

Historical Development of Medical-Legal

Historical Development of Medical-Legal Ethics

1. Introduction

- Medical-legal ethics has evolved over centuries in response to advances and abuses in medicine.
- Studying its history explains today's principles and protections.

2. Ancient Foundations

- The **Hippocratic Oath** established early duties to benefit patients and avoid harm.
- Ancient codes emphasised confidentiality and professional conduct.

3. Twentieth-Century Turning Points

- The **Nuremberg Code (1947)** arose after unethical wartime experiments, establishing voluntary consent.
- The **Declaration of Helsinki (1964)** set ethical standards for medical research.

4. Patient Rights Movement

- Later decades emphasised autonomy, informed consent, and the right to refuse treatment.
- Landmark legal cases shaped rules on consent and end-of-life care.

5. Modern Era

- Bioethics committees and professional codes now guide practice.
- New technologies raise ongoing ethical questions.

6. Summary

- Ethical principles developed largely in response to historical abuses.
- This history underpins modern protections for patients and research subjects.