

# Medical Professionalism in the New Millennium: A Physician Charter 15 Months Later

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As we mark the 15-month anniversary of the physician charter that was published simultaneously in *Annals of Internal Medicine* and *The Lancet* in 2002 (1, 2), the members of the Medical Professionalism Project are pleased by the level of interest and activity the charter has engendered. Several hundred U.S. and international newspapers cited the charter in related stories; more than 70 radio, television, and online interviews have been conducted with individual project members; over 65 000 reprints have been requested from around the world; and, collectively, the *Annals*, Medical Professionalism Project and European Federation of Internal Medicine (EFIM) Web sites have logged more than 70 000 related visits. In addition, this issue of *Annals* features a collection of provocative Letters about the charter. Building on this level of responsiveness, the ABIM (American Board of Internal Medicine) Foundation and the ACP (American College of Physicians) Foundation will sponsor phase II of the Project, planned as a 2-year initiative. Phase II will encompass reviewing the charter's initial impact and, within that context, explore the opportunity to define the health rights and responsibilities of patients, physicians, and society.

## BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Medical Professionalism Project, jointly sponsored by the ABIM Foundation and the ACP Foundation, began in November 1999 as a collaborative effort designed to raise the concept of professionalism within the consciousness of internal medicine, both in the United States and Europe. The two foundations, in partnership with the European Federation of Internal Medicine, are well positioned to influence the ethical and professional standards of medicine and encourage the profession to reaffirm its civic commitment.

Impetus for the Project stemmed from the following question: Why is raising awareness about the core values of medical professionalism important? As the pace of change in health care accelerated and the future of medical practice became increasingly uncertain, the ABIM and ACP Foundations and European Federation of Internal Medicine saw the need to convene this collaborative project because medical professionalism is universally endangered. Physician unionization, waning ability to self-regulate, medical errors, bioterrorism, compromised access and health care delivery, conflicts of interest precipitated by managed care

and for-profit medicine, and the pharmaceutical industry's role in patient care and medical education reflect the range of issues that challenge the medical profession globally. At this crossroads, the medical profession urgently needs a united front to influence and inform the culture and context of both clinical practice and medical training. The charter's three fundamental principles and set of professional responsibilities are intended to encourage such dedication and debate (Table).

## PUBLICATIONS

To date, in addition to *Annals of Internal Medicine* and *The Lancet*, the charter has been published in the following journals: *Clinical Medicine* (formerly *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians*), *European Journal of Internal Medicine*, *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, *The American Journal of Surgery*, *Journal of the American College of Dentists*, *Annals of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada*, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, *The Medical Journal of Australia*, *Bollettino Ordine Provinciale Medici Chirurghi e Odontoiatri-Milano*, *La Revue de Médecine Interne*, and *La Radiologia Medica*. The charter has been translated into Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, and Polish. The Health Ministry of Italy also published the charter and distributed it to every medical student and faculty member throughout the country. Translations into Dutch, Swedish, Japanese, and Turkish should lead to future publication in journals written in these languages.

## PRESENTATIONS

Since the charter's publication, project members and others have collectively given more than 100 related presentations in a variety of formats: named lectures, grand rounds, medical school graduation addresses, plenary sessions at national and international meetings, workshops, and seminars. National meetings have included those of the Association of American Medical Colleges, ACP, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Medical Association, Arnold P. Gold Foundation, Council of Medical Specialty Societies, Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, American Board of Medical Specialties, American College of Surgeons, Association for Hospital Medical Education, and Federation of State Medical Boards. International meetings have in-

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\*For a list of members of these organizations, see the Appendix.

See editorial comment on pp 844-846 and Letters on pp 851-855.

**Table. Charter on Medical Professionalism: Fundamental Principles and Professional Responsibilities**

Fundamental principles	
Principle of primacy of patient welfare	
Principle of patient autonomy	
Principle of social justice	
Professional responsibilities	
Commitment to professional competence	
Commitment to honesty with patients	
Commitment to patient confidentiality	
Commitment to maintaining appropriate relations with patients	
Commitment to improving quality of care	
Commitment to improving access to care	
Commitment to a just distribution of finite resources	
Commitment to scientific knowledge	
Commitment to maintaining trust by managing conflicts of interest	
Commitment to professional responsibilities	

cluded those of the Association for Medical Education in Europe and the European School of Internal Medicine; the European Federation of Internal Medicine Congresses in Edinburgh and Berlin; the International Society of Internal Medicine Congress in Kyoto; and the Association of Canadian Medical Colleges, Ottawa Conference, and Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

