



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement by Marc J. Levine, MD, President of the Medical Society of New Jersey (MSNJ):

Lawrenceville, NJ - “MSNJ remains opposed to physicians hastening the death of a patient. Effective August 1, the New Jersey Medical Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill Act permits physicians to engage in this activity. Importantly, the law does not compel physicians to provide medical aid in dying. Regulations implementing this law have yet to be promulgated. MSNJ adopted the following guidance to assist physicians in navigating the new law and evaluating other policies permitting physicians to facilitate a natural death:

1. THE POLICY NOT ERODE PUBLIC TRUST IN THE PHYSICIAN/PATIENT RELATIONSHIP.

There is already significant lack of trust of the medical community by some members of the public. Wondering if your physician is trying to cure your illness or is trying to convince you to die would not increase that trust. While many distrust the system, they still trust their own doctor. Discussion and implementation should not be delegated to nursing or subordinate staff but should be by the physician or Advance Practice Nurse.

2. THE POLICY BALANCES BENEFICENCE/NON-MALEFICENCE.

The physician’s responsibility is to help and not harm the patient. Ensure decisions are based on clinical criteria.

3. THE POLICY RESPECTS PATIENT AUTONOMY.

Qualified adults who retain decision making capacity have the right to accept or refuse interventions and their decisions should be determinative.

4. THE POLICY IS DESIGNED TO REDUCE SUFFERING.

A goal of medicine is to reduce patient suffering as defined by the patient.

5. THE POLICY PROTECTS VULNERABLE POPULATIONS.

Prevent exploitation by involved parties whose priorities are not those of the patient. Ensure that those with disabilities are not undervalued or coerced.

6. THE POLICY ALLOWS PHYSICIAN CHOICE.

No practitioner should be required to perform an activity that undermines their own deeply held moral beliefs. Physicians are obligated to ensure prompt transfer of care.

7. THE POLICY PROTECTS CONFIDENTIALITY WHILE KEEPING RECORDS TO MONITOR THE POLICY.

Respect existing HIPAA requirements, but maintain transparent records of how the policy is implemented and to monitor for compliance.”

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About Medical Society of New Jersey

MSNJ is the oldest professional medical society in the United States, with over 6,500 members. MSNJ is the leading advocate for physicians in the state of New Jersey, including physicians in every specialty and practice setting. Its mission is to promote the betterment of the public health and the science and art of medicine, to enlighten public opinion in regard to the problems of medicine, and to safeguard the rights of the practitioners of medicine.