Ethical AI Use in Healthcare: Policy Guidelines

1. Patient Consent Protocols

- **Informed Consent**: Patients must be fully informed when AI tools are used in diagnosis, treatment planning, or monitoring. Consent must include what data is collected, how it's used, and who accesses it.

- **Right to Opt-Out**: Patients must be allowed to opt out of AI-driven decisions without loss of care quality. A human alternative should always be available.

- **Data Use Limitations**: Patient data should be used strictly for agreed purposes. Any secondary use (e.g., for training models) must require explicit, renewed consent.

- **Anonymization and Security**: All patient data used by AI systems must be anonymized, encrypted, and protected in compliance with HIPAA, GDPR, and local data protection regulations.

2. Bias Mitigation Strategies

- **Representative Data**: AI models must be trained on diverse, representative datasets that include age, gender, race, socioeconomic background, and health conditions.

- **Fairness Audits**: Regular audits using tools like IBM AI Fairness 360, Fairlearn, or internal dashboards must be performed to check for disparities in outcomes across demographic groups.

- **Corrective Measures**: When bias is detected, immediate corrective actions must be taken — including retraining models, adjusting decision thresholds, or limiting deployment until fairness is verified.

- **Independent Review**: All AI tools should undergo third-party evaluation for ethical compliance before being deployed in patient-facing systems.

3. Transparency Requirements

- **Explainability**: AI recommendations (e.g., diagnosis or risk scores) must be explainable to healthcare providers and, when appropriate, to patients in plain language.

- **Disclosure of AI Use**: Medical staff must disclose to patients when an AI tool contributes to clinical decision-making.

- **Documentation**: AI development and usage logs must be maintained — including training data sources, performance metrics, known limitations, and model update history.

- **Human Oversight**: All AI decisions must be reviewable and overridable by qualified medical professionals.

Conclusion:

Ethical AI in healthcare must prioritize patient autonomy, safety, and fairness. These guidelines serve as a foundation for building trust and ensuring AI supports — rather than replaces — human-centered care.