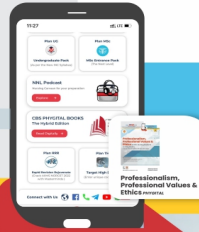


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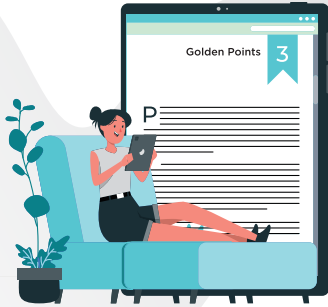
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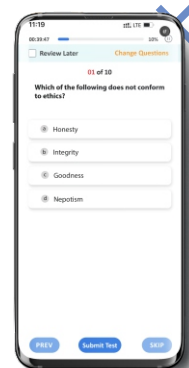
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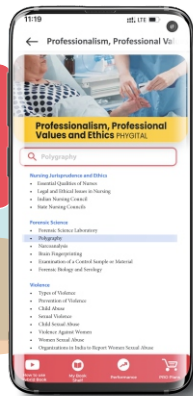
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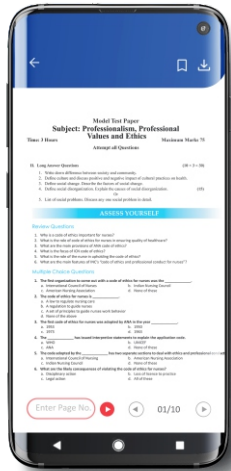
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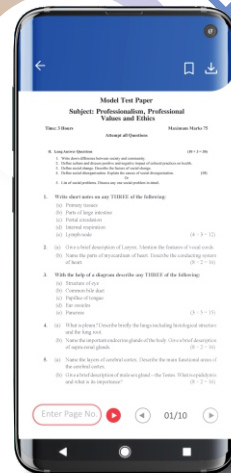
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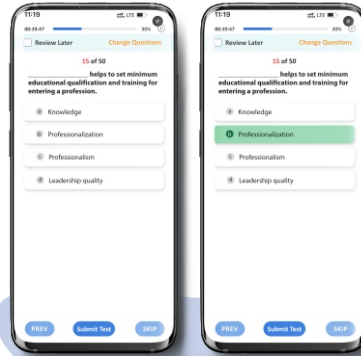
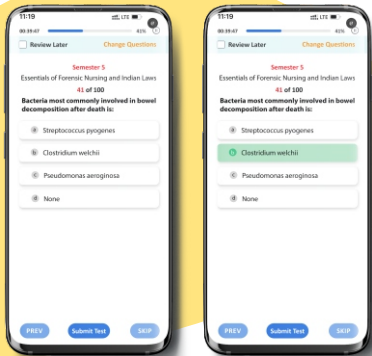
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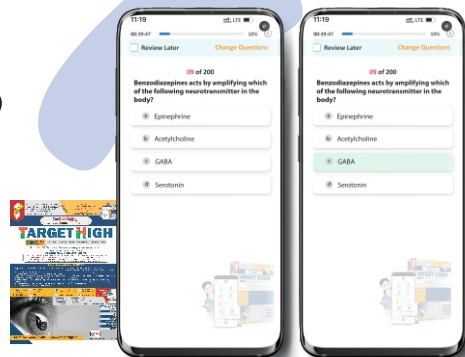
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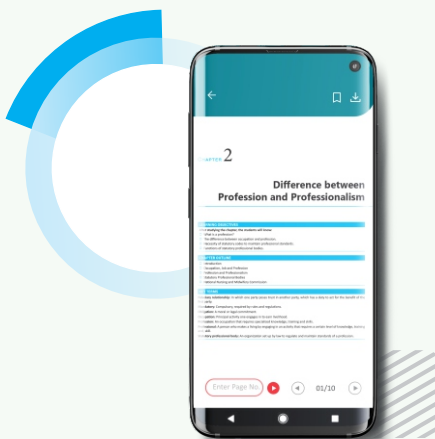
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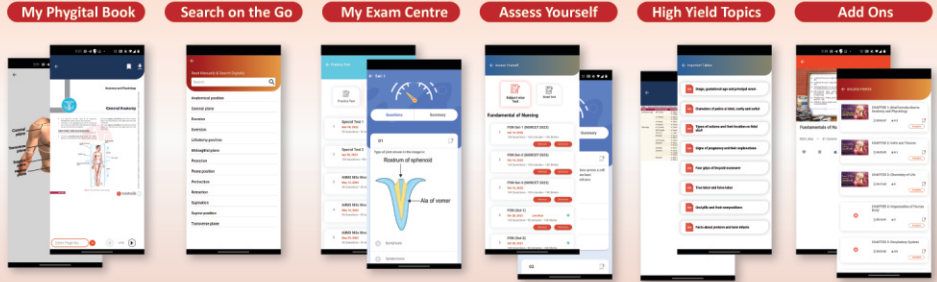
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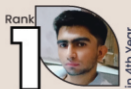
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Preface

Ethics and professionalism are two crucial elements in every field but they assume greater significance in domains related to healthcare. Doctors, nurses and other medical care providers often face complex and challenging situations that involve ethical dilemmas and moral judgments. They have to deal with the matters of life and death, human dignity and well-being. In healthcare settings, human lives are at stake and actions and decisions made by healthcare providers have a profound impact on the physical and emotional well-being of patients.

Nurses are an essential part of the healthcare teams. They have to play a key role in the delivery of healthcare as they have maximum interaction with the patients. They are responsible for providing a wide range of services to patients and they face a variety of ethical issues working in different healthcare settings, such as hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and at private practice centers. The quality of healthcare largely depends on the scientific knowledge, clinical competence and conduct of nurses. Nurses have to face many ethical questions at workplaces while dealing with patients from different age groups and diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.

Nurses cannot grow into true professionals without having profound knowledge and awareness about ethics. While scientific knowledge and clinical expertise are essential for providing quality patient care, nurses also need “ethical awareness” to deliver care with dignity, respect and compassion. Ethics provide a framework of moral standards and values to guide human actions and decisions. In clinical settings, application of ethical principles enables nurses to make decisions in conformity with their moral obligations and serve the best interests of the patients. Good grounding in ethics helps them to effectively address the moral aspects of nursing practice and navigate through complex ethical situations.

The profession of nursing is primarily focused on patient care. Nurses, who possess requisite ethical knowledge, understand the importance of providing care that is nondiscriminatory, culturally sensitive and patient-centered. Ethics and professionalism go hand in hand in nursing care. They are interdependent and complement each other in ensuring that nurses provide quality care that is safe, effective, compassionate and respectful. By integrating ethics and professionalism into their practice, nurses can provide care that is not only clinically competent but also compassionate, respectful, and patient-centered. They can build trusting relationships with their patients, communicate effectively, and collaborate with other healthcare professionals to achieve optimal health outcomes for their patients.

