

American Medical Association

Physicians dedicated to the health of America



John C. Nelson, MD, MPH, FACOG, FACPM
President-Elect

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May 26, 2004

Joseph J. Nicolosi, PhD
President
National Association for Research and Therapy
of Homosexuality
16633 Ventura Boulevard
Suite 1340
Encino, CA 91436-1801

Dear Dr. Nicolosi:

Thank you for your letter of April 27, 2004, concerning the American Medical Association (AMA) *Complete Medical Encyclopedia*. The article on "Homosexuality" to which you refer was carefully researched, written, and reviewed by a physician panel—as were all the entries in the *Encyclopedia*.

As you know, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) does not define homosexuality as an illness or disease, and current mainstream medical practice recognizes and incorporates the APA's expertise on this question.

The AMA is a members' organization for physicians governed by the House of Delegates. The House debates and passes policies, and in the instance of clinical issues, the policies are usually informed by and preceded by research-based reports of the AMA Council on Scientific Affairs. Current policy in the form of H-160.991, "Health Care Needs of the Homosexual Population," was based on such a council report. This policy includes the following clause:

[Our AMA:] Opposes the use of "reparative" or "conversion" therapy that is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the a priori assumption that the patient should change his/her homosexual orientation.

The number of practicing homosexuals is always stated as an estimate or opinion, and the doctors who reviewed the article verified that the percentages used were commonly agreed upon and reasonable. Self-reporting surveys on sexual behavior are sometimes subject to underreporting, for a variety of reasons.

Regarding the final point in your letter, the *Encyclopedia* was not attempting to dismiss religion or treat it cavalierly. The focus of AMA health publications for patients, however, is health information and advice. We expect and assume that readers have

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diverse religious views on many topics, and we respect that. But as a physicians' organization, we key our editorial approach toward clinical information, and that is what our readers are seeking from the AMA.

Thank you again for contacting the American Medical Association with your input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Nelson MD, MPH". The signature is written in a cursive style.

John C. Nelson, MD, MPH
President-Elect

cc: William G. Plested III, MD
J. Edward Hill, MD
Michael A. Maves, MD, MBA
AMA Board of Trustees Executive Committee
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