The Revised Declaration of Geneva
A Modern-Day Physician's Pledge

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by workgroup members and considered for inclusion in the revised draft.

The most notable difference between the Declaration of Geneva and other key ethical documents, such as the WMA's Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects and the Declaration of Taipei on Ethical Considerations Regarding Health Databases and Biobanks, was determined to be the lack of overt recognition of patient autonomy, despite references to the physician's obligation to exercise respect, beneficence, and medical confidentiality toward his or her patient(s).

To address this difference, the workgroup, informed by other WMA members, ethical advisors, and other experts, recommended adding the following clause: "I WILL RESPECT the autonomy and dignity of my patient." In addition, to highlight the importance of patient self-determination as one of the key cornerstones of medical ethics, the workgroup also recommended shifting all new and existing paragraphs focused on patients' rights to the beginning of the document, followed by clauses relating to other professional obligations.

To more explicitly invoke the standards of ethical and professional conduct expected of physicians by their patients and peers, the clause "I WILL PRACTISE my profession with conscience and dignity" was augmented to include the wording "and in accordance with good medical practice."

A reevaluation of how the professional obligations of physicians are represented in the Declaration of Geneva would not be complete without considering increasing workload, occupational stress, and the potential adverse effects these factors can have on physicians, their health, and their ability to provide care of the highest standard. In light of feedback received in the survey of WMA members, along with the recommendations outlined in the recently adopted WMA Statement on Physician Well-Being, workgroup members incorporated the concept of physician well-being into the revised Declaration as follows: "I WILL ATTEND TO my own health, well-being, and abilities in order to provide care of the highest standard." This clause reflects not only the humanity of physicians, but also the role physician self-care can play in improving patient care.

With regard to professional relationships, previous versions of the Declaration called for students to respect their teachers, but deviated from the Hippocratic Oath, which calls for mutual respect between teachers and students. The workgroup agreed to integrate this idea of reciprocity of respect and to add a reference to respect for colleagues—"I WILL GIVE to my teachers, colleagues, and students the respect and gratitude that is their due"—to replace the line "MY COLLEAGUES will be my sisters and brothers," which has been removed in the current draft because the tone was considered outdated. To complement this principle, the workgroup also added a clause referring more explicitly to the obligation to teach and forward knowledge to the next generation of physicians.

These and other editorial amendments, including the addition of a subtitle identifying the Declaration as a "Physician's Pledge," have enabled this pivotal document to more accurately reflect the challenges and needs of the modern medical profession. It is the hope of the World Medical Association that this thorough revision process and follow-up advocacy efforts will lead to more widespread adoption of the Declaration of Geneva on a global scale.