

Introduction to Ethics

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Introduction

- Nurses frequently have to make difficult decisions for which there is not always a quick, easy or 'correct' answer
- e.g. Can Mrs X be discharged yet? Can Mr Y manage his own medications safely?
- A 'code of ethics': a set of important principles to help guide nurses

Definition of ethics

Oxford dictionary defines ethics as "a science of human duty"

In Webster Dictionary:

✓ "the morals concerned with or relating to what is right and wrong in matters of human behaviour."

Definition of Ethics

- Ethics came from the Greek word {Ethos} which means: (custom, habit, conduct)
- Ethics: "the science that approaches human actions in forms of Right or wrong"

What is Ethics?

- Ethics is a discipline studied in almost all professional fields including medicine, nursing, business and philosophy
- A systematic approach to understanding, analysing, and distinguishing matters of:
 - ✓ right & wrong
 - ✓ good & bad
 - ✓ admirable & deplorable

Ethics

- Custom or character
- A branch of philosophy dealing with standards of conduct & moral judgment
- A method of inquiry that assists people **to understand the morality of human behavior** (i.e. it is the study of morality)
- A way of looking at or **investigating certain issues about human behavior**

Ethics

- **Practices or beliefs** of a certain group (i.e. Nursing ethics, Physicians' ethics)
- The **expected standards** as described in the group's code of professional conduct
- What ought to be, what is right, or wrong, good or bad
- The base on moral reasoning & reflects set of values

What is an 'ethical issue'?

When you have to:

- judge what is right or wrong
- Choose between options
- Decide whether to do something or do nothing
- Should I or shouldn't I?
- Weighing up the potential impact of your decisions or actions
- **A dilemma = making a difficult choice**

Ethical issues in health care

- We usually think of the 'big' issues
- e.g. definition of life, what is a person, quality of life, prolonging life, ending life, human rights.

But day to day ethical issues can involve:

- ✓ Respecting people
- ✓ Treating people with dignity
- ✓ Treating people fairly
- ✓ Supporting patient's choices

Codes of ethics

Applying ethics to a profession or discipline, examples:

- Nursing
- Engineering
- Medicine
- Law
- Journalism
- Psychology
- Information Technology

MORAL

Moral

- Moral is:
 - ✓ principles & rules of right conduct
 - ✓ It is private or personal
 - ✓ Commitment to principles & values are usually defended in daily life

Moral

- Is similar to ethics & many people use the two words interchangeably (closely associated with the concept of ethics)
- Derived from the Latin “**mores**” = custom or habit
- Are based on religious beliefs & social influence and group norms

Moral vs Ethics

- In both:
 - ✓ we describe the behavior
 - ✓ we observe as good, right, desirable, honorable, fitting or proper or
 - ✓ we might describe the behavior as bad, wrong, improper, irresponsible, or evil

Comparison of morals & ethics

Morals

- Principles & rules of right conduct
- Private, & personal
- Commitment to principles & values is usually defended in daily life
- Pertain to an individual's character

Ethics

- Formal responding process used to determine right conduct
- Professionally & publicly stated
- Inquiry or study of principles & values
- Process of questioning, & perhaps changing, one's morals
- Speaks to relationships between human beings

What is a value? القيم

- Qualities, characteristics, or ideas about which we feel strongly
- Our values affect our decisions, goals and behavior
- A belief or feeling that someone or something is worthwhile.
- Values define what is of worth, what is beneficial, & what is harmful
- Values are standards to guide your action, judgments, & attitudes

Values

- Are freely chosen, enduring beliefs or attitudes about the worth of a person, object, idea, or action (e.g. freedom, family, honesty, hard work)
- Learned or derived from /influenced by a person's cultural, ethnic, & religious background; from societal traditions; & from the values held by peer group and family
- People need societal values to feel accepted, & they need personal values to produce a sense of individuality

Think about your own Values?

- We should explore our own values and beliefs regarding such situations as the following:
 - ✓ An individual's right to make decisions for self when conflicting with medical advice
 - ✓ Abortion
 - ✓ End-of –life issues
 - ✓ Cloning

Value clarification

- The process of becoming more conscious of & naming what one values or considers worthy is known as “**value clarification**”
- In value clarification:
we examine what we believe is good, bad, beautiful, worthy, meaningful,and explore the process of determining our personal values.

Why?

The purposes of value clarifications

- To increase our self-awareness or understanding of ourselves & assist us in making choices
- To facilitates decision-making
- Helps when you are faced with an ethical dilemma
- Ethical dilemma occurs when an individual must choose between two unfavorable alternatives
“e.g. assisted suicide”

Where do we get values?

- our homes,
- school,
- society,
- friends,
- TV,
- Mosque,
- church,
- music,
- books,
- families,
- culture,
- employers,
- time-period in which you were raised (70's anti-establishment, peace, individuality. 80's money, prestige, don't get caught, etc. 90's earth, green peace, health & fitness), etc.

Where do we get values?

- Your age will greatly influence your values
- Different people & things influence you at different ages:
- Ages 1-7: parents
- Ages 8-13: teachers, heroes (sports, rocks, TV)
- Ages 14-20: peers (values because of peers or peers because of values?)
- Ages 21+ your values are established, but you may test your values from time to time