The book has been written as per the revised curriculum prescribed by the Indian Nursing Council. We have tried to include in the book all the essential information that nurses need to know and learn to have a proper understanding of ethics and professionalism. The book contains latest information and covers various topics relating to ethical challenges being thrown up by new digital health technologies, increasing use of electronic health records, telemedicine and other advancements in medical science. Ethical challenges faced by nurses during the outbreak of dreaded COVID-19 pandemic have also been discussed at length in chapter 12 entitled “Ethical Issues in Nursing”.

There are 22 chapters in all arranged into five units. The first two units, together, comprising eight chapters, are devoted to topics related to profession and professionalism. The historical evolution of the nursing profession, professional values, challenges of professionalism in nursing, impact of professionalization, professional nurse-patient relationship and other relevant topics have been covered in detail in the other two units.

The remaining three units, comprising 14 chapters, deal with ethics, laws and related issues. Origin and history of ethics, ethical issues in nursing care and nursing research, difference between ethics and law, development of various codes of ethics, rights of patients, ethical decision making, role of institutional ethics committees and other relevant topics have been covered.

It's very difficult to find a book that contains everything nurses need to know and learn about the twin topics but we are confident that it will serve as a useful resource not only for the nurses but also other healthcare providers involved in patient care.

Shama Lohumi
Rakesh Lohumi

Acknowledgments

We express our deepest gratitude to all those who took pains to give their honest views and valuable suggestions to help make the book better and more useful. However, no book is complete; there is always scope for including new information, refining existing ideas and rectifying errors. We keenly look forward to the response of readers, as their honest feedback will enable us to identify the areas that need improvement.

Writing a book requires a painstaking effort that demands both time and energy. We have to sacrifice a significant amount of time that we would have normally spent with our family and friends. Social life gets restricted and the near and dear ones, particularly family members, have to bear with us.

We are indebted to our son Tejaswi and daughter Garima for their unstinted support throughout, while daughter-in-law Vandana, who helped in creating infographics and fixing computer glitches, deserves a special mention.

We would like to thank **Mr Satish Kumar Jain** (Chairman) and **Mr Varun Jain** (Managing Director), M/s CBS Publishers and Distributors Pvt Ltd for providing us the platform in bringing out the book. We have no words to describe the role, efforts, inputs and initiatives undertaken by **Mr Bhupesh Aarora** [Sr. Vice President – Publishing and Marketing (Health Sciences Division)] for helping and motivating us.

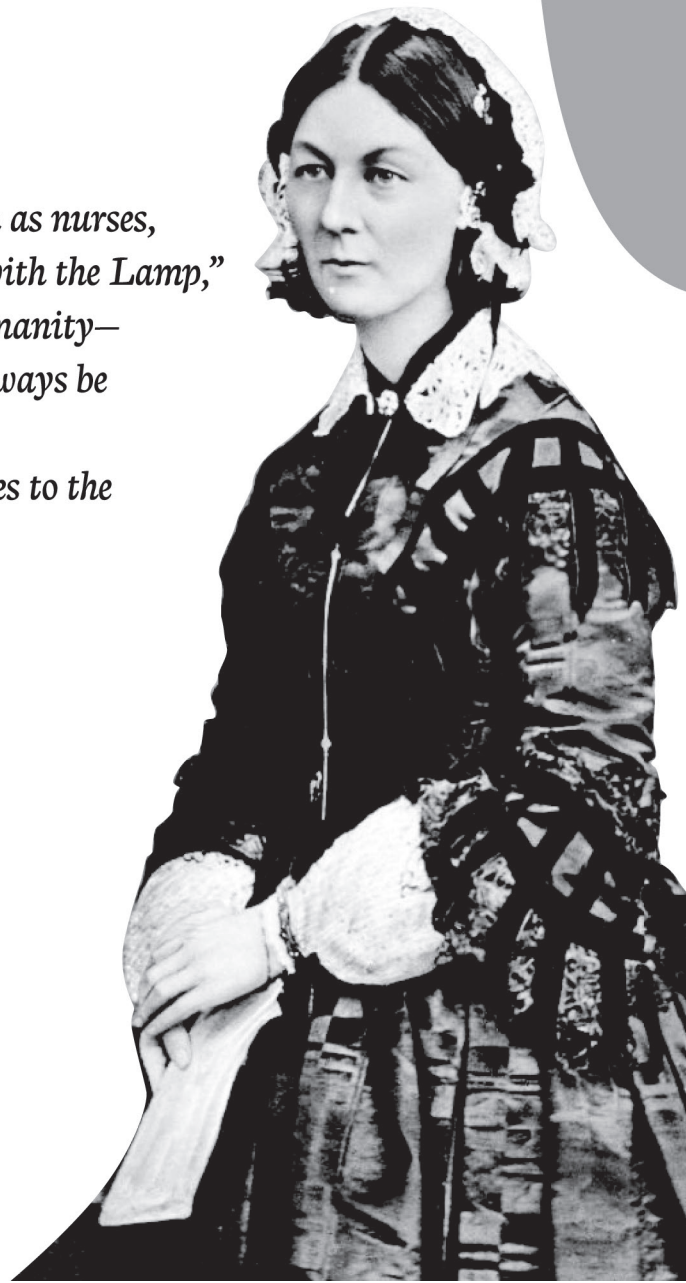
We sincerely thank the entire CBS team for bringing out the book with utmost care and attractive presentation. We would like to thank Ms Nitasha Arora (Publishing Head and Content Strategist – PGMEE and Nursing), and Dr Anju Dhir (Product Manager cum Commissioning Editor – Medical) for their editorial support. We would also extend our thanks to Mr Shivendu Bhushan Pandey (Sr. Manager and Team Lead), Mr Ashutosh Pathak (Sr. Proofreader cum Team Coordinator) and all the production team members for devoting laborious hours in designing and typesetting the book.



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The last two years were the most crucial phase when the entire world stood still due to adversity of COVID-19. The normal life was in turmoil, and people had no idea what would be their next step and how long this crisis would persist. In the midst of all, a few things which nobody could stop is 'Change', which is inevitable. During the last two years, we have done a lot of innovations and put our best efforts in implementing those innovations to bring quality education and make sure that every person should have access to best possible education.

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When pandemic halted everything, the future seemed to be doomed, Nursing Next Live made it possible for the Nursing Professionals across the nation to keep continuing their learning and helped them to achieve their dream career.

In a step toward strengthening the Nursing Segment, we have melded the four important pillars—Print, Digital, Nursing Professionals and Social Media—to work in a homogenized manner for the better future of the nursing education through:

NN Social, a community of 20K+ professionals, is an initiative of Nursing Next Live as India's knowledge-sharing network platform for the nursing segment. Nursing Next Social is curated with the aim to bring all the nursing faculty members across the nation closer and together on a single platform. Through **NN Social**, we aim to connect the sharp minds across the nation to use their knowledge for the better future of Nursing Profession. With NN Social **India's top-notch societies, like TNAI, SOCN, NTA, KINS, etc. are associated with us.** Apart from this, NN Social has a strong network of 100+ authors, 500+ reviewers and contributors. They all are dedicated and committed as we are, toward imparting quality nursing education.

