

AMA Code of Medical Ethics – First of Its Kind

In 1847, physicians representing 22 states and the District of Columbia came together to establish America’s first national professional association for physicians, the American Medical Association (AMA).

As one of its first acts, the AMA created the first national codification of ethics for any profession anywhere in the world. As the first of its kind, the 1847 *AMA Code* was reprinted by medical societies in Berlin, London, Paris, Vienna, and around the world. Throughout the rest of the 19th century, it was the most commonly printed medical document in the English language. Today, the *AMA Code* remains the only codification of professional conduct for *all* US physicians regardless of their medical specialty, practice type or location.



Ethics guidance is regularly added or amended in the *AMA Code* to reflect changes in medical science and societal expectations. As with any “living” document that is authored by different individuals over many decades, the *AMA Code* became fragmented and unwieldy.

To address these issues, the AMA embarked on a multi-year “modernization” project to comprehensively review and update the *AMA Code*. After much deliberation and debate, the AMA House of Delegates adopted the modernized *AMA Code* last June.

“The modernization project ensures that the *Code of Medical Ethics* will remain a useful and effective resource that physicians can continue to rely on, while remaining faithful to the virtues of fidelity, humanity, loyalty, tenderness, confidentiality and integrity enshrined in the original Code,” AMA Immediate Past President, Steven J. Stack, MD, said.



A commemorative, leather-bound edition of the modernized *AMA Code* is [available](#).