

Medical Arts and Sciences: A Scientific Journal of the College of Medical Evangelists

Volume 2 | Number 2

Article 2

4-1948

Duration of Physician-Patient Relationship

Louis J. Regan

College of Medical Evangelists

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarsrepository.llu.edu/medartssciences>

 Part of the [Life Sciences Commons](#), [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Regan, Louis J. (1948) "Duration of Physician-Patient Relationship," *Medical Arts and Sciences: A Scientific Journal of the College of Medical Evangelists*: Vol. 2: No. 2, Article 2.

Available at: <http://scholarsrepository.llu.edu/medartssciences/vol2/iss2/2>

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by the Loma Linda University Publications at TheScholarsRepository@LLU: Digital Archive of Research, Scholarship & Creative Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Medical Arts and Sciences: A Scientific Journal of the College of Medical Evangelists* by an authorized administrator of TheScholarsRepository@LLU: Digital Archive of Research, Scholarship & Creative Works. For more information, please contact scholarsrepository@llu.edu.

EDITORIAL

DURATION OF PHYSICIAN-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

LOUIS J. REGAN, M.D.*

A physician is not required to accept any patient, but once the relationship of physician-patient is established, the physician, if he accepts the employment generally and without special limitation, is obligated to continue to render the professional service until his attention is no longer required, unless he is sooner discharged by the patient or withdraws from the case. A physician may withdraw from the case by giving reasonable notice of his intention to do so and by allowing the patient a reasonable time to fill his place.

A physician may by notice or special agreement limit his obligation to render service to the patient. Thus he may lawfully agree to treat the patient only for a limited time, or at a particular place, or for a specified condition, or through the use of special procedure or instrumentality. It may be arranged: that a consultant will have but a single contact with the patient; that a surgeon will function

only in respect to performing a specific operation; that a radiologist may simply make and interpret certain films; that an ophthalmologist will just treat an eye condition which has developed intercurrently during the course of a general disease, et cetera. In all of these situations the responsibilities and the duration of the assumed obligations are limited by the express or implied agreement of employment.

It is held that if a physician relies on his having been discharged by the patient or upon having properly withdrawn from the case to justify discontinuing attention to the patient, the burden of proving such facts is upon him. It is important, therefore, to confirm discharge or withdrawal by means of a written communication to the patient, a carbon copy to be filed in the medical case record.

A physician may not voluntarily abandon his patient.

*Professor of Legal Medicine, College of Medical Evangelists.