

Caring for Family Members

Medical Staff Policies & Procedures

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BACKGROUND: Many organizations including the AMA have adopted positions on treatment of family members^{1,2}. With rare exception³, it has been posited that professional objectivity may be compromised when an immediate family member is the patient. Physicians may not address sensitive information in the history or examine intimate areas. Concerns regarding patient autonomy have been raised, as patients may be uncomfortable requesting an alternate care provider or refusing proffered advice.

SCOPE: Patients admitted; placed in observation or undergoing an outpatient procedure at any HMH Hospital. The policy is relevant to:

1. Any procedure requiring informed consent in any setting
2. Any procedure that might be life-threatening or that uses life-threatening modalities in treatment (i.e. cancer chemotherapy)
3. Any condition that involves the use of schedule III or greater drugs

PURPOSE: To insure that all patients receive the most professional, objective, high quality advice and care when faced with serious illness.

DEFINITION: - For the purpose of this policy, IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS shall mean: Spouse, Domestic Partners, Parents, Parents-in-Law, Children, Stepchildren, Siblings, Siblings-in-law, Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, Nieces and Nephews

POLICY:

1. Unless there is no other qualified physician available, members of the HMH Medical and Dental Staff shall not serve as attending physician or consultant when an immediate family member is undergoing care at an HMH hospital.
2. Physicians are encouraged to assist their family to identify the most appropriate caregivers and to serve as advocates to help their loved ones have the best possible experience and outcome.
3. Should the rare situation arise when there is no other qualified physician available, the treating physician must notify both the Department Chair and the CMO within 24 hours of serving as a treating physician to a family member.
4. At the request of the patient, a family member who is an HMH physician may be added to the Epic Treatment Team but may NOT write orders or progress notes.

REFERENCES:

1. Self-Treatment or Treatment of Immediate Family Members. *AMA Code of Medical Ethics*. 1995-2015 Opinion 8.19 Issued June 1993
2. Should Doctors Treat Their Relatives? *ACP Internist*.
<http://www.acpinternist.org/archives/1999/01/relative.htm>
3. Christman KD. AMA Attacks Physicians Caring for their Families. *J Amer Physicians and Surgeons*. 2011;16:85-87.
4. Chen FM. Role Conflicts of Physicians and their Family Members: Rules but no Rulebook. *West J Med* . 2001;175:236-239