

Navigating this situation involves balancing medical expertise, ethical considerations, and respect for the wishes of Mr. Jenkins' family. Here's a structured approach to address the dilemma:

- 1. Medical Assessment and Prognosis:** First, ensure a clear and thorough medical assessment of Mr. Jenkins' current condition and prognosis. The strokes and unresponsiveness indicate a severe decline in health, and it's crucial to communicate this effectively to the family.
- 2. Communication with Family:** Despite previous attempts, continue to communicate openly and compassionately with Mr. Jenkins' children. Acknowledge their faith and emotional state while clearly explaining the medical situation, including the grave nature of his condition and the limited chances of recovery. Use non-medical language as much as possible to ensure understanding.
- 3. Respect for Patient Autonomy:** Since Mr. Jenkins does not have an advance directive, the family's wishes are pivotal. Respect their desire to pursue all possible life-saving measures, as long as they do not contradict medical ethics or legal guidelines.
- 4. Ethical Considerations:** Discuss the ethical implications of continued aggressive treatment. Consider whether further intervention aligns with the principle of beneficence (doing good) versus non-maleficence (avoiding harm), particularly if the chances of meaningful recovery are exceedingly low and further treatment may cause undue suffering.
- 5. Shared Decision-Making:** Engage in shared decision-making with the family, ensuring they understand the risks, benefits, and likely outcomes of different treatment options. Offer support in exploring what quality of life would mean for Mr. Jenkins if he were to survive.
- 6. Consultation with Ethics Committee:** In complex cases where there is disagreement or uncertainty about the best course of action, involving the hospital's ethics committee can provide additional guidance and support. They can help navigate the ethical principles and values at stake.

Scenario: Mr. Jenkins has been in the intensive care unit for ten days. He was initially admitted through the emergency room for an elevated temperature of unknown origin and suspected sepsis. After diagnostic testing, it was determined Mr. Jenkins had a perforated bowel that resulted in full-body sepsis. In the past twelve hours, he has experienced two strokes, become unresponsive, and has no Advance Directive. Mr. Jenkins' children state they are "holding on to faith that God is going to bring him through." Despite efforts from the doctor to explain the gravity of the situation and attempts to prepare the children for the worst, they insist that all possible life-saving measures be used.

Ethical Dilemma: Health and nursing care are results-driven and based on science. The science behind patient care may contradict personal or religious beliefs. Nurses may feel frustrated because the science they know is not enough to save their patients. When families find it difficult to accept a poor prognosis for their loved one and cling to religious beliefs instead, nurses may feel helpless.

How to Deal with this Ethical Dilemma: The American Nurses Association Code of Ethics states nurses should acknowledge and respect the *"unique differences of patients, including lifestyle, value system, and religious beliefs."* However, the Code also states respect for the patient's belief *"does not imply that the nurse condones those beliefs or practices on a personal level."* Many patients experience reduced stress when they rely on their faith during times of medical challenges. Nurses should be mindful of a patient's spiritual and religious needs. In this scenario, although the nurse accepts the science behind the patient's diagnosis and expected outcome, her job is to honor the family's decisions and be supportive of them.

What is an Ethical Dilemma in Nursing?

An ethical dilemma in nursing is a situation where a nurse must decide between competing values and know that no matter what choice they make, there are consequences. Ethical dilemmas may conflict with the nurse's personal values or with the Code of Ethics for Nurses.

5 Main Reasons Why Nurses Face With Ethical Dilemmas in Nursing

Nurses often face ethical dilemmas when caring for patients. Ethical dilemmas come in various forms and for several reasons. The following are five main reasons why nurses face ethical dilemmas in nursing.

1. Patients or their loved ones must make life or death decisions
2. The patient refuses treatment
3. Nursing assignments may contradict cultural or religious beliefs
4. Nursing peers demonstrate incompetence
5. Inadequate staffing

How to Identify Ethical Dilemmas in Nursing?

Nurses in all disciplines face ethical challenges from time to time. The best way to describe and identify an ethical dilemma in nursing is to consider how a situation makes you think and feel. Ethical dilemmas create a conflict between two courses of action that are both correct but represent different principles or values. If a situation involves doing something right and wrong at the same time and one of those actions negatively impacts the other action, this is what creates the dilemma.

