



CPME/AD/Brd/170606/101/EN

At its Board meeting in Brussels on 17 June 2006, the CPME adopted the following resolution: **CPME Resolution on Safeguarding Professional Autonomy of Doctors** (CPME 2006/101 Final EN/FR)

CPME RESOLUTION ON SAFEGUARDING PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY OF DOCTORS

Background

A Dutch health insurance company has recently proposed to offer GPs a reward if they followed professional guidelines to the letter and if they were to substitute (75-95%) of their prescriptions for certain types of medication by cheaper brands or generics. A Dutch court has ruled (on 30/05/06) that this type of incentive does not limit the doctor's professional autonomy and does not jeopardise patients' best interests, since professional guidelines are taken as a starting point and the doctor remains free to deviate from the policy if this is in the best interest of the patient.

This is one of many examples of different stakeholders in health care who—with varying motives—are trying to influence medical decision-making. Such activities threaten the professional judgement of doctors and could stand in the way of what is best for their patients.

Statement

- CPME reiterates its position¹ that it is of paramount importance to protect the principle of professional autonomy of physicians. Professional autonomy is first of all intended to protect the rights of patients.
- Professional autonomy implies that physicians can deviate from professional guidelines when needed, and that they are prepared to account for any deviation.
- Where treatment alternatives exist, physicians must pay proper attention to cost-effectiveness, always considering the best *medical* interests of the patient.
- CPME recommends that physicians refrain from contacts, alliances and associations that might create a conflict with their professional responsibilities.
- CPME calls upon other stakeholders to refrain from providing incentives that might unduly influence physicians' professional decision-making.

¹ CP 1999/020 FINAL EN