



MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

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Massachusetts Medical Society adopts several organizational policies at Interim Meeting

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WALTHAM – At its Interim Meeting Dec. 1 and Dec. 2, the Massachusetts Medical Society’s House of Delegates adopted into policy several resolutions, including those involving medical aid-in-dying, medical parole for the terminally ill, recommended naloxone training for Massachusetts health professionals, and insurance coverage for contraceptive procedures.

The House of Delegates, the organization’s governing body, considered resolutions brought forth by physician-members. Resolutions that were accepted by the House of Delegates are now organizational policy.

The Massachusetts Medical Society rescinded its longstanding opposition to physician assisted suicide, or the act of a physician writing a prescription for a lethal dose of medication to be used by an adult with a terminal illness at such time as the patient sees fit.

Instead, the Medical Society adopted the position of neutral engagement, which allows the organization to serve as a medical and scientific resource as part of legislative efforts that will support shared decision making between terminally ill patients and their trusted physicians.

The organization asserted that physicians should not be required to practice medical aid-in-dying that involves the prescribing of lethal doses of medication if it violates personally held ethical principles, and that medical aid-in-dying should be practiced only by a duly licensed physician in conformance with standards of good medical practice and statutory and/or legal authority. If medical aid-in-dying is legalized, the MMS will support its members with clinical and legal considerations through education, advocacy and other resources, regardless of whether the member physician chooses to practice medical aid-in-dying.

The House of Delegates also emphasized the importance of effective palliative care, especially at the end of life.

Part of the House of Delegates' discussion on the matter included the results of a survey conducted by the Massachusetts Medical Society that asked its members to share anonymously their views on medical aid-in-dying/physician-assisted-suicide.

Other resolutions adopted into Massachusetts Medical Society organizational policy include:

- Medical parole for the incapacitated and terminally ill: MMS will advocate for a mechanism of medical parole, allowing inmates who are terminally ill or who are mentally or physically incapacitated to be given the choice to be released to civilian living conditions in order to undergo necessary physical, palliative and psychosocial end-of-life care.
- Naloxone training for MA medical students: MMS will encourage that all health care professional students in Massachusetts receive training in the administration of naloxone.
- Family leave for early child care: MMS supports family leave with job protection and pay for parents/guardians or primary caregivers.
- Permitting Massachusetts physicians to dispense prescription medications from the office: MMS will advocate to the Massachusetts legislature and other relevant regulatory bodies to permit the state's physicians to dispense prepackaged prescription medications directly to patients from the physician's office.
- Support for patients and physicians in direct primary care: MMS will advocate to changes in federal law that will allow Direct Primary Care membership fees to be paid with pre-tax funds.
- Unbundling contraceptive procedures from the delivery global payment: MMS will work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that all Massachusetts health insurance policies provide coverage for both long-acting reversible contraceptive devices and the insertion procedure in the immediate postpartum period.
- Prescription availability for weekend discharges: MMS will work with pharmacy benefit managers, insurers and pharmacists to address patients being denied access to medications because the insurer or PBM does not have weekend staff to resolve coverage or formulary issues.

The Interim Meeting also included a continuing medical education component for attendees. Harvard medical School Professor Alvaro Pascual-Leone, MD, PhD, gave an oration entitled "Traumatic Brain Injury, Concussion and American Football."