In the era of digitalization, to make study interactive and convenient, we have conceptualized the idea of **Hybrid Edition of the books**. In this series, our many bestselling titles are available in the hybrid form. This hybrid learning is a blended learning wherein printed booklets are thoughtfully integrated with the digital support to reconceptualize the learning method in a more interactive manner with added values to knowledge. Hybrid edition is an endeavor to facilitate the next level of preparation for any nursing competitive exams through quality content, flexibility, customization and engaging interactive learning experiences.

We have also increased our **social media presence** through meaningful and innovative ideas and are committed to assist the nursing professionals in gaining and sharing the knowledge. We have taken the initiative to learn from the experience of the others and started **NNL Talks**. It is a platform where every nursing professional who has done exceptionally well in his/her career, toppers of any Nursing Exams and those who manage themselves in all the odds and stand firm and determined and succeed in his/her life, can share the success journey. We aim to motivate, educate and encourage the nursing professionals through various activities and posts on our social media platform.

Whatever initiative we take, we always make sure that it is for a noble cause of promoting the quality education accessible to everyone.

Today we can say this with confidence, we "CBS Publishers and NNL" have an edge over all other Indian and International Publishers. Our Approach, Vision, Mission, Concept, Content, Reach, Ideas all have a single goal that is better nursing education can lead to a better healthcare system.

Long way to go.... Together!

Looking forward to invite more young and experienced minds who can join us as Authors, Reviewers, Contributors, and Faculties and accomplish our mission of providing quality nursing education to all.

With Best Wishes

Mr Bhupesh Aarora

Sr. Vice President – Publishing and Marketing
(Health Sciences Division)



Special Features of the Book

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- ➔ Necessity of ethical decision-making in nursing.
- ➔ Importance of ethical decision-making.

Learning Objectives given in all the chapters focus on the areas that a student will become aware of after completing the chapter.

Every chapter starts with a **Chapter Outline** that gives a glimpse of the content covered in the chapter.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- ➔ Introduction
- ➔ Importance of Ethical Decision-Making

KEY TERMS

Foster: To encourage, nurture or facilitate.

Hamper: To make more difficult, to hinder or impede.

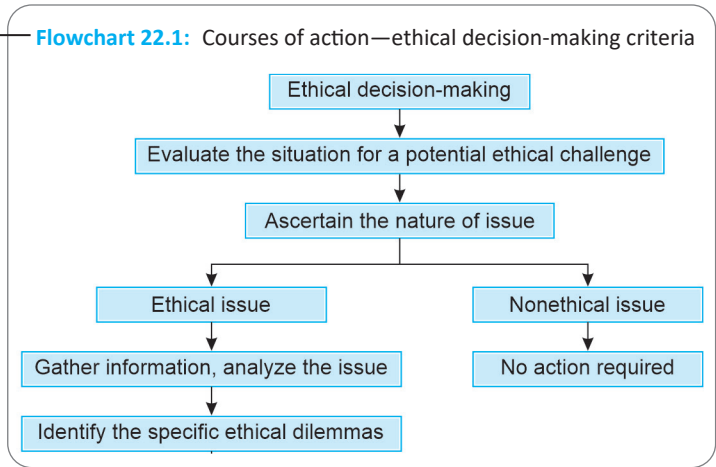
Important terms used in the chapter are enlisted under **Key Terms**.

Numerous **Tables** have been used to provide necessary data in compiled form.

Table 2.1: Features of profession and occupation

Occupation	Profession
A regular activity performed by a person to earn livelihood	An occupation, which requires a high degree of specialized knowledge and expertise in the concerned field
No mandatory training required	Mandatory training essential
No code of conduct	Governed by code of ethics, professional codes

Flowchart has been used at relevant place to simplify the concepts for the students.



ASSESS

Review Questions

1. Why is ethical decision-making essential in healthcare settings?
2. What are the benefits of ethical decision-making?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Identifying the _____ issue is the first step toward ethical decision-making.
 - a. Unethical
 - b. Legal
 - c. Ethical
 - d. Professional
2. Ethical decision-making is a complex affair that is improved and refined through _____ process.
 - a. Legal
 - b. Iterative
 - c. Nonmoral
 - d. Clinical

At the end of every chapter, **Assess Yourself** section has been included to help the students evaluate their learning.

Syllabus

PROFESSIONALISM, PROFESSIONAL VALUES & ETHICS INCLUDING BIOETHICS

Placement: IV Semester

Theory: 20 Hours

Unit	Time (Hrs)	Learning Outcomes	Content	Teaching/ Learning Activities	Assessment Methods
I	5 (T)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss nursing as a profession Describe the concepts and attributes of professionalism Identify the challenges of professionalism Maintain respectful communication and relationship with other health team members, patients and society Demonstrate professional conduct Respect and maintain professional boundaries between patients, colleagues and society Describe the roles and responsibilities of regulatory bodies and professional organizations Describe the roles and responsibilities of regulatory bodies and professional organizations 	<p>PROFESSIONALISM</p> <p>Profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of profession Criteria of a profession Nursing as a profession <p>Professionalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition and characteristics of professionalism Concepts, attributes and indicators of professionalism Challenges of professionalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal identity versus professional identity Preservation of self-integrity: threat to integrity, deceiving patient: withholding information and falsifying records Communication and relationship with team members: Respectful and open communication and relationship pertaining to relevant interests for ethical decision making Relationship with patients and society <p>Professional Conduct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following ethical principles Adhering to policies, rules and regulation of the institutions Professional etiquettes and behaviors Professional grooming: Uniform, dress code Professional boundaries: Professional relationship with the patients, caregivers and team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture cum discussion Debate Role play Case-based discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short answer Essay Objective type

Contd...

Unit	Time (Hrs)	Learning Outcomes	Content	Teaching/ Learning Activities	Assessment Methods
			Regulatory Bodies and Professional Organizations: Roles and Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regulatory bodies</i>: Indian Nursing Council, State Nursing Council • <i>Professional Organizations</i>: Trained Nurses Association of India (TNAI), Student Nurses Association (SNA), Nurses League of Christian Medical Association of India, International Council of Nurses (ICN) and International Confederation of Midwives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture cum Discussion • Visit to INC, SNC, TNAI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit reports
II	5 (T)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the importance of professional values • Distinguish between personal values and professional values • Demonstrate appropriate professional values in nursing practice 	PROFESSIONAL VALUES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values: Definition and characteristics of values • Value clarification • Personal and professional values • Professional socialization: Integration of professional values with personal values Professional Values in Nursing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of professional values in nursing and health care • Caring: Definition, and process • Compassion: Sympathy versus empathy, altruism • Conscientiousness • Dedication/devotion to work • Respect for the person—Human dignity • Privacy and confidentiality: Incidental disclosure • Honesty and integrity: Truth telling • Trust and credibility: Fidelity, loyalty • Advocacy: Advocacy for patients, work environment, nursing education and practice, and for advancing the profession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture cum discussion • Value clarification exercise • Interactive learning • Story telling • Sharing experiences • Scenario-based discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short answer • Essay • Assessment of student's behavior with patients and families
III	10 (T)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define ethics and bioethics • Explain ethical principles • Identify ethical concerns 	ETHICS AND BIOETHICS Definitions: Ethics, Bioethics and Ethical Principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficence • Nonmaleficence: Patient safety, protecting patient from harm, reporting errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture cum discussion • Group discussion with examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short answer • Essay • Quiz • Reflective diary • Case report • Attitude test

Contd...

