

Virtual Mentor

American Medical Association Journal of Ethics
July 2000, Volume 2, Number 7: 60.

CASE AND COMMENTARY

Should Physicians Advocate for Political Issues and Candidates?

Commentary by Audiey Kao, MD, PhD

Case

Dr. Henry is an internist at a university teaching hospital, and also has clinical responsibilities at a local prison hospital. He has strong views about the corporatization of medicine, and is outspoken in his conviction that universal health coverage is a human right. Dr. Henry often discusses his political views with his patients. A few of his physician colleagues have expressed concern about him bringing his political views into the examination room. In response, Dr. Henry says, "It's a free country. Besides, what does expressing my views about the political system have to do with treating my patients? If anything, I'm acting as an advocate for patients when I discuss with them why we need universal health coverage."

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you think it is appropriate for Dr. Henry to discuss his political views with his patients?
2. If not, does Dr. Henry not have a [First Amendment](#) right to express his political views?

See what the AMA *Code of Medical Ethics* says about this topic in Opinion 9.012 Physicians' political communications with patients and their families. American Medical Association. *Code of Medical Ethics 1998-1999 Edition*. Chicago, IL: American Medical Association; 1998.

Audiey Kao, MD, PhD is editor in chief of *Virtual Mentor*.

The people and events in this case are fictional. Resemblance to real events or to names of people, living or dead, is entirely coincidental. The viewpoints expressed on this site are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the AMA.

Copyright 2000 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.