

The Hippocratic Oath

Hippocrates (c. 460 – c. 377 BCE)

I. The Invocation:

“I swear by Apollo Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panaceaia and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfill according to my ability and judgment this oath and covenant.”

II. The Obligations and Prohibitions:¹

[A] “To hold him who has taught me this art as my equal to my parents and to live my life in partnership with him, and if he is in need of money to give him a share of mine, and to regard his offspring as equal to my brothers in male lineage and to teach them this art—if they desire to learn it—without fee and covenant;

[B] To give a share of precepts and oral instruction and all the other learning to my sons and to the sons of him who has instructed me and to pupils who have signed the covenant and have taken the oath according to the medical law, but to no one else.

[C] I will apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment; I will keep them from harm and injustice;

[D] I will neither give a deadly drug nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly, I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy.

[E] In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my art.

[F] I will not use the knife, not even on sufferers from stone, but will withdraw in favor of such men as are engaged in this work.

[G] Whatever houses I may visit, I will come for the benefit of the sick, remaining free of all intentional injustice, of all mischief and in particular of sexual relations with both female and male persons, be they free or slaves.

[H] What I may see or hear in the course of the treatment or even outside of the treatment in regard to the life of men, which on no account one must spread abroad, I will keep to myself holding such things shameful to be spoken about.”

III. The Curse:

“If I fulfill this oath and do not violate it, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and art, being honored with fame among all men for all time to come; if I transgress it and swear falsely, may the opposite of all this be my lot.”

¹ Note: the capital letters in brackets in this section are mine.