



To the
Constituent Members of the
World Medical Association

By e-mail

28 July 2020

Declaration of Helsinki – promoting the use of the correct version

Dear Colleagues,

The [Declaration of Helsinki](#) is undoubtedly the cornerstone document on ethical principles guiding medical research involving human subjects. We appreciate that many medical journals require the adherence (and documentation of it) as a prerequisite for publishing research papers. Moreover, the “Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals - Updated December 2019”(page 7) by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors says “that the planning conduct and reporting of human research are in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration as revised in 2013”.

However, we still find numerous publications that relate to earlier versions of the Declaration of Helsinki. It is important to emphasize that only the 2013 version reflects the current level of protection for research subjects. Previous versions are no longer valid and do not satisfy the ethical demands for research with human beings. Authors can, of course, quote older versions of the Declaration of Helsinki. Still, those cannot serve to indicate the compliance of ongoing or planned research with current ethical principles and demands.

We therefore kindly ask you to write to the medical journals in your country asking them for assistance by demanding adherence to the principles for medical research as laid down in the 2013 version of the Declaration of Helsinki and not to permit the use of older versions for the acceptance of publications.

With kind regards

Dr Otmar Kloiber
Secretary General