



Source Oaths

The healer's connection to patients and communities was special. It was not *contractual* but *covenantal*, as between kings and subjects, fathers and sons, husbands and wives, and between the divine and humankind.

That connection was established via oaths, which is one type of *covenant* statement. The *Oath of Hippocrates* was the first formal, written oath and remains the best known. It adapted to the times and was joined by similar medical oaths using a typical *covenant* structure. That structure involves three parts.

- Part One: oath takers call upon the divine, or in modern parlance, "...all I hold dear," to witness a set of promises the oath taker will make.
- Part Two: oath takers make professional and ethical promises, updating and adapting those to the culture and times.
- Part Three: oath takers invite the divine to reward them for faithfulness to those promises or, if they do not, to meet out the reverse.

In the case of *contractual* agreements, when one party violates the agreement or harms another, judges adjudicate the outcome. *Conversely, covenants are self-enforcing because, as shown most clearly in the Oath of Hippocrates, the promise is between healers and the divine, not between healers and patients.*

Eventually, nurses and pharmacists embraced oaths tailored to their profession, as did some healthcare executives. Though these later oaths embraced many – though not all – of the three elements of a *covenant* statement, they nonetheless were taken with that intent in mind.

Oath of Hippocrates ♦ Ancient Version

I swear by Apollo the physician, by Aesculapius, Hygeia, and Panacea, and I take to witness all the gods, all the goddesses, to keep according to my ability and my judgment the following Oath:

To consider dear to me as my parents him who taught me this art; to live in common with him and if necessary to share my goods with him; to look upon his children as my own brothers, to teach them this art if they so desire without fee or written promise; to impart to my sons and the sons of the master who taught me the disciples who have enrolled themselves and have agreed to the rules of the profession, but to these alone, the precepts and the instruction.

I will prescribe regimens for the good of my patients according to my ability and judgment.

To please no one will I prescribe a deadly drug nor give advice that may cause his death.

Nor will I give a woman a pessary to procure abortion.

But I will preserve the purity of my art and my life.

I will not cut for stone and leave this operation to be performed by practitioners (specialists in this art).

In every house where I come, I will enter only for the good of my patients, keeping myself far from all intentional ill-doing and all seduction, and especially from the pleasure of love with women or with men, be they free or slaves.

All that may come to my knowledge in the exercise of my profession, outside of my profession, or in daily commerce with men, which ought not spread abroad, I will keep secret and will never reveal.

If I keep this oath faithfully, may I enjoy my life and practice my art, respected by all men and at all times, but if I swerve from it or violate it, may the reverse be my lot.

Oath of Hippocrates ♦ Modern Version

I do solemnly swear, by whatever I hold most sacred,

that I will be loyal to the profession of medicine and just and generous to its members.

That I will lead my life and practice my art in uprightness and honor.

That into whatsoever home I shall enter, it shall be for the good of the sick and the well to the utmost of my power and that I will hold myself aloof from wrong and from corruption and from the tempting of others to vice.

That I will exercise my art solely for the cure of my patients and the prevention of disease and will give no drug nor perform any operation for a criminal purpose, and far less suggest such thing.



That whatsoever I shall see or hear of the lives of men and women which is not fitting to be spoken abroad, I shall keep inviolably secret.

These things I do promise and in proportion as I am faithful to this oath, may happiness and good repute be ever mine, the opposite if I shall be foresworn.

Prayer of Maimonides

All-bountiful! Thou hast formed the human body in Thy complete wisdom. Thou hast united it in ten thousand times ten thousand parts that function continuously to preserve the harmony of the beautiful entity, the mortal integument of the immortals. Ever they are active in complete order, harmony and unity. The moment, however, that frailty of matter or passions disturb this order and disrupt the unity, the forces engage in conflict, and the body is reduced to its dust. It is then that Thou sendst to man beneficent messengers, the diseases, who announce to him the danger and urge him to avoid it.

Thy Earth, Thy rivers, and Thy mountains are blessed by Thee with healing substances: they can heal. They assuage the suffering of Thy creatures and heal their wounds. Thou hast granted man the wisdom to unravel the secrets of his body, to recognize order and disorder, to draw the substances from their sources, to seek out their forces, and to prepare and apply them according to their respective diseases. And Thy eternal foresight has chosen me to watch over the life and health of Thy creatures, and I now go forth to follow my calling. Stand by me, All-bountiful, in this great undertaking so that I may succeed, for without Thy aid, man has no success, even in the most trivial things.

