



Wolters Kluwer

When you have to be right

Chapter 10

Ethical Issues in Health Care

Ethics

- ❖ Study of right and wrong related to human conduct
- ❖ Knowledge of right and wrong related to:
 - Individual
 - Society
 - Situation

Nursing and Ethics #1

❖ Nurses

- Have the ability and obligation to help patients
- Internalize the concept of what it means to be a human being
- Accept personal responsibility for relationships
- Are obligated to do good and not harm
- Are committed to providing high-quality care to all human beings

Nursing and Ethics #2

❖ Code of Ethics

- NFLPN and NAPNES
- Purpose is to provide a list of rules of good conduct
- Attempt to describe the ideals of a group
- Identify standards of behavior

Personal Accountability

- ❖ Being responsible means to accept being the cause of an action.
- ❖ Being accountable means to accept the consequences of the action.

Unethical Behavior

- ❖ Failure to adhere to a code of ethics
- ❖ Failure to base practice on high ethical standards
- ❖ Disregard for basic human rights

Ethical Dilemmas #1

- ❖ Conflict or opposition between:
 - Personal values
 - Moral principles
 - Laws
- ❖ Personal and professional obligations
- ❖ The rights of individuals and society
- ❖ No right or wrong answer
- ❖ Legal versus ethical problems

Ethical Dilemmas #2

❖ **General Guidelines for Ethical Decision Making**

- Collect the facts.
- Ask questions about behavior.
- Discuss concerns with an authority.
- Understand your motivation and choose course of action.
- Prepare to accept consequences.

Ethical Issues in Nursing #1

- ❖ Dilemmas exist when there is the belief that appropriate and safe care cannot be provided.
- ❖ Choosing between the employer's requirements and what the patient needs:
 - Staffing shortages
 - Excessive paperwork and administrative tasks
 - Cost-containment measures
 - Managed care
 - Mandatory overtime
 - Risks to personal health and safety

Ethical Issues in Nursing #2

❖ Other issues

- Right to refuse to assist with a procedure you believe is morally or ethically wrong.
- Cannot refuse to provide nursing care for a patient.

Bioethics #1

- ❖ Implications of biologic research and applications

Bioethics Committees

- ❖ Bring all available information and points of view to a bioethical dilemma.
- ❖ Task is to make a decision about action to be taken.

Bioethics #2

Contemporary Bioethical Dilemmas

❖ Reproductive Issues

- Birth control
- Abortion
- Alternative fertilization

Bioethics #3

❖ Genetic Issues

- Profile can lead to discrimination
- Human genome project
- Genetic screening

❖ Stem Cell Research

- Embryonic stem cells require destruction of an embryo.

Bioethics #4

❖ Organ Transplants

- Cost for surgery
- Cost of lifelong drug therapies
- Ethics of sacrificing animals
- Religious objections
- Buying and selling organs

Bioethics #5

❖ Death

- Criteria for legally declaring one dead
- Ability to continue biological functions
- Euthanasia
 - Active
 - Passive

Bioethics #6

❖ **Death (cont.)**

- Advance Directives
 - Living will
 - Health care proxy
 - Ulysses Pact

Question #1

- ❖ Is the following statement true or false?
- ❖ A moral dilemma exists when there is no right or wrong answer.

Answer to Question #1

❖ True

❖ Rationale: The fact that there is no right or wrong answer is what makes it a dilemma.

Question #2

- ❖ General guidelines for ethical decision making include:
 - A. Adhere to a code of ethics
 - B. Be accountable
 - C. Collect the facts
 - D. Identify standards of behavior

Answer to Question #2

❖ C. Collect the facts

❖ Rationale: Guidelines include collecting all the facts. A code of ethics identifies standards of behavior and personal accountability is one of those behaviors.

Question #3

- ❖ Is the following statement true or false?
- ❖ Disregard for basic human rights is an ethical dilemma.

Answer to Question #3

❖ False

❖ Rationale: Disregard for basic human rights is unethical behavior. There is no question that this is right or wrong. It is wrong behavior.