

# Historical Perspectives on Medical Ethics

## Historical Perspectives on Medical Ethics

### 1. Introduction

- The history of medical ethics traces how moral standards in medicine have developed over time.
- Studying it helps explain the principles that guide practice today.

### 2. Ancient Foundations

- **Hippocratic Oath:** an early Greek code emphasising benefit to patients and avoiding harm.
- Many ancient cultures linked healing with duties of confidentiality and care.

### 3. Development of Codes

- Religious and philosophical traditions shaped ideas of duty and compassion.
- Codes gradually formalised expectations for honesty and professional conduct.

### 4. Twentieth-Century Milestones

- **Nuremberg Code:** established after wartime abuses, requiring voluntary consent for research.
- The Declaration of Helsinki set ethical standards for medical research on humans.

### 5. Modern Era

- The four-principle approach became central to teaching and practice.
- Patient autonomy and informed consent gained increasing emphasis.

### 6. Summary

- Medical ethics evolved from ancient oaths to modern codes, shaped by philosophy, religion, and responses to past abuses in research and care.