

## VERMONT MEDICAL SOCIETY RESOLUTION

### Reaffirming the Physician/Patient Relationship

*Submitted to VMS Council by VMS Executive Committee - September 7, 2010*

1 Whereas, medicine is, at its center, a moral enterprise grounded in a covenant of trust. This covenant  
2 obliges physicians to be competent and to use their competence in the patient's best interests.  
3 Physicians, therefore, are both intellectually and morally obliged to act as advocates for the sick  
4 whenever their welfare is threatened and for their health at all times; and

5 Whereas, strong forces, both internal and external, degrade the physician-patient relationship, and time  
6 available for physician-patient interaction is severely constrained, the quality of medical care and health  
7 outcomes may also be in serious jeopardy. With studies finding an association between shorter visits  
8 and increased rates of medication prescriptions; and  
9

10 Whereas, face-to-face encounters are where physicians and patients come to know each other over the  
11 years as people rather than as "cases" and "providers." They are where physicians inform, motivate, and  
12 negotiate with patients. And they are also where physicians gather the information essential for  
13 diagnosis and management with 90% of diagnosis made from a patient's history and only 10% from  
14 physical exam or diagnostic testing; and  
15

16 Whereas, palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families  
17 facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of  
18 suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other  
19 problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual; and  
20

21 Whereas, shared decision making is the collaboration between patients and caregivers to come to an  
22 agreement about a healthcare decision; and  
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24 Whereas, the physician/patient relationship can only be strengthened by shared decision making  
25 therefore be it  
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27 **RESOLVED, that the VMS support shared decision making and encourage physicians to have an**  
28 **open dialog with patients about palliative care services and end-of-life planning; and be it**  
29 **further**  
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31 **RESOLVED, that the VMS work with the medical profession to reaffirm the primacy of its**  
32 **obligation to the patient through national, state, and local professional societies; academic,**  
33 **research, and hospital organizations.**