Inspire me with love for my art and Thy creatures. Do not permit that thirst of grain and greed for fame interfere with my calling, for these are enemies of truth and philanthropy, and they might also lead me astray in the mighty enterprise to further the weal of Thy creatures. Preserve the strength of my body and soul so that they may be indefatigable at all times to help and to stand by the rich as well as the poor, the good and the bad, the enemy as well as the friend. In the sufferer always let me behold only the human being.

Enlighten my understanding so that I may grasp what is present and correctly surmise what is absent or hidden. Allow it not to sink so that my judgment may not fail to recognize what is evident but also that it may not overestimate itself and see what cannot be seen. For fine and imperceptible are the boundaries of the great art and of watching over the life and health of Thy creatures! Let not my intelligence be abstracted. At the bedside, let no extraneous matters rob my spirit of its watchfulness. Let them not disturb in its quiet labors. For great and holy is the search for the preservation of life and health of Thy creatures.

Grant my patients confidence in me and my art, and imbue them with obedience to follow my precepts and directions. Ban from their bedside all quacks and the army of advice-giving relatives and too-wise nurses, for they are a terrible band, who, through their vanity, harm the best intentions of the healing art and frequently cause the death of Thy creatures.



If wiser artists seek to improve and instruct me, let my spirit be thankful and obedient; for great is the field of the art. When, however, conceited fools berate me, then let the love of the art steel my spirit and insist on truth, regardless of age, fame or standing, for to retract in such a case would mean death and disease of Thy creatures.

Grant to my spirit, gentleness and calm, when colleagues, vain of their years, repulse, scorn or sneering try to correct me. Let this also be to my advantage for they know some things that are foreign to me and their self-conceit shall not offend me; they are old and old age is not the master of passions. For I too hope to be old before Thee, All-bountiful!

Grant me contentment in all things, safe in the great art. Permit not the thought to awaken in me: You know enough; but grant me strength, leisure and the urge always to enlarge my accomplishments and to add to others. True art is long, but man's mind penetrates even farther. All bountiful, Thou in Thy mercy hast chosen me to watch over the life and death of Thy creatures. I now go forth in the pursuit of my calling. Stand by me in this large undertaking, so it may be successful, for sans Thy help man is not successful, be it in the most trifling matter.

Islamic Oath

I swear by God the Great;

To regard God in carrying out my profession;

To protect human life in all stages and under all circumstances, doing my utmost to rescue it from death, malady, pain, and anxiety;

To keep people's dignity, cover their privacies, and lock up their secrets;

To be, all the way, an instrument of God's mercy extending my medical care to near and far, virtuous and sinner and friend and enemy;

To strive in the pursuit of knowledge and harnessing it for the benefit but not the harm of mankind;

To revere my teacher, teach my junior, and be brother to members of the medical profession joined in piety and charity;

To live my Faith in private and in public, avoiding whatever blemishes me in the eyes of God, His apostle, and my fellow Faithful;

And may God be witness to this Oath.



Nightingale Pledge

I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly:

To pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully;

I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug;

I will do all in my power to maintain and elevate the standard of my profession and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping and all family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my calling;

With loyalty will I endeavor to aid the physician in his work, and devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care.

Pharmacist's Oath

At this time, I vow:

To devote my professional life to the service of all humankind through the profession of pharmacy.

I will consider the welfare of humanity and relief of suffering my primary concerns.

I will apply my knowledge, experience and skills to the best of my ability to assure optimal drug therapy outcomes of the patients I serve.

I will keep abreast of developments and maintain professional competence in my profession of pharmacy.

I will maintain the highest principles of moral, ethical and legal conduct.

I will embrace and advocate change in the profession of pharmacy that improves patient care.

I take these vows voluntarily with the full realization of the responsibility with which I am entrusted by the public.

American College of Healthcare Executives

Abide by its Code of Ethics;

Contribute to the advancement of our profession by exemplifying competence and



leadership in healthcare management;

Commit to lifelong learning by maintaining a personal program of continuing education;

Contribute to the improvement of my community's health status;

Enhance our profession through leadership in a wide range of community and professional activities;

Uphold and further the mission of the American College of Healthcare Executives to advance healthcare management excellence.

