

## **Advisory opinion: Termination of the Patient-Physician Relationship**

The Board is commonly asked for guidance on how to appropriately and ethically terminate a Patient-Physician relationship and avoid any claims of patient abandonment. In preparing this guidance document, the Board first looked to the AMA Code of Medical Ethics, which states:

*“Physicians have an obligation to support continuity of care for their patients. While physicians have the option of withdrawing from a case, they cannot do so without giving notice to the patient, the relatives, or responsible friends sufficiently long in advance of withdrawal to permit another medical attendant to be secured.”*

In order for a physician to maintain his or her ethical obligations to patients, we make the following recommendations for physicians intending to termination the patient/physician relationship.

1. Notify the patient in writing of intent to dismiss and give a specific date, generally 30 days
2. Provide a brief explanation of why you are terminating the doctor/patient relationship
3. Document the notification, and reason for the termination in the patient's medical record
4. Assist patient in locating another provider by providing referral resources
5. Transfer all medical records to new provider immediately upon receipt of valid patient authorization form
6. Assure the patient has adequate refills of maintenance medications to assure continuity of care