



American College of
Emergency Physicians®

ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE 

POLICY STATEMENT

Approved February 2020

Use of the Title “Doctor” in the Clinical Setting

Revised February 2020

Originally approved
April 2014

The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) believes that a physician is an individual who has received a “Doctor of Medicine,” “Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine,” or an equivalent degree (eg, Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery ‘MBBS’) following successful completion of a prescribed course of study from a school of allopathic or osteopathic medicine.

ACEP strongly opposes the use of the term “doctor” by other professionals in the clinical setting, including by those with independent practice, where there is strong potential to mislead patients into perceiving they are being treated by a physician.

Therefore, ACEP recommends that anyone in a clinical environment including, but not limited to, a hospital, free-standing emergency department, urgent care, or retail clinic who has direct contact with a patient and presents himself or herself to the patient as a “doctor,” and who is not a “physician” according to the definition above, must specifically and simultaneously declare themselves a “non-physician” and define the nature of their doctorate degree.