

Ethical Decision Making

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- **Ethical dilemma** usually have no perfect solution and those making decisions may find themselves in the position of having to defend their decisions_
- **Value conflict** occurs when we must choose between two things, both of which are important to us.
- **It's the nurses' role to help clients identify values and clarify them**

What is Ethical Decision Making?

- **When faced with an ethical dilemma the objective is to make a judgment based on well-reasoned, defensible ethical principles.**
- **The risk is poor judgment i.e. a low-quality decision**
- **A low-quality decision can have a wide range of negative consequences**
- **Two Types of Ethical Choices**
- **Right vs wrong: choosing right from wrong is the easiest**
- **Right vs right**

- **Situation contains shades of gray i.e. all alternative have desirable and undesirable results**
- **Choosing “the lesser of two evils”**
- **Objective: make a defensible decision**

Factors that influence EDM

- 1. Codes for Nurses**
- 2. The patient’s rights**
- 3. Social and cultural attitudes**
- 4. Science and technology**
- 5. Legislation**
- 6. Judicial decisions**
- 7. Funding**
- 8. Personal religious and philosophic viewpoint**

Factors in the work environment that affect EDM

- 1. Status as an employment**
- 2. Collegial relationships**
- 3. Authoritarian and paternalistic background**
- 4. Ethics committees in health care**
- 5. Consumer involvement in health care**

A framework for Ethical Decision Making (EDM)

- 1. Identify and clarify the ethical problem**
- 2. Gather data**
- 3. Identify options**
- 4. Make a decision**
- 5. Act and assess**

Making Moral Decisions--Some Inappropriate Ways:

- Appeal to Authority**
- Appeal to Law**

Appeal exclusively to self-interest



Some Guidelines for Making Ethical Decisions

- 1. Choose correct moral language.(Often, the way in which you initially conceptualize a situation will affect what moral conclusions you will make)**
- 2. Be as clear as you can about the facts, both empirical and philosophical**
- 3. Consider the relevant moral principles and rules, and make your best judgment.**

Ethics Committees

With the increasing complexity of ethical issues in health care, ethics committees have been created to assist in making ethical decisions in clinical settings. Ethical committees can:

- 1. Provide structure and guidelines for potential problems.**
- 2. Serve as an open forum for discussion and debate.**
- 3. Function as a patient advocate by placing the patient at the core of the committee's deliberations.**

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