consideration;**

- The term “health” in line 6 was considered too narrow.
- Other literature refers to the “welfare” or “well-being” of the patient. The workgroup decided for the latter term.

# The Declaration of Geneva

## Patient self-determination



**I WILL RESPECT the autonomy  
and dignity of my patient;**

- Although it is one of the most important principles of modern medical ethics, respect for patient self-determination is not mentioned in the current version of the DoG.
- This is in stark contrast to other important WMA documents.
- This clause has been added to overcome inconsistencies with other documents and to modernize the oath.

# The Declaration of Geneva

## Professional autonomy



**I WILL PRACTISE my profession  
with conscience and dignity;**

**I WILL PRACTISE my profession  
with conscience and dignity and  
in accordance with good medical  
practice;**

- The workgroup considered adding a new line to refer more explicitly to professional autonomy.
- It was ultimately decided that this existing line (with the inclusion of the additional text seen here) sufficiently reflected this principle.

# The Declaration of Geneva

## Reciprocal respect



**I WILL GIVE to my teachers the respect and gratitude that is their due;**

**I WILL GIVE to my teachers, colleagues, and students the respect and gratitude that is their due;**

**MY COLLEAGUES will be my sisters and brothers;**

***Removed.***

- The DoG deviates from the Hippocratic Oath in that it only calls for students to respect their teachers.
- The Hippocratic Oath calls for mutual respect.
- The workgroup agreed to incorporate this change and add a reference to respect for colleagues to replace the line “MY COLLEAGUES will be my sisters and brothers”, which has been removed in the current draft.

# The Declaration of Geneva

## Obligation to teach



**I WILL SHARE my medical knowledge for the benefit of the patient and the advancement of healthcare;**

- This new line is meant to build upon the previously mentioned principle of reciprocal respect between teachers and students.
- It represents the obligation to teach and forward knowledge to the next generation of physicians.

# The Declaration of Geneva

## Physician well-being



**I WILL ATTEND TO my own health, well-being, and abilities in order to provide care of the highest standard;**

- As stated in the WMA Statement on Physician Well-Being (adopted in October 2015), it is essential to enhance physicians' health as a way to improve health for the whole population.
- In the member survey conducted regarding DoG use, the importance of physician self-care and the impact this can have on patient care was highlighted.

# The Declaration of Geneva

## The revision process – next steps



- Conduct a survey among WMA members
  - Engage in continuous discussions in the workgroup and the WMA Ethics Committee
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# The Declaration of Geneva

## The future role of the DoG



- The claim is to serve globally as

– one single binding universal oath/pledge for physicians –

to be sworn at the time of being admitted as a member of the medical profession.

- The ethical standards of the profession represent an important cornerstone of physician identity.

→ The Declaration of Geneva can play a major role in the future in terms of strengthening professional identity and adherence to professional ethics.

- Once it has been adopted, the new version will be discussed in the GMA Committee for the Professional Code and the preface of the Professional Code will be updated accordingly.

One world, one medical profession,  
one ethical basis, one professionalism



**Thank You !**

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Declaration of Geneva revision workgroup