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| 2 | Answer Key for  The Basics of Ethics |

ANSWERS

**Discussion (p. 13)**

Which of the following qualities do you think is the most important in the healthcare field?

Honesty

Fidelity

Integrity

Justice

Respect

Empathy

Sympathy

Responsibility

Hard work

Fairness

Sanctity of life

Equality

Compassion

Humility

**ANS: The question asks the student to select just one virtue as most important, which is what will make this so challenging. Students’ answers may vary, but discussion should almost immediately lead to students asserting that they should be allowed to choose more than one. Talk about why it is difficult to choose just one. You might point out that whenever we discuss a person’s values, we always speak in terms of plurals. We always say, “What are your values?”, not “What is your value?” Conclude by sharing your own list and reflecting on why there is not just one correct list—unless you can list them all.**

**Discussion (p. 14)**

Should a healthcare professional treat a patient differently based on the patient's insurance coverage?

1. What would be the legal complications from this? Would there be grounds for a case of malpractice?

**ANS: Negligence could be involved.**

1. What should a medical assistant do if she witnesses a denial of medical service due to a lack of or inadequate insurance coverage?

**ANS: Follow the chain of command to report the issue.**

**Discussion (p. 18)**

Give an example of medical dilemmas affected by one or more medical principles of healthcare ethics as listed in this chapter.

**ANS: You may choose to break the class into small groups, assigning each group a single principle to derive as many examples as possible, or you may prefer each individual to apply each one on their own. In either case, sharing answers in discussion afterward will help the group see each principle in as many applications as possible—as well as provide an opportunity to understand any misconception.**

**Examples you might share later could include:**

1. **A young adult cancer patient chooses to forego painful procedures that might not save him anyway to have a shorter, but more quality, life experience (Autonomy)**
2. **A drug company charges as much as triple for their products, depending on the population (Justice)**
3. **An EMT, disgusted by a mentally disturbed patient’s violent behavior, thinks later that he may have used more force than necessary in restraining that patient (Non-malfeasance)**
4. **A private surgical practice weighs the pros and cons of offering a sliding fee scale for performing some surgeries (Beneficence)**

**Discussion (p. 17)**

Under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, an individual has the right of freedom of religion and to practice that religion. However, in the healthcare setting, there may be situations in which the religious rights of the patients and/or the family members may conflict with the healthcare provider's medical advice and recommended treatment. How does a physician handle a case in which a child needs a blood transfusion to save his life yet the parents’ religious beliefs do not allow blood transfusions? Using the rights-based ethical model, should the physician respect the religious beliefs of the parents and allow the child to die? Or does the physician respect the child’s right to life, despite parental beliefs?

**ANS: The only course of action that the physician would have to save the child’s life would be to petition the courts to intervene and force the parents to allow the treatment.**

**Discussion (p. 19)**

Is it ethical for an ethics committee to make a life-and-death decision for patients without even interviewing them? Why or why not?

**ANS: Use for discussion groups because answers will definitely vary and circumstances are purposely omitted to leave room for open discussion.**

**Relate to Practice (p. 14)**

A medical assistant is working in a family practice clinic when a patient requires an immunization. The physician takes the medical assistant aside and explains that it is a particularly busy day because the nurse has called in sick. The physician asks the medical assistant to administer the injection so she can proceed to the next patient. The medical assistant explains that it is not within the scope of practice in his state for her to administer an injection. The physician insists, saying she will take that responsibility. What should the medical assistant do?

**ANS: Answers may vary but the emphasis should be that the medical assistant must follow the ethical code for scope of practice and decline giving the immunization.** Sh**e should also follow chain of command to discuss and report the matter. At the least,** s**he should have a conversation with the provider to inform her that** s**he is not comfortable working outside the scope of practice.**

**Relate to Practice (p. 14)**

Janie was recently hired for her first job as a medical assistant at the women's wellness clinic in town. During her interview, the office manager asked her several questions in regard to injection skills and her ability to handle upset or angry patients. Janie felt that she had given appropriate answers to all the questions. When asked if she had any questions, Janie inquired about several policies that the clinic had in place for their employees, such as workplace attire, company sick days, and weekend work schedules.

One week into her new job, Janie feels completely unprepared to handle the situation that now confronts her. One of the medical procedures the clinic offers is performing legal abortions. Janie had not thought about the clinic performing abortions or the fact that, as a medical assistant, she would be required to assist in these procedures.

What should she do now?

**ANS: The only course of action available to Janie now is to tell her supervisor of her ethical dilemma. The decision regarding what can be done will be up to whoever is in charge. IF she cannot do her job and be excused from assisting with abortions she might have to find a different job.**

What are the legal and ethical issues that Janie must address?

**ANS: Legally, Janie is required to provide the standard of care expected of a medical assistant in her situation. The abortions performed at the clinic are legal, so performing them under any rules proscribed by the state will be legal. Any ethical concerns she has would be personal and she will have to make a determination whether she is willing to continue working at the clinic.**

What are her ethical and moral responsibilities to herself and her job?

