Ethical Considerations in Emergency Settings

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Discuss the **ethical theories** of clinical care and service provision for patients in the emergency room.

Discuss the **ethical principles** of clinical care and service provision for patients in the emergency room.

Emphasize the **ethical considerations** involved in emergency service provision.
Introduction

Why Discuss Nursing Ethics?

- Nurses rated highest (85%) by Americans for honesty and ethics in 2019
  - for the 18th year in a row
  - Medical Doctors in 3rd place (65%) – Gallup study

  Helps **build capacity** for healthy, sustainable work environments; and

  Contributes to the **best possible outcomes** for patient, family, and community.

“It takes less time to do things right than to explain why you did it wrong.”
- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Introduction

Why Discuss Nursing Ethics?

- There is a rapid change in the environments in which nurses work—globalization, technology, customers’ needs...
- Nurses serve their patients/customers, families, and communities while fulfilling nursing values and standards
- Ethical challenges are embedded in everyday practice irrespective of the setting in which nurses work

“No Ethic is as ethical as the Work Ethic”
- John Kenneth Galbraith
Common Terminologies

- Integrity
- Principles
- Value
- Moral
- Honor
- Right
- Choice
- Conscience
- Fairness
- Responsibility
- Ethics
Ethics

- Derived from the Greek word ‘ethos’
  - which can mean custom, habit, character or disposition
- A branch of Philosophy
- “what is morally good and bad / morally right and wrong”
Ethics

- prescribes what human **ought to do**
- Comprises the basic issues of:
  - Values and **practical decision making**
  - Standards by which human actions can be judged right or wrong.

**Ethics is knowing the difference between**
what you **have the right to do** and
what is **the right thing to do**
Nurses **render health services** to the individual, the family and the community and **coordinate** their services with those of related groups.

Nurses have four fundamental responsibilities:

- **To promote health**
- **To prevent illness**
- **To restore health**
- **To alleviate suffering**
Inherent in nursing is a
- respect for human rights
- the right to life and choice,
- Right to dignity and to be treated with respect.

Nursing care is unrestricted by considerations of
- age, colour, creed, culture, disability or illness, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, politics, race or social status.
Ethics

- The principles of ethics are universal.
- They apply to both research and patient care.
- Common ethical theories in nursing research: deontology, utilitarianism, Virtue.
- The 4 (common) **Ethical Principles** in Nursing:

  - Autonomy
  - Beneficence
  - Nonmaleficence
  - Justice
# ETHICAL THEORIES

## Teleology
- Conquence-based
- e.g. Utilitarianism
  - >good/<harm to most people
  - Budget allocation

## Deontology
- Principles-Based
- Duty/obligation
- Objective principle
- Working in COVID-19 Ward

## Virtue
- morals
- good habits
- good character traits
- Cardinal: wisdom, courage temperance and justice
- Theological: faith, hope and charity
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Autonomy

- Right to make one's own decisions
- Privacy
- Confidentiality
- Informed Consent
- Paternalism X
- Shared decision making

Information/Comprehension
- Intentionality
- Voluntariness
- Competence/Capacity
  - Best interest – Chevron case
  - Surrogacy - Rape victim/sick husband
Respect for Autonomy and Informed patient Choice

- The move away from paternalism healthcare
- focus on patient autonomy, informed consent, and shared decision making
- usually accompanied by increased patient access to information about their illness and the options for treatment, and fully involved in decisions about their health care (Dr Google, PBoRR)
- If the autonomy of patients is to be respected, they must be given information that enables them to make choices that are consistent with how they wish to live their life.
Competency and Capacity

• Competency and capacity to make decision is critical to autonomy

• A patient who can make medical decisions by and for his/herself is considered to possess capacity.
  • A patient who is not mentally or psychologically able to make medical decisions is considered to lack capacity.

• Tested by asking patients to rephrase the information provided.
Respect for Autonomy and Informed Patient Choice

**Surrogacy**

- A surrogate helps to make decisions when patients lack capacity to decide
  - especially for children.

- Who should be the surrogate?
  - typically, it is a person who has the best interest of the patient at heart and
  - who is acquainted with the patient's past expressions, wishes, and values
  - so that the surrogate can make the same decision the patient would make were he able.
  - sometimes difficult to determine the "best" surrogate (e.g., wife of an abusive man).
Respect for Autonomy and Informed Patient Choice

**Surrogacy**

- sometimes difficult to determine the "best" surrogate (e.g., wife of an abusive man).
- The best surrogate is not necessarily a close family member.
- It is the duty of the health care team and other family members to determine the proper surrogate.
- Patients may sometimes communicate who the proper surrogate is.
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Justice

- Fair and appropriate distribution of responsibilities, rights and roles
- Nursing care should be equitably accessible to all persons who needs it

- Right to emergency services
- Not just being fair but being seen to be fair
  - As simple as making roster

First come first served?
**ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

**Beneficence**

- **Protect** and **defend** the rights of others.
- **Prevent harm** from occurring to others.
- **Remove** conditions that will cause harm to others.
- **Help** persons with disabilities.
- **Rescue** persons in danger.

- **Act solely for the patient’s benefit**
- **To Act or Do Good**
- **Benevolence** —virtue of being disposed to act for the benefit of others
  - **Paternalism vs Patient Centered Care**
  - **Platinum rule vs Golden Rule**
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

• Understanding of benefit/harm may vary between nurse and patient – End of Life care
• Sentinel events
  • ‘Orisa bo o le gbemi, se mi bo se bami’
    - “if the deity cannot cure me, he should not make my situation worse”
• Nurse’s Competence – knowledge, skill, attitude

Non-Malificence

“Primum non nocere” - above all do no harm to anyone
• the welfare of the patient is central to care.
ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

**Veracity**
Telling the truth

- **Truth** about diagnosis, plan of care, treatment and possible risks ...possible expenses
- Nurse’s **responsibility** never to mislead or deceive a patient
- **Accountability**

**Fidelity**
Keep your Word

- Should a nurse tell the truth even if it is known that it could cause harm?
- £700,000 Klinefelter's Settlement - June, 2020
- Fosters **trust**
ETHICAL DILEMMA

- A situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, especially ones that are equally undesirable.
- Occurs when there is conflict between two or more ethical principles.
- No correct decision exists
- Requires Ethical reasoning and Ethical decision making
Common Ethical Issues in the ER

- Suspected criminal
- HIV/AIDS (to tell or not to tell?)
- Abortion
- Surrogate Decision Making
- End of life care – Euthanasia, Advance Directives,
  - Withdrawing or Withholding Life-Sustaining Therapy
- Child custody
Resolving Ethical Dilemma

Requires Ethical Decision-Making

- Gather all relevant information
- Identify and clarify the ethical problem(s)
- Analyse the problem
  - considering the various ethical theories or approaches
- Explore the range of options or possible solutions
- Make a decision
- Implement and then reflect on the decision
To wrap up...

Ethical Nurses must:

• be **sensitive** to the ethical dimensions of nursing practice

• **Understand** their values and their customers’ values

• **Understand** how values/morals **influence** decisions

• Learn to **recognise** a moral issue/ethical dilemma and take the right steps to resolve it

• Continue to **balance** economics and caring in the allocation of health resources
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

QUESTIONS PLEASE?