## ENDORSEMENTS

To date, the following 90 professional associations, colleges, societies, and certifying boards have endorsed the charter: Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education; American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology; American Academy of Dermatology; American Academy of Family Physicians; American Academy of Neurology; American Academy of Ophthalmology; American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons; American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation; American Board of Medical Specialties; American Board of Allergy and Immunology; American Board of Anesthesiology; American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery; American Board of Dermatology; American Board of Emergency Medicine; American Board of Family Practice; American Board of Internal Medicine; American Board of Medical Genetics; American Board of Neurological Surgery; American Board of Nuclear Medicine; American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology; American Board of Ophthalmology; American Board of Orthopedic Surgery; American Board of Otolaryngology; American Board of Pathology; American Board of Pediatrics; American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation; American Board of Plastic Surgery; American Board of Preventive Medicine; American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology; American Board of Radiology; American Board of Surgery; American Board of Thoracic Surgery; American Board of Urology; ABIM Foundation; American College of Dentists; American College of Medi-

cal Genetics; American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; ACP; American College of Radiology; American College of Surgeons; ACP Foundation; American Psychiatric Association; American Society of Anesthesiologists; American Society of Clinical Pathologists; American Society of Plastic Surgeons; American Urological Association; Association of Academic Physiatrists; Association of Physicians of Ireland; Association of Physicians of Malta; Austrian Society of Internal Medicine; Belgian Society of Internal Medicine; College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia; Council of Deans, Association of Canadian Medical Colleges; Council of Medical Specialty Societies; Czech Society of Internal Medicine; Danish Society of Internal Medicine; Estonian Society of Internal Medicine; European Federation of Internal Medicine; Federation of Royal Colleges of Physicians of United Kingdom; Federation of State Medical Boards; Finnish Society of Internal Medicine; French Society of Internal Medicine; German Society of Internal Medicine; Hellenic Society of Internal Medicine; Hungarian Society of Internal Medicine; Israeli Society of Internal Medicine; Italian Society of Internal Medicine; Latvian Society of Internal Medicine; Lithuanian Society of Internal Medicine; Luxembourg Society of Internal Medicine; Ministero della Salute; Netherlands Society of Internal Medicine; Polish Society of Internal Medicine; Portuguese Society of Internal Medicine; Royal Australasian College of Physicians and Surgeons; Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh; Royal College of Physicians of Ireland; Royal College of Physicians of London; Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada; Slovak Society of Internal Medicine; Slovenian Society of Internal Medicine; Society of Neurological Surgeons; Society of Nuclear Medicine; Society of Thoracic Surgeons; Spanish Society of Internal Medicine; Swedish Society of Internal Medicine; Swiss Society of Internal Medicine; and Turkish Society of Internal Medicine. During the remainder of the year, additional endorsements will be sought from state medical societies, educational organizations, and other national and international medical associations.

## FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The ABIM Foundation has launched a series of targeted activities to promote the charter: 1) an attractive charter publication for distribution at medical school and residency orientation, white coat ceremonies, and graduation; 2) a charter wall poster suitable for framing; 3) Putting the Charter into Practice (small seed grants for implementation were awarded to McGill University; New York University School of Medicine; University of California, San Francisco; University of Michigan Medical School; and University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston); 4) Medical Professionalism Project colloquia and conferences; 5) professionalism portfolios designed to promote self-reflection and use of self-assessment tools; 6) inclusion of

the charter with each ABIM diplomate's Board certificate; 7) a proposed charter series in peer-reviewed journals; and 8) a proposed award recognition program. The past, present, and future activities stimulated by the charter are being chronicled and will be essential in determining its short- and long-term impact toward promoting and empowering an action agenda for the profession of medicine that is universal in scope and purpose.

#### APPENDIX: PROJECT MEMBERS

ABIM Foundation: Troyen Brennan, MD, JD (*Project Chair*); Linda Blank (*Project Staff*); Jordan Cohen, MD; Harry Kimball, MD; and Neil Smelser, PhD.

ACP Foundation: Robert Copeland, MD; Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, MBA; and Walter McDonald, MD.

European Federation of Internal Medicine: Gunilla Brenning, MD; Chris Davidson, MA, MB, FRCP; Philippe Jaeger, MB, MD; Alberto Malliani, MD; Hein Muller, MD, PhD; Daniel Sereni, MD; and Eugene Sutorius, JD.

Special Consultants: Richard Cruess, MD; Sylvia Cruess, MD; and Jaime Merino, MD.

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