Scenario #1

A nurse working in a physician office is helping the physician explain a medical diagnosis and proposed treatment plan to a middle-aged woman who is a recent immigrant from Thailand. The woman speaks no English, and her daughter is attempting to translate the conversation. The woman has metastasized lung cancer, and her prognosis is not good. The nurse notices a pronounced hesitation in the daughter’s translation of this news to her mother, and she suspects the daughter has not relayed the information correctly, because the patient seems undisturbed by the news.

Questions:
1. As the nurse or medical assistant helping the physician in this scenario, what would you do?

2. Assume that the nurse and the physician must obtain informed consent from the patient in the scenario. Should they rely solely on the daughter’s ability to translate? Explain your answer.

Scenario #2

HIPAA has made it illegal, under threat of penalty, for health care practitioners to disclose confidential health information about patients to unauthorized sources.

Question:
Sharon, a second-year nursing student, is completing a surgical rotation in a community hospital. At the breakfast table, Sharon’s husband asks her to find out what is wrong with one of his employees, who has been hospitalized for several days. He is interested in knowing when the man may be able to return to work. Is it ethical for Sharon to give her husband this information? Explain your answer.

Scenario #3

A young woman is diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection and is subsequently reported to the public health department. A public health nurse visits her, but she refuses to name her sexual contacts.

Questions:
1. Should the woman be compelled by law to name her sexual contacts? Why or why not? Does the best interest of the woman’s sexual contacts and their contacts supersede the woman’s right to privacy? Explain your answer.

2. What values are involved in Ethics Issue 2?
3. What is the first duty of health care practitioners caring for the woman in Ethics Issue 2?

**Scenario #4**

All ethical guidelines for health care practitioners remind them to be aware that, even though sexually suggestive behavior may not have crossed the line legally, any form of sexual harassment or exploitation between medical supervisors and trainees, employers and employees, coworkers, or medical practitioners and patients is unethical.

**Questions:**

1. You are a surgical technologist in a large hospital. Whenever you work with a certain surgeon, she tells off-color jokes to you and your coworkers and makes suggestive comments to workers of the opposite sex. One coworker tells you that he might quit his job because he is married, and the surgeon’s behavior makes him so uncomfortable that he dreads coming to work. Is the surgeon’s behavior illegal or simply in bad taste? Explain your answer.

2. Do you or your coworkers in the previous situation have grounds for a sexual harassment complaint? Explain your answer.

3. If you have determined that you do have a complaint, how would you proceed?

**Scenario #5**

A 56-year-old widowed woman is living alone, but has always wanted to have a baby. She has read about reproductive technology and the methods used to help women conceive, and she formulates a plan and contacts a local for-profit fertility clinic. At the clinic, the woman tells her fertility doctor about her longing to have a baby. She says she realizes her eggs may be too old for her to conceive, so she suggests that donor eggs and donor sperm be used, but she wants to gestate the embryo herself, with the help of hormone treatments. She is financially secure and can pay cash for all treatments. Her plan for raising the child includes naming a 39-year-old nephew and his wife as parents if her child should become orphaned. She produces a letter of consent from her nephew and says she will draw up a will leaving her money to a trust fund for her child, to be administered by his adoptive parents if she does not survive to raise the child herself.

**Question:**

What unique risks do you think might affect this woman’s pregnancy and the birth of her child, and should the clinic turn her down because of these risks?

**Scenario #6**

In some states, state law allows EMTs to do what is right for the patient when transporting them for care. In other states, the law may say you must obey the patient’s instructions, regardless of what those instructions are.
Question:
As an EMT in a state where the law says you must do what is right for the patient, you are transporting a patient with chest pain, and you decide to transport her to a hospital with heart catheterization capabilities, even though the patient has expressed a desire to go to a less well-equipped hospital in the area. Legally and ethically, how will you respond?