

Global Doctors for Choice
55 West 39th Street
Suite 1001
New York, NY 10018

Bartosz Arłukowicz - Minister Zdrowia
Ul. Miodowa 15
00-952 Warszawa

Maciej Hamankiewicz - Prezes Naczelnej Rady Lekarskiej
Ul. J. Sobieskiego 110
00-764 Warszawa

August 4, 2014

To Drs. Arłukowicz and Hamankiewicz, and the signatories of the Declaration of Faith of Medical Doctors and Students on Human Sexuality and Fertility:

We represent Global Doctors for Choice, an international physicians' organization active in many countries around the world. GDC is committed to the defense of human rights and to the provision of high-quality medical care grounded in science. Through medical research and advocacy for evidence-based policy, we strive to protect and expand access to comprehensive reproductive health care.

We write to express our concern about "Declaration of Faith of Medical Doctors and Students on Human Sexuality and Fertility," a pledge to refuse services including contraception, abortion, IVF and sex reassignment.

As doctors, we fully understand the importance of personal moral conscience. At the same time, our first duty is to the patient; this means that despite one's personal convictions we have an obligation to ensure that the patient's rights to information and services are not infringed. This position is supported by a number of international bodies, including the World Health Organization, the United Nations, the World Medical Association, and the International Federation of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

We recognize that there can be tension between one's personal conscience and professional obligation to a patient's best interest. A host of medical professional and international bodies have concluded that when physicians conscientiously object to providing certain components of legal care, they must:

- Disclose their objector status to patients as early as possible.
- Provide patients with timely access to medical services, including giving information about the medically indicated options of procedures for care, including those that providers object to on grounds of conscience.
- Provide accurate and timely referral information to a physician willing to provide the care
- Provide timely care to their patients when referral to other physicians is not possible and delay would jeopardize patients' health.
- Provide the medically indicated care in emergency situations, regardless of their own personal objections

These principles allow for conscientious objection to reproductive healthcare provision to be managed such that the rights of both patients and providers are accommodated. GDC starts from the premise that both individual conscience and autonomy in reproductive decision-making are essential rights. As a physician group, we advocate for the rights of individual physicians to maintain their integrity by honoring their conscience. We simultaneously advocate that physicians maintain the integrity of the profession by according first priority to patient needs and to adherence to the highest standards of evidence-based care.

Sincerely,

Global
Doctors
FOR CHOICE

Global Doctors for Choice
55 West 39th Street
New York, New York 10018
646-649-9910
646-366-1898 (Fax)