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On 31 October 2015, the CPME Board adopted the 'CPME Statement on medical confidentiality' (CPME 2015/074 FINAL)

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### **CPME Statement on medical confidentiality**

*The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) represents national medical associations across Europe. We are committed to contributing the medical profession's point of view to EU and European policy-making through pro-active cooperation on a wide range of health and healthcare related issues<sup>1</sup>.*

There have been calls to ease medical confidentiality restrictions, most recently in the aftermath of the crash of the Germanwings Airbus brought about by the alleged suicide of the plane's co-pilot, which led to 150 deaths.

In light of this discussion, the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) reaffirms the fundamental importance of the principle of medical confidentiality - a principle that benefits patients and society. Physicians have an obligation to remain silent about anything that has been entrusted to them in their capacity as physicians. This obligation also extends beyond the death of the patient. Strong principles of medical confidentiality and patient privacy not only form the basis of a trusting patient-physician relationship but are also essential for unrestricted access to medical care and good and effective medical practice. They also constitute patient rights and human rights. Confidentiality serves the security of society as it helps patients to seek medical care in cases when their illness may threaten the patient him/herself and/or society and the fear of disclosure of medical data inhibits the patients from seeking care. Neither patients nor society are served if patients in need of medical care are afraid to seek help.

Tragic events must not be used to justify the restriction of fundamental rights that would result from a weakening of the principle of medical confidentiality. However, physicians already acknowledge the need to divulge confidential information in exceptional circumstances. This is true in cases where they have been released from their obligation to medical confidentiality or where disclosure is required to defend an over-riding public interest to prevent serious harm, including serious crime.

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<sup>1</sup> CPME is registered in the Transparency Register with the ID number 9276943405-41. More information about CPME's activities can be found under [www.cpme.eu](http://www.cpme.eu)