



## Healthcare Professional Trainee's Right of Conscience

Respect for conscientiously held beliefs of individuals and for individual differences is an essential aspect of our free society. In the words of Thomas Jefferson: "No provision in our Constitution ought to be dearer to man than that which protects the rights of conscience against the enterprises of the civil authority."

In healthcare the right of choice of moral refusal is foundational and applies to all participants, including patients and healthcare professionals. Healthcare by its nature cannot be morally neutral, as it is actively concerned with human health and need. Issues of conscience arise when a proposed medical or surgical intervention conflicts with the deeply held personal beliefs and values of the patient or the healthcare professional. AAME believes that in such circumstances Rights of Conscience have priority.

### **The Healthcare Professional Trainee's Right of Conscience:**

- If a trainee in the healthcare professions expresses an unwillingness to participate in an aspect of training or patient care as a matter of conscience, that stance should be explored in a non-judgmental manner to ensure that both parties fully understand the issue. The trainee's position on matters of conscience should be honored without academic or personal penalty.
- Educators and trainees should be allowed to refuse to participate in policies and procedures that they deem morally objectionable without threat of reprisal.
- Trainees should not be mandated to be present during practices or procedures, or view or images of behaviors, that they deem morally objectionable.
- No organization or governing body should mandate participation in policies or procedures that violate conscience.
- Healthcare professionals at all levels should seek to learn about and understand policies and procedures that they deem morally questionable as well as their colleagues' reasons for objecting for reasons of conscience.

### **Bibliography**

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