

BOOK REVIEW ΒΙΒΛΙΟΠΑΡΟΥΣΙΑΣΗ

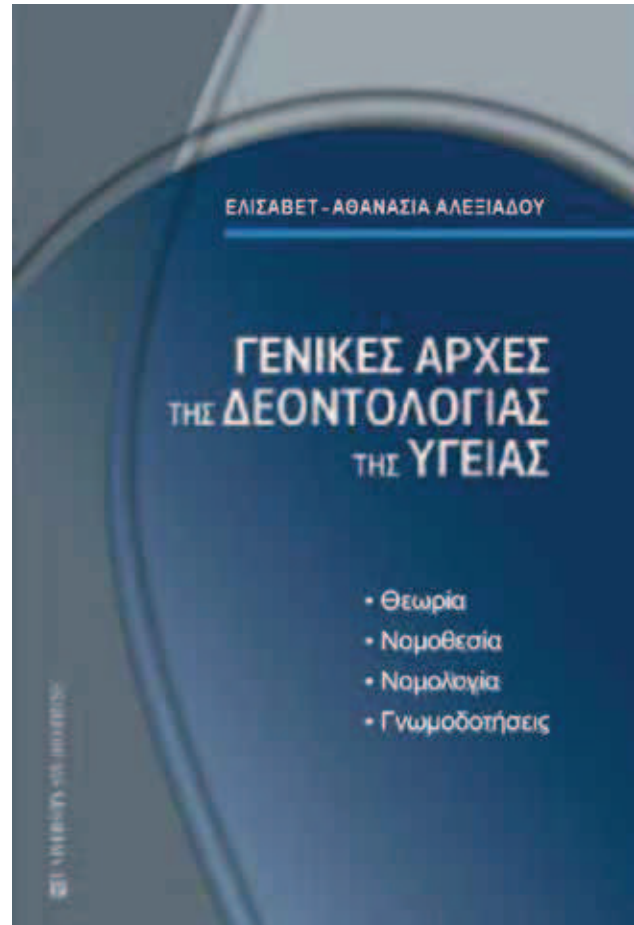
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General principles of health deontology

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This is a comprehensive, composite, authoritative book on the code of health deontology. As the author points out in the summary, deontology, a Greek word, derived from deon, meaning duty, is the concept of rights and duties, in particular in the service of health. It is a cross section of the rights and obligations of medical practice within the rules and laws set by legislature. In principle, physicians are bound by the Hippocratic Oath and its permutations in the practice of medicine. In every professional practice, however, including medicine and ancillary medical services, there are specific rules set within a legal framework by the national legislature, the directives, laws and acts. The code of deontology in health is the point where medicine and law intertwine. The strength of this book, written by an academic lawyer who is a graduate of the Law School of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and holder of the UK LLM in Medical Law and MSc in Healthcare Management, is its important, systematic documentation of the legal principles which guide the deontology of physicians and health professionals. This is a field not adequately covered in medical publications, congresses or seminars. The book constitutes an invaluable reference tool and a practical guide for not only health professionals in general, but also for lawyers, jurists and health administrators. It is particularly valid for its coverage of the professional status of health professionals in state and private health institutions, regarding their obligations, rights and limitations, which are usually not well known, especially regarding the legal framework.



The material is organized in six parts. Part A is introductory and outlines the guiding principles of health deontology, i.e., professional behavior, objective judgment, transparency, confidentiality, adherence to and respect for professional duty, moral integrity and conformity with the legal framework which guides health practices. Part B deals with the predisposing factors which influence professional behavior, i.e., professional development through continuing education and training, seminars, congresses and publications, evaluation by expert reviewers and quality control for continuous improvement, and the importance of oral, written or electronic communication and the various different ways of interaction, internal external, verti-

cal, personal, official and unofficial. Part C addresses the fundamental obligations, rights and limitations of health professionals regarding both state employees and those in private health institutions. It provides an extensive and detailed enumeration of their obligations, adherence to the observance of laws, the legality of their actions, behavior, execution of duties, integrity and confidentiality, effective execution of duties with respect to people and patients, integrity of character and confidentiality. The rights, *inter alia*, include establishment of tenure according to rules and regulations, sick leave, maternity leave, leave to attend educational activities, social security, health coverage, leave of absence without pay, and retirement benefits for a specified period on justifiable grounds. Part D refers to professional responsibility regarding disciplinary, civic and penal aspects of public servants in state and private health institutions. Part E addresses the professional duties and rights of health professionals in ancillary medical services, namely technicians and assistants in pathology, radiology, occupational medicine, dental services, physical therapy, speech therapy, nursing –an important part of the health services– midwifery and health administration. The book provides a compilation of detailed legal aspects of the deontology of health, delivered by trained professionals in cooperation with physicians in the demanding aspects of medical practice in the service of patients. Part F discusses the rights and legal protection of hospital patients, covering free access to hospitalization, consent for diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, protection of personal data, confidentiality in the handling of medical records and

the right to submit complaints. This section reads as a declaration of the rights of patients, addressed not only to hospital patients, but to all patients in all health settings. These rights are in accordance with the Biomedicine Convention of the Council of Europe, ratified by Greece and incorporated by Law 2619/1998, as well as with the Administrative Protection of the Greek Ministry of Health granted to patients.

The book is completed with an extensive list of references in Greek and international publications and appendices with the relevant legislature, acts and laws on health deontology and formats of legal reports on related subjects.

The book is a significant contribution to the understanding of health legislature, particularly relevant and pertinent in our times, with the emergence of complex ethical issues in medicine and expansion of the legal boundaries. The subject of medical ethics involves physicians, jurists, academic health lawyers, philosophers, clergymen, theologians and legislators.

The book "*General principles of health deontology*" is eloquently and well written, with clarity and excellent organization of the material. It is a scientific reference and a guide to the most valuable gift to mankind ethical aspects of health.

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