Unit	Time (Hrs)	Learning Outcomes	Content	Teaching/ Learning Activities	Assessment Methods
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical issues and dilemmas in health care Explain process of ethical decision making and apply knowledge of ethics and bioethics in making ethical decisions Explain code of ethics stipulated by ICN and INC Discuss the rights of the patients and families to make decisions about health care Protect and respect patients' rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Justice: Treating each person as equal Care without discrimination, equitable access to care and safety of the public Autonomy: Respects patients' autonomy, self-determination, freedom of choice <p>Ethical Issues and Ethical Dilemma: Common Ethical Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict of interest Paternalism Deception Privacy and confidentiality Valid consent and refusal Allocation of scarce nursing resources Conflicts concerning new technologies Whistleblowing <i>Beginning of life issues</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abortion Substance abuse Fetal therapy Selective deduction Intrauterine treatment of fetal conditions Mandated contraception Fetal injury Infertility treatment <i>End of life issues</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of life Euthanasia Do not resuscitate (DNR) <i>Issues related to psychiatric care</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noncompliance Restrain and seclusion Refuse to take food <p>Process of Ethical Decision Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the situation (collect information) Identify the ethical problem Identify the alternative decisions Choose the solution to the ethical decision Implement the decision Evaluate the decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flipping/ self-directed learning Role play Story telling Sharing experiences Case-based clinical discussion Role modeling Group exercise on ethical decision-making following steps on a given scenario Assignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of assignment

Contd...

Unit	Time (Hrs)	Learning Outcomes	Content	Teaching/ Learning Activities	Assessment Methods
			<p>Ethics Committee: Roles and Responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical decision making • Research <p>Code of Ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Council of Nurses (ICN) • Indian Nursing Council <p>Patients’ Bill of Rights—17 patients’ rights (MoH & FW, GoI)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Right to emergency medical care 2. Right to safety and quality care according to standards 3. Right to preserve dignity 4. Right to nondiscrimination 5. Right to privacy and confidentiality 6. Right to information 7. Right to records and reports 8. Right to informed consent 9. Right to second opinion 10. Right to patient education 11. Right to choose alternative treatment options if available 12. Right to choose source for obtaining medicines or tests 13. Right to proper referral and transfer, which is free from perverse commercial influences 14. Right to take discharge of patient or receive body of deceased from hospital 15. Right to information on the rates to be charged by the hospital for each type of service provided and facilities available on a prominent display board and a brochure 16. Right to protection for patients involved in clinical trials, biomedical and health research 17. Right to be heard and seek redressal 		

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UNIT I

Profession and Professionalism

Unit Outline

Chapter 1 History of Nursing

Chapter 2 Difference between Profession and Professionalism

Chapter 3 Professional Responsibility

Chapter 4 Importance of Professional Values

CHAPTER 1

History of Nursing

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- The stages and growth of nursing care.
 - The various foreign influences that shaped nursing.
 - The contributions of various religious orders in development of nursing.
 - The transition from traditional to modern nursing.
 - The progress made in nursing education after Independence.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - History and Evolution of Nursing Profession
 - Nursing in India
-

KEY TERMS

Evolution: Continuing process of change or progress from one state to another.

Monastic order: A group of persons living under a religious rule, i.e., nuns, monks.

Nursing: The practice of providing care for the sick and infirm.

Profession: Any type of work that requires special training or a particular skill.

Reformation and Counter-Reformation: Catholic response to the Protestant Reformation is known as the Counter-Reformation.

Renaissance: A French word meaning “rebirth”, time of the great revival of art, learning.

INTRODUCTION

One of the oldest professions, nursing has come a long way from the ancient times when ailing and injured persons were provided care at home by family members and friends. The responsibility of caregiver was assigned to female members in most communities as women, who took good care of children and family members, were traditionally considered more suitable for the task. There was no formal education or training for caregivers and they learnt the art of giving care from the elders through oral transmission of knowledge and their own experience.

Nursing evolved into a profession rather early. Some nurses received payment for the services they provided when nursing was at a nascent stage. For instance, services of wet nurses were desperately required to nurse babies whose mother either had died or were not in a position to breastfeed. Wet nurses mostly stayed at the home of their employer.

In fact, in those days safest care was provided at home where family, friends and members of the clan took responsibility of looking after the ailing person. Home remained the center for all types of nursing and medical care for centuries. Only those who had no family and friends were forced to go to hospital for treatment. Traditionally, nursing has always been characterized by caring, nurturing and supporting the sick, infirm and needy and the caregivers provided service without any formal training. In the current modern era, it has become a highly technical job due to advances in medical science. Nurses have to handle sophisticated equipment and continuously update their knowledge to keep abreast of the latest developments in healthcare.

HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF NURSING PROFESSION

Origin of Word 'Nursing'

Originally, the word 'nurse' was not used in the sense it is used today to describe a person who takes care of the sick. Initially, it was used for the women who came forward to breastfeed the hapless infants whose mothers had died or were not in a position to do so. The word was first used in the 13th century for wet nurses. It came from the post-Classical Latin root word 'nutricia' and was used for a wet-nurse. 'Nutricia' itself is derived from the Latin verb "nutrire" which means 'to nourish', 'feed' or 'cherish'.

The word acquired the figurative meaning only toward the second half of the 14th century to refer to anything that nurtures or fosters a quality or condition. It had several variations in English dialects like norce, nors, norsse and, noarse, before taking the final form. Spelled as 'nurse' the word was first used in the early 15th century for referring to a 'wet-nurse' or a woman hired for looking after young children. Subsequently, it acquired a more generalized meaning to indicate any person who takes care of, educates or counsels someone. The term was not used to refer to someone, who takes care of patients, until the 16th century. The word 'nurse' was used strictly in a medical sense in Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors (1616).

Looking after the sick and injured persons has been an integral part of community living. Societies and groups have been taking care of the ailing and injured members from ancient times. Parents bringing up their children is the first example of nursing, which was driven by maternal and paternal instincts. Nursing was being practiced all through in one form or the other throughout recorded history, depending on the culture and requirements of the communities. Healthcare practices varied across communities as every social group had its own system for looking after the sick and infirm members. For example, life in many ancient cultures was nomadic and the communities, which kept on moving from one place to another in search of food, required a different kind of healthcare.

The form of nursing kept changing with the advancement of the healthcare system. In the medieval period, nursing was instinctive and motivated by compassion for others. Women served as the caregivers without any kind of training. They learnt the art of nursing by experience. Nursing was driven by religious values and ethos like devotion, service before self and hard work.



