

New position paper addresses the ethical concepts related to health as a human right

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The American College of Physicians (ACP) has issued a new position paper addressing health as a human right and examining the intersection of human rights, ethical obligations, and health reform in recognizing

health as a human right.

The [position paper](#) is published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. An [accompanying editorial](#), "ACP and the Human Right to Health" is published with the paper.

The concept of health as a human right is complex. Rights, [human rights](#), and [ethical obligations](#) are not synonymous. ACP has longstanding policy on the ethical responsibility of physicians to provide care for all and maintain the patient-physician relationship as central to care; the ethical obligation of society to provide equitable and [universal access](#) to appropriate health care; and the continuing need for [health reform](#) in the United States to increase access to care.

By recognizing health as a human right and supporting the patient–physician relationship and [health systems](#) that promote access to care, the United States can move closer to respecting, protecting, and fulfilling for all the opportunity for health.

Developed by ACP's Ethics, Professionalism and Human Rights Committee, ACP's positions state the following:

- ACP views health as a human right based in the intrinsic dignity and equality of all patients.
- ACP recognizes that implementing health as a human right requires ethical and evidence-based [medical care](#), but also, the consideration of social determinants of health and states that health is more than health services, providing a benchmark for health equity.
- ACP understands that health as a human right can inform the ethical design, implementation, and evaluation of health care delivery. Viewing health care as human right does not directly imply a particular health system design but can be translated to

practical actions and accountability measures to assess health care performance striving for the well-being of individuals and communities.

- ACP believes that health as a human right aligns with—but does not fully encompass—the ethical obligations of physicians, the medical profession, and a just society, and stresses the urgency and importance of health as part of a physician's commitment to the best in patient interests, thus empowering them to make choices in pursuing their health.

More information: *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2023).

<https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M23-1900>

Editorial: <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M23-2606>

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