

**Missouri State Medical Association  
House of Delegates**

Resolution # 12  
(A-23)

Introduced by: Ashley Glass, Charles Adams, Bethany Baumgartner - Kansas City University

Subject: Pelvic Exams for Anesthetized Patients

Referred to: Reference Committee A

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1 **WHEREAS**, non-consensual pelvic exams are performed on unconscious patients under anesthesia for  
2 “learning opportunities” of medical students<sup>1</sup>, and

3  
4 **WHEREAS**, although the rate of non-consensual pelvic exams is unknown because they are not reported  
5 and patients are unaware that they are being performed, the procedure is prevalent in teaching  
6 hospitals<sup>1</sup>, and

7  
8 **WHEREAS**, a recent survey of 101 medical students from seven American medical schools indicated that  
9 92% of students had performed pelvic exams on anesthetized female patients where 61% of those  
10 students didn’t have consent from the patients involved<sup>2</sup>, and

11  
12 **WHEREAS**, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) believes that pelvic examinations on  
13 women under anesthesia, without their knowledge and approval is unethical and unacceptable<sup>3</sup>, and the  
14 American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) states that pelvic examinations on an  
15 anesthetized woman that offer her no personal benefit and are performed solely for teaching purposes  
16 should be performed only with her specific informed consent<sup>4</sup>, and

17  
18 **WHEREAS**, the supreme court case *Schloendorff v Society of New York Hospital* (1914), establishes that a  
19 clinician who performs a procedure on a patient without informed consent is held liable at the court of  
20 law<sup>5</sup>, and

21  
22 **WHEREAS**, informed consent requires that the patient has capacity, has enough information to base  
23 their decision on, and is free of coercion<sup>5</sup>, and

24  
25 **WHEREAS**, institutional policies for physical exam consent do not clearly distinguish between intimate  
26 exams and those on other “neutral” body parts in current processes, patients view intimate exams as  
27 necessitating additional consent<sup>6</sup>, and

28  
29 **WHEREAS**, performing pelvic exams without informed consent violates one's inherent bodily autonomy,  
30 basic rights, and trust<sup>7</sup>, and

31  
32 **WHEREAS**, non-consensual pelvic exams may harm the patient psychologically and physically<sup>7</sup>, and

33  
34 **WHEREAS**, medical students who perform these pelvic exams may also be negatively impacted such as  
35 experiencing PTSD, guilt, and distrust<sup>5</sup>, and

36  
37 **WHEREAS**, medical students who do not conduct intimate exams because of the lack of consent may  
38 jeopardize their career by showing “unwarranted disobedience” to preceptors or attendings<sup>2</sup>, and

39  
40 **WHEREAS**, 21 states have outlawed unauthorized pelvic exams<sup>8</sup>, and  
41  
42 **WHEREAS**, in Missouri, House Bill No. 459 has been proposed to ban non-consensual pelvic exams<sup>9</sup>, and  
43  
44 **WHEREAS**, House Bill No. 459 has not progressed from its assigned committee<sup>10</sup>; therefore, be it  
45  
46 **RESOLVED**, that our MSMA oppose non-consensual pelvic exams of anesthetized patients solely for  
47 learning purposes in the state of Missouri.

**Fiscal Note: None**

**Current Policy: None**

References:

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6. Valencia, Misha. "Hospitals are Allowing Medical Students to Perform Pelvic Exams on Unconscious Women - without Their Consent. *Healthy Women*, 24 May 2021.
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9. Pelvic Examinations, HR 459, 101st General Assembly, First Regular Session (2021).
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