The early era of Christianity was significant for nursing as it brought about a positive change in the attitude toward nursing. The Christian belief that selfless service to humanity without any reward was the greatest virtue, changed the way of thinking and people became more compassionate, helping toward the sick, and needy. Throughout the middle ages, from 500 AD to 1500 AD, the religious values and ideas of Christianity inspired people to serve the suffering humanity and women entered the nursing profession in a big way. The stature of nurses was raised as many charitable institutions came up to take care of the sick, aged and poor people.

The benevolence of the church was not limited to treating the sick, it also took care of the hungry, needy widows, children and homeless people. Monasteries saw additions to wards, primarily meant for spiritual sustenance but also served the needs of the sick and infirm. Even in the middle ages, nursing care was continued to be provided by caregivers without any formal education or training but they worked under the supervision of experienced nurses. The situation changed as the monasteries emerged as centers of education and medical care and monks and nuns dedicated their lives to service of the sick and needy. Nursing, particularly, midwifery flourished under the new nursing system that came up under the patronage of the Church.

However, nursing suffered a big setback due to the turmoil caused during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in northern Europe. It turned out to be the “darkest period of nursing” as monasteries, where the sick and needy took shelter and received care, were closed down. France, politically and culturally the strongest country at that time, was at the center of bloody religious wars between Protestants and Catholics. The repression of the monasteries, particularly ban on Catholic organizations in Protestantism dominated areas, led to closure of churches and sudden dismantling of the bulk of nursing infrastructure and there was little provision for the institutional care of the sick that had evolved over the years. Nursing sank to the lowest levels and there was a huge shortage of caregivers. The suffering people, particularly the sick and infirm, were left to fend for themselves.

The growing demand for healthcare forced authorities to open hospitals but nursing received further setbacks as these institutions were run by laypersons with no training. The profession lost its social status as nurses were mostly recruited from the lower strata of society. It was not considered honorable to work in hospital. The Protestant church had little concern for freedom of women and the nursing services. The women lost the freedom and opportunity to move about in the world available under Catholic Church. Miserable conditions at work places and low salaries made nursing a low status menial job.

Advances in the Field of Medicine

Advances in the field of medicine during the Renaissance period from 1500 to 1700 AD also led to revival of nursing. Many medical and nursing schools came up during the period, which saw both women and men, providing nursing care to people of all ages. The Daughters of Charity, was founded by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac in Paris in 1633, to help mitigate the suffering of the poor and sick. It played a significant role in laying the foundation of modern nursing. The caregivers were also imparted systematic training in the theory and practice of nursing, in addition to spiritual knowledge. The main responsibility of the Daughters of Charity was to provide care to the sick in their homes, it was a new concept on which modern nursing practices developed. In 1638, the Daughters of Charity started extending its footprint and set up establishments of sisters dedicated to giving nursing care in the home in many places.

The training in nursing was comprehensive. Besides hands-on experience in both home nursing and hospital services, the sisters were also taught about medicines. They were provided training to grow, process and utilize medicinal plants to treat patients and conduct various therapeutic procedures like application of leeches. General skills like cooking, housekeeping and gardening also formed part of the training module. Besides providing home nursing services, the sisters worked in various institutions like schools, hospitals, children’s homes, old age homes, prisons and lunatic asylums.

There was not much change in nursing practices from the late 1700s to 1853. Nursing got a boost in 1836 with the establishment of the first Protestant hospital. Pastor Theodor Fliedner and his wife Friederike Fliedner set up the healthcare facility at Kaiserswerth in Germany as a counterpart to the Catholic nursing congregations. It proved an important milestone as deaconess movement soon spread to other Protestant countries in Europe. Subsequently, deaconesses played a major role in taking care of the suffering sick, elderly persons, needy and prisoners. Pass outs of the Kaiserswerth program provided services across the world.

Demand for nurses increased as industrialization led to rapid urbanization and hospitals were set up to cater to the healthcare needs of the growing urban population. However, the quality of nursing varied and the health facilities run by monastic orders generally provided better care. Other hospitals did not have trained caregivers.

Contributions of Florence Nightingale to Nursing

Florence Nightingale, who transformed the nursing profession and hailed as the founder of modern nursing, had received her training at Kaiserswerth School. Her parents were not in favor of her getting into nursing; caring for strangers was not socially acceptable. Moreover, during that period, nursing was largely seen with low status menial job and she was well educated and came from a privileged background. However, driven by her passion to serve the suffering humanity, Florence went on to study nursing at the School of Lutheran deaconesses in Germany. She rose to become the manager of a hospital in London in 1853. Drawing from nursing traditions of both Catholic sisters and Protestant deaconesses, she developed her own training program at St Thomas' Hospital in London in 1860. It turned out to be a successful initiative, which changed public perception about the profession.

Born on May 12, 1820 in an affluent English family, Florence Nightingale etched her name in the history of nursing by her dedicated services to the sick and impoverished. She gave her invaluable contribution in raising the status of nursing profession.

Her acclaimed mission during the Crimean War in 1854 turned out to be a turning point for both in her own career and the evolution of the nursing profession. With her team of 38 volunteer nurses, Florence Nightingale took care of 1500 injured British soldiers fighting in the war. Serving at the military hospital it did not take long for her to realize that diseases like typhus, dysentery, typhoid and cholera were claiming more lives than the fatalities on the war front.

She compiled important statistical data for six months to evaluate the impact of the efforts put in by her team. The outcome was miraculous with the mortality rate declining dramatically from 60% to 2%. Her scientific approach, efficient management and the measures she put into practice, laid the foundation of modern nursing. She also authored a book "Notes on Nursing," which still serves as basic guide for nurses. It eventually led to creation of standards for the profession. She encouraged all the hospitals to collect important statistics to evaluate and compare outcomes, paving the way for evidence-based practice.

Nightingale shifted focus of nursing care to personal hygiene, maintaining cleanliness along with preventive measures and ensuring proper nutrition to the patients. She initiated various measures to improve patient-centered care, competence of the caregivers, and the overall healthcare environment. She identified the gaps in nursing care after investigating the root cause of problems and came up with appropriate reforms and innovations. She was well educated and had the ability to communicate fluently in French, Italian, German, and Turkish. Her language skills helped her to convince others involved in healthcare delivery about her projects.

She examined the military and medical rules threadbare and retained only those, which were sensible, and facilitated effective delivery of healthcare. The routines laid down by the military medical officers, which affected efficiency in healthcare delivery, were modified or replaced with new ones.

She carried out large-scale improvements in nursing practice and patient care, achieved outcomes and overcame barriers that hampered efficiency. The principles of good nursing delineated by Nightingale were

based on her own practical experience and is her most outstanding contribution. She made a clear distinction in training and skills of a professionally qualified nurse and knowledge essential for every woman who can be called at any time to render nursing service in some form. The principles of good nursing she founded on the basis of her own experience are still relevant. Students are amazed at the clarity with which Nightingale delineated the role of nurses. In her view, “the purpose of nursing was not merely to keep people alive but to help people to live.”

