

MEDCHI, THE MARYLAND STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution 2-14

INTRODUCED BY: Baltimore County Medical Association

SUBJECT: Law Enforcement Use of Lethal Force in Cases of Patients with Mental  
Illness

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1 Whereas, although most individuals with mental illness do not threaten or perpetrate violence against  
2 others or against law enforcement officers; and

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4 Whereas, there is a small minority who are threatening to others, particularly if they are having a relapse in  
5 their illness or are not responding to treatment for some reason; and

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7 Whereas, in these circumstances the mentally ill person may feel the need to defend themselves against a  
8 delusional misperception of what is happening to them and take up a weapon of some kind; and

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10 Whereas, if this weapon is a firearm, they represent a clear and present danger to law enforcement and the  
11 law enforcement officer must use whatever force is necessary to defend him/herself including shooting to  
12 kill the mentally ill individual; and

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14 Whereas, sometimes the mentally ill person will seize a knife or a club of some kind and shooting the  
15 individual to disable the person may allow the officer to get control of the situation without killing the  
16 person; and

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18 Whereas, in England there was a case in which two mentally ill individuals with hatchets and knives  
19 attacked and hacked to death a British soldier, and police were called to the scene, and the police were  
20 threatened, and they shot these individuals in the leg and subdued them; therefore be it

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22 Resolved, that MedChi advocate for better law enforcement training in shooting to disable as well as  
23 shooting to kill, so that mentally ill persons who are not armed with a firearm may survive such encounters  
24 more often.

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27 Resolution 2-14 was referred to the MedChi Board of Trustees by the House of Delegates at its meeting on  
28 April 26, 2014.