

Evolve Resources for Legal and Ethical Issues for Health Professions

4th edition

Chapter 2 The Basics of Ethics

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Lesson 2.1 Ethics (1 of 2)

1. Define *ethics* and explain the different branches of ethics.
2. Examine the importance of ethics in healthcare.
3. Understand the difference between ethics, morals, and values.
4. Describe the importance of a code of ethics for healthcare professionals.
5. Describe the difference between standards of practice and standards of care.
6. Relate specific ethical theories to healthcare situations.
7. Apply one of the ethical decision-making models to a specific ethical healthcare dilemma.
8. Explain the function of an ethics committee.

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What Are Ethics?

- Values that influence human behavior
 - Sense of right and wrong
- Individual's ethics – one person's moral principles
 - Values that govern a single person's decisions
- Group ethics
 - System of principles and rules of conduct agreed upon by a group or culture
 - Example: medical ethics

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Ethics, Morals, or Values?

- **Ethics:** how individuals in a society should act by defining right and wrong and appropriate conduct to serve the greater good
- **Morals:** goodness or badness, right or wrong of specific actions
- **Values:** what an individual person believes to be right or wrong

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Codes of Ethics/Conduct

- Code of ethics or code of conduct
 - Policy by which all employees must abide
 - Core values of the organization or profession
 - May include statements regarding:
 - Treating patients with dignity and respect
 - Guarding and respecting patient confidentiality
- Applied ethics
 - Ethical policies applied to specific issues or circumstances
 - Usually categorized by organization or profession

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Bioethics

- Example of applied ethics
- Study of ethical dilemmas related to medicine, medical research, and science
- Issues such as: stem cell research, genetic engineering, organ donation, euthanasia

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Medical Ethics

- Basic principles:
 - **Autonomy:** capacity to think, decide, act on one's own free will and initiative
 - **Justice:** ethics should be based on consistency and fairness
 - **Beneficence:** doing the "most good", doing what is best for patients
 - **Non-maleficence:** "do no harm"
- Ethical issues that arise out of patient care
- Focus on duty to patient

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Medical Codes of Ethics

- Hippocratic Oath
 - Sworn by medical professionals for centuries
 - Pledge to prescribe only beneficial treatments according to their abilities and judgment, to refrain from causing harm or hurt and to live an exemplary life
- American Medical Association (AMA)
 - More encompassing, contemporary code of medical ethics
 - Enacted in 1847, updated in 2001

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Tolerance

- Respect for others whose beliefs, practices, religions, or customs may differ from our own
- **MUST** be practiced by all healthcare providers in all fields
 - Do not have to agree with or condone, but can never pass judgment by actions or words

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Medical Ethics

- Standards of practice
 - Establishes basic requirements for skill and care
- Medical practice acts
 - Prescribe scope of practice guidelines
 - Establish and govern licensing boards and regulations for education and training
 - **Scope of practice**
 - Defines procedures, actions, and processes that are permitted for licensed and unlicensed individuals
 - Limited by provisions of the law required for education, experience, and demonstrated competency

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Ethics and the Challenges of Subjectivity (1 of 4)

- Repeated wrongs
 - Individuals have ability for self-deception
 - Over time, repeated wrong becomes less troublesome
- Ignoring a witnessed wrong
 - Convinced they are innocent of ongoing misconduct because they are not the perpetrator
 - Can be held financially and criminally liable for not reporting an offense

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Ethics and the Challenges of Subjectivity (2 of 4)

- Subjectivity and the Needs Hierarchy
 - Needs must be satisfied in a specific order for us to self-actualize
 - Need for basic sources of life
 - Need for safe environment
 - Need to belong and to be loved
 - Need to feel responsible and valued (self-esteem)
 - Need to contribute, find personal growth and fulfillment
 - Patients may be on different level of need
 - Value differences may reflect that disparity

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Ethics and the Challenges of Subjectivity (3 of 4)

- Bioethics
 - Study of ethical dilemmas that arise as medicine advances
- Ethics versus law
 - Many unethical behaviors are not illegal
 - Must understand all legal and ethical ramifications of our actions and behaviors

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Ethics and the Challenges of Subjectivity (4 of 4)

- Medical etiquette
 - How medical professionals handle each other and patients
 - Especially applicable to patients with disabilities or mental disorders
 - Standards of professionalism in the medical field
 - Show patients respect and tolerance, no matter the circumstances
 - Most patients are not well or may be facing stressful challenges
 - Healthcare workers need to remember "it's not personal"

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Ethical Theories

- Utilitarianism (teleology)
- Duty-based ethics (deontology)
- Rights-based ethics
- Virtue-based ethics

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Utilitarianism (Teleology)

- Consequence-focused theory
 - Bases decision making on greatest good for greatest number
 - "Ends justifying the means"
- Used to determine most efficient use of resources
 - Looks beyond individual impact to overall benefits
 - Cost/benefit analysis

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Duty-Based Ethics or Deontology

- Based on duty of individual to a society, group, or organization
 - Obligation of individual to perform his or her responsibility, no matter the circumstances
- Impartial thinking with respect to individuals
- Absolute rules that should be obeyed

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Rights-Based Ethics

- Based on the individual's rights
 - Does not always take into account general population
- Could lead to individual gain without regard for damage or harm to others

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Justice-Based Ethics

- “Justice is blind”
 - All individuals should be treated with impartiality
 - No advantages or disadvantages to individuals
- One individual should not have a greater chance over another
 - Person with greater financial means should not have more power than person with less financial means

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Virtue-Based Ethics

- Emphasis on character traits and qualities of individuals
 - Honesty, integrity, industriousness
- Focus on individual striving for a better life

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Ethical Decision-Making Models

- Used as guideposts for application of ethical theories
 - By individuals or groups facing ethical dilemmas
- Ask the following questions:
 - Is it legal?
 - Is it balanced?
 - How does it make me feel?
- No ethical decision should be based on emotions

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The Seven-Step Decision-Making Model

- Determine facts and assess possible options
 - Determine all facts of situation
 - Determine ethical issue involved
 - Determine rules, laws, principles, or values involved
 - List ALL possible options or courses of action
 - Determine advantages and disadvantages of each option
 - Determine possible consequences
 - Determine which decision is best and act

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Dr. Bernard Lo Clinical Model

- Relates directly to the medical field
 - Gather information
 - On issues and things that may complicate the case
 - Clarify ethical issue
 - What are the ramifications of the courses of care?
 - Resolve the dilemma
 - If the patient is mentally competent, involve the patient in the process

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Ethics Committees

- Ethics committees
 - Generally do not see or speak with patients
 - Focus solely on facts involved in the situation
 - Make decisions based on logic and on the codes and standards

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Questions?

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