

March 1999 (Volume 40, Number 1)

Oaths, Laws, and Declarations in the Studies of Medical Ethics in Lithuania

Zita Liubarskienė

Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences, Kaunas University of Medicine, Kaunas, Lithuania

The article aims at: (a) elucidating the evolution of ethical principles in Lithuanian medical practice, associating it with the past and present changes taking place in social life, from the so-called "free-of-charge" medical service to paid insurance and private medical service; (b) debating the newly-established principles of the patients' autonomy, patient's informing, and veracity by interpreting the traditional Hippocratic principles of beneficence (usefulness) and nonmaleficence (harmlessness), as well as confidentiality, with respect to the documents of the World Medical Association; (c) acquainting the readers with ethical education at the Kaunas University of Medicine, basing the rules of professional conduct on accepted oaths, codes, and declarations; and (d) inviting medical students and health care practitioners to take part in the discussion to facilitate the solution of ethical dilemmas of medicine, which arise in practical work, and pose difficult and controversial problems. I briefly describe the situation in Lithuanian society which gave rise to the changes in the field of medicine. We relied on universally accepted oaths, codes, and declarations in interpreting medical ethical principles. The experience gained in academic studies on medical ethics at the Kaunas University of Medicine was also described by pointing to ethical dilemmas and their possible solution.

Key words: clinical ethics; confidentiality; ethics, medical; education, medical; educational achievement; Helsinki Declaration; Hippocratic oath; Lithuania; teaching materials; World Health Organization