



American College of
Emergency Physicians®

ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE 

POLICY STATEMENT

Approved February 2020

Fictitious Patients

Reaffirmed February 2020,
April 2014

Originally approved
June 2008

The American College of Emergency Physicians believes that all emergency patients should have access to safe, timely, efficient, and courteous medical care.

ACEP supports creativity in the development of effective measures to evaluate and improve patient care. ACEP also supports innovative approaches to medical education, including approaches that foster empathy toward patients by health care providers.

Some institutions reportedly have used fictitious patients to help evaluate the service aspects of emergency care. Some medical schools have had students pose as patients as part of their training.

ACEP opposes the use of fictitious patients in emergency care units. Deception is unethical and may undermine the trust essential to the relationship between patients and emergency caregivers. Such practices may have unintended negative effects, such as the delays in treatment for other patients, unnecessary administration of medications and improper billing practices.