

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 423
(A-03)

Introduced by: California Delegation
American College of Preventive Medicine

Subject: Toxicity of Computers and Electronics Waste

Referred to: Reference Committee D
(Carol A. Tavani, MD, Chair)

1 Whereas, The manufacture, use and disposal of electronic products has a broad range of
2 environmental and health impacts, including the use of carcinogenic materials, toxic chemicals,
3 air and groundwater pollution, poor working conditions and ozone depletion; and
4

5 Whereas, Due to the higher sales and shorter life spans of electronic products, electronic waste
6 has become the world's fastest growing waste stream and the National Safety Council predicts
7 that in the US between 315 million and 680 million computers will become obsolete within the
8 next few years (in California alone, 6,000 computers become obsolete every day); and
9

10 Whereas, According to the Environmental Protection Agency, 70% of the heavy metals
11 (including mercury and cadmium) found in landfills comes from discarded electronic products,
12 and the heavy metals and other hazardous substances found in electronics contaminate
13 groundwater and pose other environmental and public health risks; and
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15 Whereas, Electronic waste contains significant amounts of PVC, which makes the flue gas
16 residues and air emissions particularly dangerous to human health; and
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18 Whereas, At present, brand owners, producers and original equipment manufacturers bear
19 none of the burden or responsibility for safely managing discarded electronic equipment at the
20 end of its useful life, instead burdening taxpayers, local governments and end users with these
21 costs and responsibilities; and
22

23 Whereas, In the European Union and several Asian nations, brand owners, producers and
24 original equipment manufacturers bear financial responsibility for ensuring the environmentally
25 superior management of discarded and obsolete electronic equipment and for phasing out toxic
26 materials such as lead, mercury and brominated flame retardants; and
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28 Whereas, The health care industry increasingly relies on and uses electronic products in all
29 facets of operation; and
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31 Whereas, Electronic manufacturers can take back their products at the end of life to safely
32 reuse and recycle the components and redesign products with minimal use of harmful materials;
33 therefore be it
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35 RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association encourage its members and US health
36 institutions to adopt purchasing or leasing contracts only with electronics manufacturers who are
37 committed to safely handling the products at the end of life, meaning that they reuse and recycle
38 to the greatest extent possible, do not export hazardous electronic waste to developing
39 countries and safely dispose of the waste that can not be reused or recycled (New HOD Policy);
40 and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That our AMA encourage its members and US health institutions to provide
2 purchasing/leasing preferences to electronics manufacturers that minimize the use of toxic and
3 hazardous constituents, use recycled content and design products that can be easily recycled in
4 order to minimize the adverse public health impacts from electronic waste (New HOD Policy);
5 and be it further
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7 RESOLVED, That our AMA support policies that hold electronics manufacturers responsible for
8 taking back their products at the end of life, with the objective of redesigning their products for
9 longevity and reduction of harmful materials. (New HOD Policy)

Fiscal Note: No Significant Fiscal Impact

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