NURSING IN INDIA

Nursing in India has undergone a sea change from the early mythical times when evil spirits were believed to be at the root of all illnesses and the only healer was the exorcist who expelled the devils out using his spells and charms. The situation changed gradually with the progress made in medicine and the earliest accounts reveal that systematic healing practices evolved around 700 BC when Brahmin priests, who engaged in intellectual pursuits, took to practice of medicine.

It was the time when medical science made rapid progress with contributions from legendary physicians like Sushruta, better known as the “Father of Indian Surgery,” who developed surgical procedures of very high standards. He devised standard practices and procedures to keep operation rooms and surgical instruments clean. He developed techniques for conducting cesarean section, cranial surgery, cataract treatment and plastic surgery. He was best known for his art of plastic surgery. Besides him, Charaka, another legendary physician, also did pioneering work to lay a strong foundation of Ayurveda, the traditional Indian science of life.

Physiotherapy was practiced as massage, with masseuses taking care of women patients and masseurs tending to men patients. The focus was on preventive measures not on curing the disease. Various preventive measures include inoculation for diseases like smallpox. The inoculation was used to be carried out house to house by a particular Brahmin tribe.

The rise of Buddhism during 500 BC to 300 AD saw further advances in the field of medicine. The philosophy of compassion toward all the creatures improved healthcare with monks serving the sick. The influence of Buddhist philosophy on King Ashoka led to establishment of hospitals both for humans and animals. As a result, veterinary science also made rapid progress. Many monastic universities came up with medical schools leading to all-round development in medicine. However, during the same time surgery suffered a setback as compassion for all living beings preached by Buddha virtually barred dissections of animals which hampered study of anatomy.

The decline of Buddhism and the resultant predominance of Brahminic influence proved fatal for healthcare system as Buddhist hospitals disappeared. Further, the caste system had developed strong roots and Brahmin physicians refused to touch blood, tissues or pathological material and avoided physical contact with anything that could involve pollution. The decline of medicine due to religious reasons also led to downslide of nursing profession.

The subsequent Mohammedan invasion gave a crippling blow to nursing profession due to severe restrictions on women on religious grounds and overall lower status compared to men. The Ayurvedic system also declined and toward the later part of medieval period, the Unani system, which enjoyed the patronage of Muslim rulers, gained ground. Female nurses virtually vanished from the healthcare scene during this period.

Advent of Modern Medicine

The modern nursing came to India with the arrival of the Portuguese. The invaders captured Goa in AD 1510 and they set up the Royal Hospital and introduced modern medicine and nursing. However, the credit for establishing modern medical and nursing services in the country goes to the French and British colonizers.

The East India Company set up its first civil hospital for soldiers at Madras in 1664. It remained a joint military and general hospital for almost two centuries and became a Government General Hospital only in 1871. The Bengal government started a Nursing Training Program in 1859 and also set up a Nursing Training Center at Calcutta (now Kolkata). Thereafter, nursing schools were opened across the country in collaboration with private and the government hospitals.

The National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, better known as Dufferin Fund, formulated the first National Medical Care and Nursing Plan in 1885.

Florence Nightingale, who never visited India, made immense contribution in laying a sound foundation for nursing in the country. She collected important data, like morbidity and mortality rate, sanitary conditions, age and length of service persons at the time of death, from all the military stations through questionnaires. She wrote letters to senior medical and military officers to help improve the quality of healthcare. A Royal Sanitary Commission Health was set up in 1859 and the effort put in by Nightingale provided a solid footing for the public healthcare services in the country.

Graduates from the Nightingale School of Nurses at St. Thomas Hospital, England, came to India to nursing training schools. The first Nursing Training Program for Indian girls was started at St Stephen's Hospital in Delhi in 1867. The first School of Nursing was started in Government General Hospital, Madras in 1871 with six month Diploma Midwives program for which four lady Superintendents and four trained nurses from England were deputed.

A number of training schools came up between 1890 and 1900 under missions or government across the country. Modern nursing in military hospitals got a further boost with the arrival of ten fully qualified nurses who laid the foundation of Indian Military Nursing Service. The first Lady Superintendent Miss Elizabeth Locke got her training at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London. She worked relentlessly and successfully to raise the standards of nursing in all the military hospitals in India. She was forced to resign in 1902 due to her failing health and she died in 1904. The system to provide training to hospital orderlies introduced by Locke in 1893 brought about significant improvement in the quality of nursing services.

The nursing service really came of age only after the formation of Indian Military Nursing service (IMNS) in 1927 with a strength of 55 trained nurses, including 12 matrons, 18 sisters and 25 staff nurses. The IMNS saw steady expansion during the Second World War. Subsequently, a full three-year training course for nurses was started in selected military hospitals.

Trained nurses formed an association; the Trained Nurses Association of India in 1908 to uphold the dignity of nursing profession. The State of Madras constituted the first Nursing Registration Council to lay down and enforce the basic standards for education and training. The first four-year basic Bachelor Degree program in Nursing was introduced in 1946 at the Nursing Colleges based in Delhi and Vellore. Health centers came up at Calcutta, Lucknow, Madras, Trivandrum, Delhi, Bangalore and Pune between 1931 and 1939 with assistance from the Rockefeller Foundation.

The demand for various categories of nursing staff, including nurses, auxiliary nurse midwives, health visitors, midwives, nursing tutors and nursing administrators, increased significantly after the country got Independence. The government set up the Indian Nursing Council in 1949. Miss Adranvala was appointed as the Nursing Advisor to Government of India in 1956.

The college of Nursing, Delhi, started the first master's degree course; a two-year postgraduate program in 1960 and School of Nursing in Trivandrum introduced the first two-year post certificate Bachelor Degree program in 1963. Today there are over 8,650 nursing institutions in the country producing over 3.2 lakh nursing personnel every year. As per official data in 2021, there were 3688 colleges offering 1,07,814 BSc, Nursing, and 13,971 MSc Nursing, seats.

There is still a long way to go. As per 2019 data, the country had 8,85,383 Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANM), 21,29,820 Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives (RN and RM), and 56,644 Lady Health

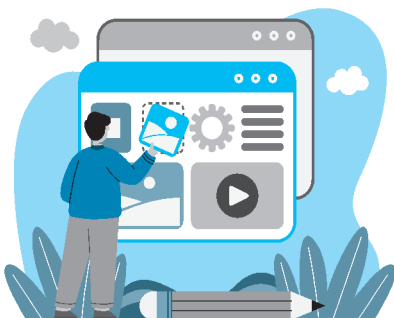
Visitors (LHV). The number is far less for India's size and population of 140 crore. India has only 1.7 nurses per thousand of population as against the WHO norm of three nurses per thousand population. As such, the country needs another 4.3 million nurses by 2024 to achieve the norm.

