



**ALLEGHENY COUNTY
MEDICAL SOCIETY**

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Ethical Responsibilities in Change in Affiliation of Medical Practices or Separation of Employment

Continuity of patient care and choice of physician are of utmost importance when there is a change in ownership or affiliation of medical practice with a hospital or in separation of physicians from employment.

Physicians have an ethical obligation to notify patients of changes in practice with sufficient notice to provide a smooth transition of care. The same considerations should be observed by institutions owning practices when a change occurs.

The AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs provides this guidance:

The patients of a physician who leaves a group practice should be notified that the physician is leaving the group. Patients of the physician should also be informed of the physician's new address and offered the opportunity to have their medical records forwarded to the departing physician at his or her new practice location."

In most cases, when physicians make such a change in their practice, patients are notified and offered the choice to follow their physician or to see other physicians in the original practice, and the transitions are made smoothly.

Competitive business interests should recognize the special and personal relationship that exists between a treating physician and patients, and make every reasonable effort to assure that such transitions are handled in a timely and responsible manner to assure that patients interests, and ability to choose their physician, is of primary importance.

The Allegheny County Medical Society supports this policy and encourages all employing entities to ensure that patient access to their physician of choice is addressed in a courteous manner consistent with the above principles with any change of employment.

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The Allegheny County Medical Society has 2,500 physician members from all specialties and is dedicated to providing leadership and advocacy on healthcare issues for the community and physicians. The organization has been serving Allegheny County since 1865. For more information, please contact ACMS at 412-321-5030 or acms@acms.org.