

ETHICAL AND MEDICO-LEGAL ISSUES IN RINGSIDE MEDICINE

POSITION STATEMENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF RINGSIDE PHYSICIANS

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The ringside physician must strive to promote safety and prevent injury and illness in all combat sports. These guidelines are provided to help avoid ethical pitfalls that can occur in the provision of medical care.

Administrative

1. The overriding principle for all ringside physicians is to provide care focused on what is best for the athlete. All other interests are subservient.
2. Physicians providing any care to athletes should have a current license to practice medicine. Physicians are responsible for checking with each jurisdiction or location in which they provide ringside coverage to determine if other requirements exist.
3. Ringside physicians may serve as Primary Care Providers for combat sports athletes and treat these athletes in their medical office for conditions relating to injuries sustained in training or competition. Physicians who treat a particular athlete outside of a sporting event should recuse themselves, when possible, from providing medical decision-making during a bout involving that athlete to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest. Note that a licensing examination, by itself, does not necessarily establish a physician-patient relationship for care and should not require recusal of the examining physician from medical decision-making during a bout.
4. For conditions encountered during licensing and pre-fight physicals, physicians must not divulge any medical information to anyone other than the sanctioning officials and medical committee members.
5. For conditions encountered during a public sporting event, physicians should not discuss medical issues during the bout with persons other than the on-site medical team and sanctioning officials. After the event, physicians may discuss medical decision-making leading to bout stoppage with officially recognized media personnel **ONLY** if the sanctioning organization and athlete authorize it.
6. Posting athlete injuries on social media is discouraged unless athletes consent to it. Taking pictures or videos of injuries of medical care for future education purposes may be done if athletes consent in writing to this specific use of their information and imagery. HIPAA law should be adhered to.
7. Physicians are discouraged from discussing non-medical issues, such as judging, scoring, or bout outcomes, with members of the media or on social media.
8. Physicians working at an event must not use any substances that may impair his or her ability to work and exercise sound judgment. Alcohol or illegal substances should not be consumed while working at an event, regardless of the habits of those in the vicinity.

9. Physicians responsible for medical care at an event should ensure they are provided complimentary seating immediately adjacent to the ring or cage, with easy access to the stairs or entrance. Physicians may request from the sanctioning body ringside seating for guests or shadowing physicians, but granting this is at the sole discretion of the sanctioning body. Physicians are encouraged to attend combat sports events in jurisdictions outside their scope of services. This increased exposure is an invaluable learning tool.
10. Physicians responsible for medical care at an event should be present continuously during the event and not leave the venue until all fighters have been adequately evaluated and have left the competition and recovery areas.
11. Physicians must not place wagers on any of the bouts or events at which they are working.
12. Physicians may seek and accept autographs and photographs with athletes after the event completion, if allowed by the sanctioning bodies and promotional organizations.
4. Gifts should not be offered to the ringside physician by a promoter, athlete, or sponsor, nor should gifts from these entities be accepted by a physician, to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest.
5. During ARP sponsored events, the ARP may purchase tickets from promoters at discounted rates. Promoters and other companies may sponsor ARP educational events with gifts or financial donations that are specifically for the event; donations should not be made directly to an individual physician.
6. Physicians must reveal to the sanctioning body any financial/contractual relationships with any athletes, promoters, or other entities involved in an athletic event. If such relationships exist, the physician should recuse him/herself from any applicable bout or event to avoid a conflict of interest.

Financial

1. Physicians should be appropriately compensated for their work and supplies related to combat sports medical coverage, including pre-bout physical examinations, event coverage, and treatments provided to athletes (if allowed), and for travel and accommodations.
2. Physicians may act as advisors/consultants to sanctioning bodies and promotional organizations and should be appropriately compensated for their time and professional expertise.
3. Physicians should not request complimentary or discounted event tickets directly from a promoter to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest.