

Patient Rights and Autonomy

Patient Rights and Autonomy

1. Introduction

- Patient autonomy is the right of competent individuals to make their own healthcare decisions.
- It is a cornerstone of modern medical ethics and patient rights.

2. Meaning of Autonomy

- **Autonomy:** self-governance and the freedom to choose without coercion.
- It requires that patients receive adequate information and have capacity to decide.

3. Informed Consent

- Patients must understand the diagnosis, options, risks, and benefits.
- Consent must be given voluntarily and may be withdrawn at any time.

4. Related Patient Rights

- The right to refuse treatment, even against medical advice.
- The right to confidentiality, dignity, and access to one's records.

5. Limits and Challenges

- Autonomy may be limited where decisions endanger others or in emergencies.
- Capacity, literacy, and power imbalances can hinder true autonomy.

6. Summary

- Respecting autonomy means supporting informed, voluntary patient choices.
- It works alongside other rights to ensure ethical, patient-centred care.