

# Using Healthcare Ethics to Engage Students and Challenge Thinking

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# Doing Ethics – Standing by Your Convictions



# Concerns of Ethics

## JUSTIFICATION

The “why” of ethics which includes reasons for actions or decisions.

# Approaches to Ethics

## PRINCIPLE-BASED

- ▶ Involves the use of objective guides for moral behavior.
- ▶ Responds most appropriately to the question:  
**What is the morally correct thing to DO?**

# Approaches to Ethics

## VIRTUE

- ▶ Habits of character that predispose you to do what is right and good.
- ▶ Responds most appropriately to the question:  
**Who should I BE?**

# Ethics

▶ A disciplined study devoted to rational analysis and justification which provides insight regarding:

- what we should or should not **DO**
- who we should or should not **BE**

in order to attain the most of what is best in human life.

# General Terminology

- ▶ **RIGHT**

A Claim that is, or ought to be, respected by others and protected

- ▶ **RESPONSIBILITY**

An area of Duty or Obligation assigned to a person by the nature of position

# Dilemma

- ▶ Every problem is not an ethical problem and every ethical problem is not a dilemma.
- ▶ A dilemma is a choice between equally undesirable alternatives.

# Sources of Moral Authority

- ▶ Religious Beliefs
- ▶ Family and Peers
- ▶ Laws and Regulations
- ▶ Secular Ethical Theories and Principles
- ▶ Professional Association
- ▶ Physician's Orders
- ▶ Hospital Policy
- ▶ Patient's Values

# When Does a Situation Involve Ethics?

- ▶ There is more than one morally plausible resolution.
- ▶ There is no clear-cut best resolution.
- ▶ There is a direct reference to well being and dignity.
- ▶ There is an intuitive sense that something is “wrong” or about to go wrong.

# Is There An Ethical Issue Here?

- ▶ A medical student is struggling to keep up with the workload in his first year of studies. He feels like he is studying night and day and is getting exhausted. When he asks a classmate how she has so much energy, she states, “I take Xenadrine that you can get over the counter and phentermine that I get on the Internet.”

# Is There an Ethical Issue Here?

- ▶ The school has a drug free policy. He asks about detection. “No problem,” she replies and offers him some of her supply. Should he take the drugs just to get him through the next week’s exams?

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# Respect for Persons

- ▶ The moral obligation to honor the intrinsic worth and uniqueness of each person.

# Autonomy – “Self rule”

- ▶ The right to make decisions about our lives
- ▶ The autonomy of the person should be respected not necessarily the action in question

# Nonmaleficence and Beneficence

- ▶ You should not inflict or cause harm
- ▶ You should prevent harm
- ▶ You should remove harm
- ▶ You should promote or do good for others

# Truth-Telling

- ▶ Related to the idea of trust
- ▶ We expect others to be truthful
- ▶ Truth can be tempered with compassion
- ▶ Can foster mutual respect and trust
- ▶ Little good comes from deception

# Justice

- ▶ Equals ought to be treated equally
- ▶ Giving everyone his or her own due or what is owed to him or her
- ▶ Fair distribution of resources—
  - WHO gets WHAT?
  - How MUCH?
  - How LONG?
  - Under WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES?

# Avoidance of Killing

- ▶ The moral obligation to avoid killing can be seen as either an absolute duty or a *prima facie* duty.



# Engaging Students and Challenging Thinking