Important Milestones in the History of Modern Nursing in India

- Portuguese were the first to bring modern nursing to India, and the French and British consolidated it.
- In 1664, East India Company opened the first civil hospital for soldiers at Madras, which was renamed as Government General Hospital in 1871.
- In 1859, Government of Bengal came up with a scheme for training of nurses. A Nursing Training Center was opened at Calcutta.
- In 1865, foundation of professional nursing was laid in India when graduates from Nightingale School of Nurses at St. Thomas Hospital, England, were deputed to start nursing schools in India.
- In 1867, St Stephen's Hospital at Delhi became the first institution to start training of Indian women as nurses.
- In 1871, Government General Hospital, Madras, started the first school of nursing with a six-month diploma midwives program.
- 1890–1900 period saw many schools opened by missions or government across India.
- In 1908, Trained Nurses Association of India (TNAI) was established. Initially, it was known as association of nursing superintendents.
- The Government of India recognized TNAI as a service organization in 1950.

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Review Questions

1. How did the growth of Buddhism influence medical care and nursing?
2. Decline in influence of Buddhism affected medical care, explain.
3. Write in detail about the influence of Christianity on nursing.
4. Write an essay on the contribution of Florence Nightingale to modern nursing.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Surgery declined with the advent of:**
 - a. Jainism
 - b. Christianity
 - c. Buddhism
 - d. Brahmanism
2. **The word 'nurse' is derived from Latin word:**
 - a. Nutrition
 - b. Nourish
 - c. Nasal
 - d. Nutrire
3. **Values of Christianity _____ the standards of nursing.**
 - a. Lowered
 - b. Had no impact
 - c. Raised
 - d. Downgraded
4. **Who brought modern nursing to India?**
 - a. French
 - b. Portuguese
 - c. British
 - d. Americans
5. **The Protestant reformation movement had a _____ impact on nursing.**
 - a. Negative
 - b. Positive
 - b. Improved
 - d. Encouraging

Answer Key

1. c 2. d 3. c 4. b 5. a




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CHAPTER 2

Difference between Profession and Professionalism

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- What is a profession?
 - The difference between occupation and profession.
 - Necessity of statutory codes to maintain professional standards.
 - Functions of statutory professional bodies.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Occupation, Job and Profession
 - Profession and Professionalism
 - Statutory Professional Bodies
 - National Nursing and Midwifery Commission
-

KEY TERMS

Fiduciary relationship: In which one party poses trust in another party, which has a duty to act for the benefit of the first party.

Mandatory: Compulsory, required by rules and regulations.

Obligation: A moral or legal commitment.

Occupation: Principal activity one engages in to earn livelihood.

Profession: An occupation that requires specialized knowledge, training and skills.

Professional: A person who makes a living by engaging in an activity that requires a certain level of knowledge, training and, skill.

Statutory professional body: An organization set up by law to regulate and maintain standards of a profession.



INTRODUCTION

People have been engaging in different activities to make a living from time immemorial. In very early days, human societies were mostly agrarian and the people were dependent on agriculture to earn their livelihoods. While most people worked in farms, some engaged in small business, worked as laborers and did other jobs to fulfil the growing requirements of society.

Human skills and the sphere of activities kept expanding with the evolution of societies. Over a period of time, improvements in basic skills and technology further widened the scope of economic activities, giving rise to more specialized skills. The farming communities required workers with varied types of skills for agricultural operations, tending to livestock, weaving clothes, building houses and other allied activities.

As societies progressed, the demand for various types of skills kept growing. People got new opportunities and sources of livelihood and economic activities kept expanding steadily. For instance, agriculture branched out into various specialties like horticulture, apiculture, dairy farming, poultry farming and other allied income generating activities. Carpentry, blacksmithery, pottery, masonry, weaving, tool making and other such skills provided more avenues for earning livelihood to people.

OCCUPATION, JOB AND PROFESSION

With the availability of multiple avenues for earning livelihood, some people even engaged in more than one gainful economic activity. The principal activity from which one earned a living and remained occupied for most of the time became one's occupation. There are many activities like traditional vocations such as farming, business or other self-employment ventures and employment in someone else's enterprise to earn livelihood.

Thus, various occupations emerged as societies made progress on the development front. The terms occupation and job are commonly used to indicate the principal source of livelihood, the two have different meanings. Occupation is a border term encompassing a group of related jobs, whereas, job is a specific position one holds in an organization. For example, teaching is an occupation but the job of teacher can be of a school lecturer, teaching in a school, or a college lecturer, teaching in a college or a professor in university teaching and pursuing research.

Advertisements published in newspapers often provide a good idea of the difference in the meanings of the terms occupation and job. One often comes across advertisements entitled, "Applications are invited for various positions in teaching and administrative streams" and in the details, the breakup of posts, the specific job titles and other information is provided. It is quite clear that teaching and administrative refer to occupation, while descriptions of posts like postgraduate teacher, language teacher, section officer, joint secretary, etc. are the specific job titles.

Similarly, the general term describing the occupation of doctors is 'physician'. A hospital can have many physicians with different job titles like anesthetist, cardiac surgeon, gynecologist, neurologist, nephrologist and other such specific job titles indicating their special skills and status. Job titles also provide an indication about the hierarchical position in the organization.

Career is the long-term progression of one's professional life. One can change many jobs during the career. For example: His lack of education did not deter him from making a career in politics. His writing skills helped him to build a career in journalism. One acquires different specific skills, knowledge and experience during one's career. A good career in any field brings a sense of achievement.

One may perform many different roles in a field during one's career. For instance, one may enter the nursing profession as a staff nurse in a hospital and performing various roles gradually helps in moving up in the professional ladder building an enviable career to occupy the top position of director of nursing.

Definition of Profession

The word ‘profession’ comes from the Latin word ‘professio’. Its original Latin meaning was to declare, promise, or make a vow expressing faith in a religion or a public declaration with determination and commitment. With the passage of time, the term profession acquired a wider meaning, beyond religion, to refer to open declaration of nonreligious objectives and ideas. In the Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, the term profess was defined as, “the public act of taking religious vows”.

It was during the Renaissance period in the 16th century that the word ‘profession’ was for the first time used to refer to occupations like medicine and law, which were associated with the well-educated and elite sections of the society. Accordingly, in the current dictionaries, the term ‘profession’ refers to an occupation that requires use of specialized ‘professed’ knowledge and skills of some field. Any individual keen to enter a profession will have to undertake painstaking efforts to acquire knowledge of the field through formal education and training. For instance, the jobs of doctors, engineers, advocates and nurses all entail a high level of education and training and, thus, qualify to be categorized as professions. In short, ‘profession’ now refers to an occupation practiced by individuals with prescribed qualifications and skills to cater to the needs of a client or the people at large.

The basic principle governing professions is that the focus of practitioners has to be on providing service and they should not be driven by economic gains.

Difference between Occupation and Profession

Many use the terms ‘occupation’ and ‘profession’ interchangeably as if they are synonyms. However, the two terms differ in many ways. While occupation is an activity a person engages in on a regular basis to make a living, profession involves an activity that requires extensive specialized training and skills, deep knowledge in the area of specialization and a certain minimum qualification. No mandatory training is required for pursuing any occupation. Occupation is a wider term that includes both profession and job.

