

Ethical Considerations in Emergency Settings

By

**FEYINTOLUWA ANNE
OGUNGBENRO**

(RN, BNSc.)

May, 2021




Learning Objectives

- 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 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

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



Ethics



Ethics has a broader base of interest than Law

- Considers personal **behaviour** and **character**

- 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***

ICN CODE OF ETHICS*

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:**

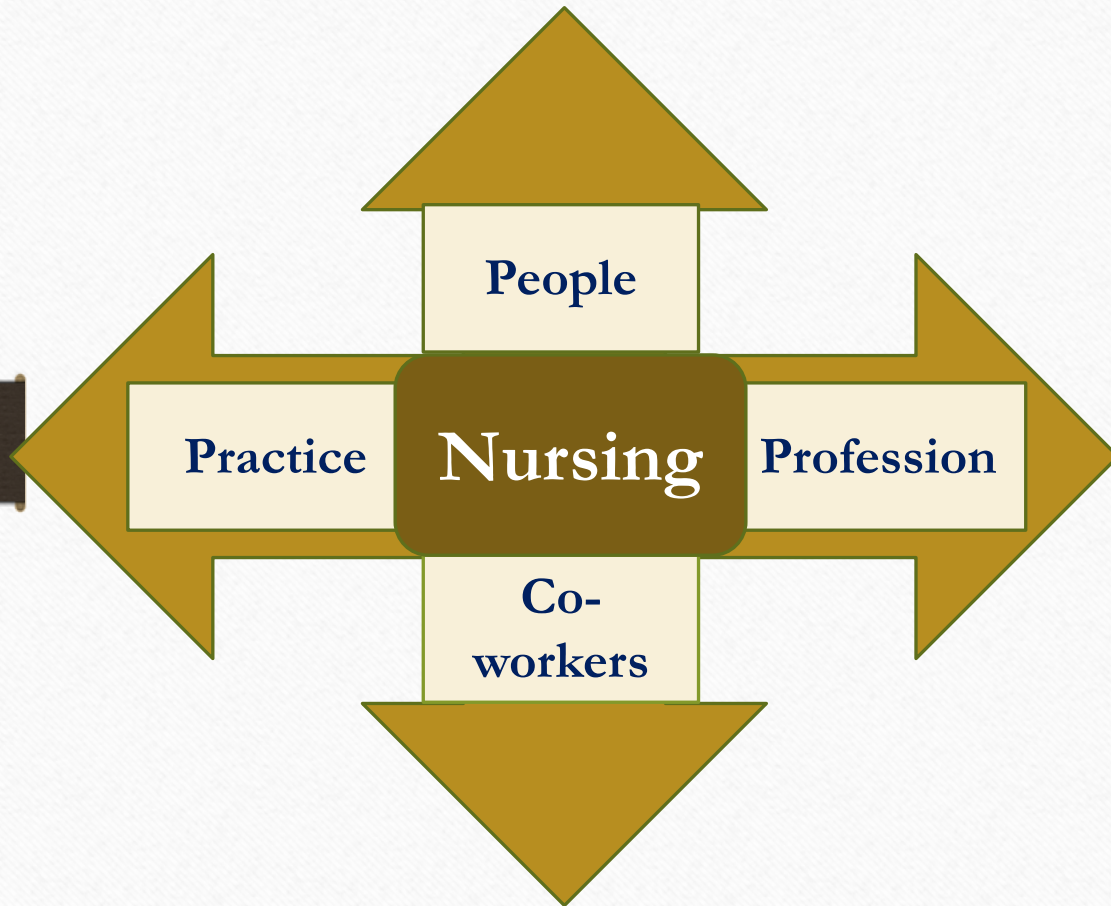
to promote
health

to prevent
illness

to restore
health

to alleviate
suffering

ICN CODE OF ETHICS*



Inherent in nursing is a

- respect for human rights
- the right to life and choice,
- Right to dignity and to be treated with respect.

VALUES

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.

AUTONOMY
THE DESIRE TO BE
SELF DIRECTED



Respect for Autonomy and Informed patient Choice

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

Non-Malificence



FIRST DO NO HARM

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

- 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

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 – Euthenasia, Advance Directives,
 - Withdrawing or Withholding Life-Sustaining Therapy
- Child custody

Resolving Ethical Dilemma

ETHICAL
COMMITTEES

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

Develop a strong
Work Ethic

Focus
Persistence
Punctuality
Honesty
Hard work
Work-Life Balance



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

QUESTIONS PLEASE?