Chapter 3: The Moral Climate of Health Care

Section 5. Five Major Moral Principles in Health Care

In Health Care settings and in the institution itself there are a number of basic principles of morality which evidence themselves. Even if one did not approach cases or situations holding the principles of any of the standard ethical traditions there would arise these basic considerations and concepts.

No matter what the ethical approach taken, with the exceptions of egoism and relativism, there is agreement that there are certain basic principles related to health care that are consistent with the notion of the GOOD. They are presented here. There is disagreement about how they might be ordered or what to do in the event there is a conflict between or amongst them.

Those matters aside for now, there will be many occasions to make reference to these principles in the analysis and discussion of cases in Biomedical Ethics.

Five Major Moral Principles in Health Care:

- I. NON MALFEASANCE
- II. BENEFICENCE
- III. UTILITY
- IV. DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE
- V. AUTONOMY

I. Non- Malfeasance- Do NO Harm!! Cause no needless harm or injury according to reasonable standards of performance.

Observe DUE CARE . This does not mean that there must be no risk of injury but only that there be no more than acceptable risks.

II. Beneficence- Promote the welfare of others. This is inherent in the relationship of a health care provider (HCP) and the recipient of care.

E.g. the doctor-patient relationship. However, what exactly is the duty of the HCP?

This comes into particular focus as problematical when the health care providers are also researchers. There must exist standards so that the benefits to the subjects and others are real and with a real possibility to be realized.

III. Utility- Attempt to bring about the greatest amount of benefit to as many people involved as is possible and consistent with the observance of other basic moral principles. Greatest Benefit and Least harm

IV. Distributive Justice- All involved should have equal entitlements, equal access to benefits and burdens. Similar cases should be treated in a similar fashion. People should be treated alike regardless of need, contributions or effort.

The formal principle of Justice as Fairness (Rawls' Theory) similar cases are to receive the same treatment. However, in what ways are the cases similar? In what relevant ways? Equal in need? Equal in contributions to society? to the Health Care institution? Equal in effort?

V. Autonomy- People are rational, self determining beings who are capable of making judgments and decisions and should be respected as such and permitted to do so and supported with truthful and accurate information and no coercion.

They should have their decision making and actions: a) free of duress of any type, (b) based upon options that are clearly explained and that are genuine possibilities and (c) given the information needed for decision making.

Some believe that there can be justifications for violations of the principle of autonomy.

There are four principles cited to justify restrictions on **AUTONOMY**:

1. HARM Principle- stop an individual whose autonomy is restricted or violated from causing harm to others

2. PATERNALISM Principle- There are two forms:

- Weak -to stop a person whose autonomy is restricted or violated from self harm
- Strong -to benefit the person whose autonomy is restricted or violated

3. LEGAL MORALISM Principle- legislated morality

Acts of legislation impose restrictions upon all, presumably for the benefit of all

4. WELFARE Principle- restrictions or violations of the autonomy of an individual for the benefit of all.

EXAMPLES:

Harm- if a person has a highly contagious and life threatening disease that person could be confined against that person's will

Paternalism-weak- a person attempting suicide by ingesting poison could have the stomach cleared of the poison in the ER even though refusing treatment.

Paternalism-strong- a 22 year old person could have a gangrenous leg amputated even against a refusal of treatment.

Legal Moralism - children can be inoculated against disease despite their refusal and that of their parents.

Welfare- a person with a rare anti-body to a deadly incurable disease threatening the general population could be made to give a specimen of their blood or bone marrow or other tissue for the sake of the benefit of the entire society.

More on the major principles of medical ethics

IMPORTANT POINT and WARNING

The five major moral principles in Health Care are moral principles most commonly held within that institution. They are NOT the basic ethical principles. They are the moral principles most widely held because there are several ethical principles that support them. The ethical principles are the basic idea of the Moral Good and they support the moral principles of health care because they are thought to be morally good. If you ask why is something like Autonomy a good thing your answer will be using one or more of the ethical principles as support or justification of the moral judgement that something like autonomy is a good thing. The ethical principles include such as Ethical Egoism, Utility, Natural Law, Categorical Imperative, Maxi-Min Principle, Feminism and others. Do not confuse the moral principles for Health Care with the basic Ethical Principles that support them.

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