Statement on Physician Nonparticipation in Legally Authorized Executions

Committee of Origin: Ethics

(Approved by the ASA House of Delegates on October 18, 2006, and reaffirmed on October 13, 2021)

1) Execution by lethal injection has resulted in the incorrect association of capital punishment with the practice of medicine, particularly anesthesiology.

2) Although lethal injection mimics certain technical aspects of the practice of anesthesia, capital punishment in any form is not the practice of medicine.

3) Because of ancient and modern principles of medical ethics, legal execution should not necessitate participation by an anesthesiologist or any other physician.

4) ASA continues to agree with the position of the American Medical Association on physician involvement in capital punishment. ASA strongly discourages participation by anesthesiologists in executions.