

## Bibliotek for Læger

*A journal devoted to medical history, ethics, philosophy and clinical theory, founded in 1809*

**Kirsten Jungersen:**

**The hippocratic oath in Antiquity**

**Bibl Læger 2007;199:313–28.**

In this article, the classical Greek doctor's oath is reanalysed and re-translated into Danish. This was last done about 100 years ago. A new perspective of the origin of the oath suggests that it should not only be named "the so-called hippocratic oath", but that it may actually be regarded as "the true hippocratic oath" and should be interpreted in the context of the world of Hippocrates during the 5th century BC. One of the ethical rules deserves special attention. Does the prohibition of "cutting" refer to surgical intervention in general, cutting for bladder stones, or, as suggested by the author, castration?

**Torben E. Andreassen:**

**The valuable Danish doctor's oath**

**Bibl Læger 2007;199:329–46.**

The Danish doctor's oath is seen as a revolutionary achievement. It was launched in 1815, but is still of great value. Of great value: the article analyses the oath as a system of values contrary to the hippocratic oath. The Danish oath is not an updated version of the hippocratic oath. The latter is a system of historical and cultural norms, whereas the Danish oath is a unique value system. The article deals with values such as equality and the value of benefiting fellow human beings. It is claimed that commercialization of the medical profession is anathema to the Danish doctor's oath.

**Henrik R. Wulff:**

**The contents of the doctor's oath from an international perspective**

**Bibl Læger 2007, 199: 347–58.**

A number of the doctor's oaths (including the Declaration of Geneva of WMA), which are used in different countries, are compared. These vows stress different aspects of the ethics of clinical practice, but apart from pledges dealing with abortion and euthanasia, the contents are largely non-controversial. It is noticeable that only a few vows mention the physician's duty to respect the patient's autonomy and to obtain an informed consent. The vow used in Denmark was introduced in 1815, whereas the others (nine from various European countries and four from the US) were written or revised after the Second World War. Doctor's oaths are mainly of a symbolic value, and it is not recommended that the short Danish vow is modernized.

**Ulla Wewer:**

**The doctor's oath at Denmark's oldest medical school**

**Bibl Læger 2007;199:359–65.**

From a position as Dean of the Faculty of Health, University of Copenhagen, the author reflects upon the history and significance of the doctor's oath for contemporary medical candidates. The setting surrounding the ceremony – the university's ceremonial hall from 1836 – is especially highlighted.

**Mogens Hørdér:**

**Around the Doctor's oath**

**Bibl Læger 2007;199:366–73.**

From a position as Dean of the Faculty of Health, University of Southern Denmark, the author reflects upon the significance of the doctor's oath for contemporary medical candidates. Examples are given from some of the 38 graduation speeches given thus far by the author.

**Hans Buhl:**

**The birth certificate of the Danish Medical Association**

**Bibl Læger 2007;199:374–9.**

The Danish doctor's oath is analyzed from the perspective of actual cases presented for the Ethical Committee of the Danish Medical Association (DMA). Special attention is drawn to professional secrecy and current dilemmas regarding the war against terror. The DMA Health Policy Declaration from 2007 is presented. This declaration is based on the statements and principles of the doctoral oath. The Ethical Committee of DMA has formulated a number of medical rights and values. The principal values are: The Obligation to help, Professionalism, Autonomy, Justice, and Trustfulness.

Finally, it is argued that the doctoral oath is still meaningful and will probably continue to be so a century from now.

**Ole J. Hartling:**

**Doctor's oath in a time of privatization**

**Bibl Læger 2007;199:380–90.**

In the Danish version of the hippocratic oath, the newly qualified physician among other things promises: "... always to care with equal conscientiousness for the poor and the rich without discrimination". A similar pledge is given in the WMA Declaration of Geneva. The promises comply with the core values of the Danish National Health Service that services should be free at the point of delivery, ethically rationed, equitably resourced, and funded out of taxation. However, there are many signs that a market driven health care system is developing in Denmark. Direct consumer advertising of health services has recently been permitted. Private hospitals and clinics are supported directly and indirectly by the government and are expanding. This makes it possible for individuals to jump queues with their money. With commercialisation and defensive medicine, a US-style health care system is approaching. The goals of publicly owned and privately owned health systems are indeed different, the first being based on equity and solidarity and the second on maximising the wealth of investors and employees. The question is raised whether the promise of non-discrimination of the hippocratic oath can be kept within a health system that is increasingly privatised.