

Discussing political issues with patients

The Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs of the American Medical Association has issued Opinion E.9-012 “Political Communications with Patients and Their Families”. The Opinion notes that physicians have the same rights as other Americans to freedom of expression and that they have particular responsibilities as physicians for advocating for improvements in matters concerning health care. However, CEJA cautions that communications with patients “must be conducted with the utmost sensitivity to patients’ vulnerability and desire for privacy [and] conversations about political matters are not appropriate at times when patients or families are emotionally pressured by significant medical circumstances. CEJA concludes that “when conversation with the patient or family concerning social, civic, or recreational matters is acceptable, discussion of items of political import may be appropriate [however] [u]nder no circumstances should physicians allow their differences with patients or their families about political matters to interfere with the delivery of high-quality professional care.”