**ANS: If her ethical beliefs prevent her from working at the clinic, she will need to apply for jobs that do not require any compromise of those ethics and investigation on her part will be necessary to target those positions.**

**Relate to Practice (p. 16)**

On a particularly busy day at the clinic, a medical assistant is performing a patient intake for a new patient. He decides to skip over parts of the medical history, including the section on drug allergies. On a follow-up visit, the patient is prescribed penicillin for an infection. A few days later, the patient calls the clinic complaining of a rash, hives, itchiness, and a swollen lip, most likely a reaction to the penicillin. What did the medical assistant do wrong? Was this a violation of the standard of practice, standard of care, or both?

**ANS: The medical assistant should not have skipped over parts of the medical history. This decision led to the patient having an allergic reaction and could potentially cause serious injury. The medical assistant was in violation of the standard of care when he skipped over parts of the patient's medical history. Making a decision to skip parts of the medical history was outside the scope of his authority, which is potentially a violation of the standard of practice.**

**Relate to Practice (p. 18)**

An EMT has been working for the same ambulance company for many years because of his own sense of values and loyalty. However, the ambulance company treats this EMT unfairly by not rewarding his loyalty and tenure with raises, increased benefits, or requested days off. Who bears responsibility? Who is wrong: the employer for the mistreatment of the employee or the employee for accepting these work conditions?

**ANS: Answers will vary in that the employer is wrong but the employee also bears some responsibility to not allow an employer to mistreat him or her.**

**Medical Application (p. 17)**

A neurology practice is interested in investing in a new piece of equipment, an electromyogram (EMG) machine, which would be used for nerve conduction testing. The new EMG machine would cost $20,000. The practice estimates that with the machine it would be able to perform 20 EMGs per month and charge $500 for each testing. However, the practice budgeted to give raises to its five employees this year, which would be $90,000. Based on the utilitarianism theory, what would be the best option? What would be the cost-benefit analysis to purchasing the machine versus giving raises to the employees instead?

**ANS: The utilitarianism theory prioritizes whatever will be the most good to the most people. Under this theory, the best option would be to purchase the new machine first. At $500 each testing and 20 tests per month, the machine will pay for itself in just two months and will benefit at least 40 patients in that time frame. The raises to employees would help those 5 employees but not a larger group. The cost-benefit analysis produces the same conclusion. Over time, the new machine will help earn enough extra money for the practice to give the raises to those employers at a later time.**

**Medical Application (p. 19)**

According to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, in 2018, there are more than 114,000 people who need a life-saving organ transplant with less than 12,000 donors available. Often, an ethics committee must decide who is placed on the waiting list for an organ donation and who will not be. Who do you think should be included on the ethics committee? How should they decide? What factors or qualities should the committee consider to qualify a person for an organ transplant?

**ANS: Answers will vary widely. Students should focus on the fact that the committee should be as unbiased as possible in making the determination as to who should receive the organs.**

**What If? (p. 17)**

1. What if there was a shortage of flu vaccines in a given year; what would the utilitarian model recommend be done?

**ANS: Current thinking is that in a shortage, it is best to give the available vaccines to those most in need—those who would most likely become severely ill and possibly die without the vaccine. Therefore the elderly and small children, as well as immunocompromised individuals, would be given the vaccine first.**

**Chapter Review Questions (p. 20)**

1. An example of utilitarianism would be the
2. **decision of which patients should receive immunizations if supplies are limited.**
3. decision of employees’ rights in a work resolution.
4. decision of what was fair in a given work resolution case.
5. decision in a malpractice suit of responsibility in the case.
6. Almost all professions and organizations have standards of behavior for their employees called
7. applied ethics.
8. **code of ethics.**
9. medical ethics**.**
10. bioethics.
11. What does an ethics committee handle?
12. **Decisions in possible violations of codes of ethics**
13. Decisions of workplace rights
14. Decisions of hiring practices
15. Legal decisions on scope of practice
16. What are values?
17. **Principles by which an individual chooses to live**
18. Moral guidelines for the workplace
19. Manners and etiquette
20. Workplace hiring guidelines
21. What is autonomy?
22. **Individual’s right to make decisions for one’s own life**
23. Group ethics guideline
24. Accreditation
25. Risk management principles

**Self-Reflection Questions (p. 21)**

1. What kinds of ethical situations would be particularly challenging or difficult for me to encounter?
2. What would I do if my best friend became my coworker and I witnessed him or her doing something unethical at work?
3. Which of the principles of ethics is the most important to me?
4. Which of the ethical theories do I find most agreeable?
5. Using an ethical dilemma scenario you create, select one of the two decision-making models discussed in this chapter to determine the best course of action.

**ANS: Answers will vary, depending on student response.**