



The World Medical Association

(www.wma.net) is the global umbrella organisation for 115 national or territorial medical associations and over 10 Million Physicians worldwide.

The purpose of the WMA is to serve humanity by endeavouring to achieve the highest international standards in Medical Education, Medical Science, Medical Art and Medical Ethics, and Health Care for all people in the world.

As an organisation promoting the highest possible standards of medical ethics, the WMA provides ethical guidance to physicians through its Declarations, Resolutions and Statements. These also help to guide National Medical Associations, governments and international organisations throughout the world. The Declarations, Resolutions and Statements cover a wide range of subjects, including an International Code of Medical Ethics, the rights of patients, research on human subjects, care of the sick and wounded in times of armed conflict, torture of prisoners, the use and abuse of drugs, family planning and pollution.

WMA Organ Procurement Ethics: Preventing Trafficking (Overview)

The World Medical Association (WMA) adopts a strong deontological approach to organ and tissue procurement, grounded in inherent duties and prohibitions, particularly regarding organ trafficking. This approach is guided by core ethical principles, including **altruism, autonomy, beneficence, equity, and justice**.

Key aspects of this approach, with a special view on organ trafficking, include:

- **Absolute Prohibition of Commercialisation:** The WMA is **strongly opposed to the commercialisation, sale, or profit from organs and tissues**. Charges related to transplantation should only cover costs directly associated with retrieval, storage, allocation, and transplantation. This principle also extends to human reproductive material, which should not be subject to commercial transactions.
- **Requirement for Free and Informed Consent:** Organ and tissue donation **must be achieved through the free and informed consent of the potential donor**. This consent must be voluntary and free from pressure or coercion, whether from deceased or living donors
- **Strict Rules for Populations with specific vulnerabilities:** To prevent exploitation:
 - **Executed prisoners must not be considered organ and/or tissue donors** due to the impossibility of guaranteeing uncoerced consent. Physicians **must not be involved** in the removal or transplantation of organs from executed prisoners.

- Prisoners and other effectively detained individuals may be eligible for deceased donation only if it aligns with their prior, uncoerced wishes and their death is from natural causes. Living donation from prisoners is permissible only in **exceptional circumstances** for first or second-degree family members, with additional safeguards against coercion.
- Individuals lacking the capacity to consent **should not be considered as living organ donors**.
- **Duty to Prevent and Combat Transplant-Related Crimes:** Physicians have a **critical responsibility in preventing and combating trafficking in persons for organ removal and trafficking in human organs**. They **should never perform a transplant using an organ that has been illicitly obtained**. Physicians must carefully scrutinise donor-recipient relationships and the altruistic motivations for donation, being vigilant for "red flags" indicative of transplant-related crime. They should also inform patients about the health risks and exploitation involved in illicit transplant activities.
- **Transparency and Traceability:** There must be **transparency of practice and traceability of organs** for every transplant procedure. Governments and health authorities should develop registries to record information on organ recovery and transplantation, which should be publicly accessible while respecting confidentiality.

Core principles of medical ethics and specific policies:

- [WMA Declaration of Geneva](#)
- [WMA International Code of Medical Ethics](#) (ICOME) 1948 (2022)
- [WMA International Code of Medical Ethics](#)(DOH) 1964 (2024)
- [WMA Declaration of Sydney on the Determination of Death and the Recovery of Organs](#) (1968/2016)
- [WMA Statement on Organ and Tissue Donation](#) (2012/2016) (replacing earlier policies)
- [WMA Resolution on the Non-Commercialisation of Human Reproductive Material](#) (2003/2021)
- [WMA Resolution on Organ Donation in Prisoners](#) (2006/2024)
- [WMA Statement on Measures for the Prevention and Fight against Transplant-Related Crimes](#) (2020)

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