

# COVID-19

## CORONAVIRUS DISEASE

**VISION:** To improve the health of all Texans.

**MISSION:** TMA supports Texas physicians by providing distinctive solutions to the challenges they encounter in the care of patients.



Physicians Caring for Texans

## Medical Ethics and COVID-19

TMA Office of the General Counsel

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The novel challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic raise new medical ethics questions for physicians and also require them to look at existing medical ethics guidance with new lenses. The American Medical Association has developed [articles](#) by topic to address medical ethics issues in light of COVID-19, both new ethics issues and guidance on how current medical ethics interact with providing care during COVID-19. Below are a few articles and their descriptions from AMA:

**[AMA Code of Medical Ethics: Guidance in a pandemic.](#)** This overview links overarching questions about wise stewardship of professional skills and material resources to guidance in opinions on allocating limited health care resources, leadership of health care teams, and the obligation to balance the needs of individuals with the needs of the community at large.

**[Access and health equity during a pandemic.](#)** What is the responsibility of physicians to support fair access to care for patients, particularly during a pandemic?

**[Caring for patients at the end of life.](#)** Every patient reaching the end of life must receive appropriate supportive care.

**[Crisis standards of care: Guidance from the AMA Code of Medical Ethics.](#)** What are the essential features of ethically sound crisis standards of care?

**[DNR orders in a public health crisis.](#)** During a public health crisis, do-not-attempt-resuscitation (DNAR or DNR) orders require special ethical consideration.

**[Ethical practice in isolation, quarantine & contact tracing.](#)** How should physicians strike the balance between individual rights and privacy when dealing with contact tracing, isolation, or quarantine that aims to protect the community?

**[Fair access to limited critical care resources.](#)** Physicians must balance competing responsibilities simultaneously, notably in decisions about how and when to draw on limited, critically needed resources.

**[Obligations to protect health care professionals.](#)** Physicians have a well-recognized duty to provide care during a public health emergency.

**[Prioritizing the rest of health care in a public health crisis.](#)** Short term, it may be essential to restrict delivery of “routine” care in the interest of reducing immediate risk, but that strategy is not medically or ethically sustainable in the longer term.

**[Protecting public health & vulnerable populations in a pandemic.](#)** Physicians have a responsibility to advocate for and protect the most vulnerable patients and populations.

**Providing patient care remotely in a pandemic.** The professional commitment to support access to care informs the ethical use of telemedicine to provide health care services, while lowering the risk of transmitting infectious disease.

**Speaking out on issues adversely affecting patient safety in a pandemic.** Physicians have an ethical obligation to address conditions that adversely affect quality patient care.

**Use of patient registries during public health emergencies.** Datasets of patient information can be extremely useful during a pandemic, allowing public health officials to track outbreaks of disease, but protecting patient confidentiality remains fundamental.

### **Additional Information**

For additional information on AMA's medical ethics guidance, you can visit AMA's [COVID-19 Ethics Resource Center](#). AMA also provides [guidance on ethical issues](#) relating to COVID-19 triage and allocation of resources.

TMA has a [COVID-19 Resource Center](#) for more general information on federal, state, and local requirements and recommendation, as well as practical guidance. You may contact TMA's Knowledge Center for general questions on medical ethics by email at [knowledge@texmed.org](mailto:knowledge@texmed.org) or by phone at (800) 880-7955.

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