The main features distinguishing profession from occupation are shown in Table 2.1.

Relationship between Profession and Society

The most important feature that distinguishes professionals is that their relationship is based on trust reposed in them by the clients. The fiduciary nature of such relationships makes it obligatory on the part of the professionals to act in the best interests of their clients. While entering the profession, they ‘profess’

Table 2.1: Features of profession and occupation

Occupation	Profession
A regular activity performed by a person to earn livelihood	An occupation, which requires a high degree of specialized knowledge and expertise in the concerned field
No mandatory training required	Mandatory training essential
No code of conduct	Governed by code of ethics, professional codes
Lower status	Higher status
Compensation or payment on the basis of production	Compensation or payment on the basis of skill and knowledge
No independence	Completely independent
No responsibility	Responsible to public, clients

commitment to competence and integrity and promise to maintain high moral standards, uphold human values and strive for the public good in their field of work. Professionals can serve the society well only by maintaining high level of integrity, ethical standards and commitment throughout their practice. This explains why professional ethics play a vital role in ensuring that members of every profession strive for the benefit of the public. The public commitment lays the foundation of a social contract between a professional and the society. The social contract also lends autonomy to the profession in practice and the privilege of self-regulation.

Professional autonomy also imposes responsibility and makes the practitioners accountable for their decisions and actions. If professionals fail to maintain trust and indulge in unethical conduct, the people will lose confidence in them. The profession will get a bad name and as a result, professionals will lose their elite status in the society.

Ensuring ethical conduct by professionals is essential not only for safeguarding their own interests but also of their clients and society. A mechanism has been put in place to achieve this by framing of ethics and professional codes for different profession. Professionals are bound to follow various statutory codes and adhere to high standards of moral and ethical conduct.

Each profession is regulated by a specific professional code to take care of varied requirements of different professions. For instance, in legal profession, advocates have much different obligations to their clients than nurses or doctors have to their patients. The obligations of professionals working in different fields differ, depending on the type of services they provide to the clients and society.

In brief, a profession can be best described as an occupation that requires specialized training, a higher level of knowledge and a formal qualification. An occupation can be in the form of business or employment where one works to make a living. It can also be in the form of a profession to provide specialized services that others require.

In every occupation, one uses one's knowledge and skills to earn a living by devoting maximum time to a particular activity. However, professionals are not only required to have a very high level of specialized knowledge and training but also carry a moral responsibility and obligation to the clients and the society.

PROFESSION AND PROFESSIONALISM

Whether it is nursing or any other profession, one has to acquire specialized knowledge and practical skills in the desired field by undergoing prolonged training to become a professional. The professional qualifications have to be obtained from recognized educational institutions, mostly colleges and universities. In India, various institutions offer standardized courses as per the syllabus prescribed by the Indian Nursing Council (INC).

The educational courses and practical training one has to undertake are prerequisite and part of preparation for performing the role of a professional. The high level of specialized knowledge bestows an exalted status on professionals due to which they not only earn recognition but also the respect and confidence of the society. The opinion of professionals is relied upon in legal, administrative, public interest issues and other matters.

Professionals cater to the needs of the society and provide specialized services required by the people. There are also various categories of employees, who also serve the people in different ways, but they have no obligation to the society of the profession. They simply follow the instructions of their employer and they have no other obligation. However, professionals are completely independent and carry a huge responsibility as they have an obligation to the society and the profession, ahead of their commitment to their employer. Professionals of higher status enjoy as well as bear responsibility in society.

Unscrupulous practitioners or quacks pose a serious threat as their conduct can undermine the credibility of professions and, in turn, cause harm to the society. Unprofessional conduct brings a bad name

to professionals and shakes the faith of people in professions. It is, thus, imperative to have high professional standards to retain public trust and ensure that the society is not put to harm due to improper conduct of professionals.

STATUTORY PROFESSIONAL BODIES

The twin objectives of safeguarding both the society and protecting the interests of professionals is achieved by setting up statutory regulatory bodies for various professions. This is the reason for laying down minimum standards and code of ethics for various professions. The prescribed standards and codes are enforced through statutory bodies. Professionals are required to adhere to a code of conduct.

Definition

A professional body is an organization comprising individual members associated with a specific profession, interest or occupation. These organizations possess specific knowledge, skills and experience of academic principles related to the professions of the members. Besides regulating the conduct of members, the statutory bodies also support and work for their professional advancement and the overall development of their respective professions.

There are different statutory bodies to regulate various professions. The All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) is responsible for maintaining standards of technical education in the country and the Bar Council of India (BCI) regulates the legal profession. It lays down the standards of professional conduct and etiquettes to be observed by advocates. The Indian Nursing Council (INC) governed the nursing profession but the government has decided to replace it with a National Nursing and Midwifery Commission. The Medical Council of India (MCI) has already been replaced with the National Medical Commission (NMC). Similarly, there are other statutory bodies to maintain standards and regulate the conduct of professionals.

It is mandatory for the professionals to get registered with the concerned statutory regulatory body to start practice and enter the profession. Registration with the statutory body assures the employers that the candidate possesses the prescribed educational qualification, training and professional skills.

Functions

Professionals are associated with activities that benefit individuals, organizations and the society and that is why they enjoy a higher status. Statutory professional bodies are responsible for ensuring ethical conduct of the members so that they do not cause any harm to the society or their respective professions by their unprofessional conduct. Statutory bodies lay down rules and regulations to ensure professional conduct by the professionals. They are empowered to take action against those guilty of unprofessional conduct and the penalty can range from debarring a professional from working for a specified period to permanent disqualification.

They specify standards and evaluate professional examinations. Accredite academic programmes, support professional development through continuing education programmes, publish professional journals, enforce code of conduct to regulate behavior of professionals, deal with complaints against professionals and facilitate access to professions for people from all walks of life.

NATIONAL NURSING AND MIDWIFERY COMMISSION

The government has decided to replace the Indian Nursing Council with the National Nursing and Midwifery Commission (NNMC) to help improve quality of healthcare and reinforce people's confidence in the nursing



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and midwifery professions. Similar Nursing and Midwifery Commissions will be set up in each state to carry out the functions of NNMC.

The major functions of the proposed commission are as follows:

- Regulation and maintenance of standards of education and services related to nursing and midwifery.
- Assessment of nursing institutions and maintenance of a Central Register and State Register of nursing professionals.
- Facilitate research, development and adoption of latest scientific advancements.

An Advisory Council will be set up to assist NNMC. It will serve as a forum for states and union territories for raising concerns before the Commission and assist it in the development of the overall agenda, policy framework relating to nursing education, nursing services, training and research. The Central Government will constitute four autonomous boards that will function under the supervision of the Commission:

1. Nursing and Midwifery Undergraduate Education Board
2. Nursing and Midwifery Postgraduate Education Board
3. Nursing and Midwifery Assessment and Rating Board
4. Nursing and Midwifery Ethics and Registration Board

The NNMC in coordination with the state commissions and these boards carry out all-important functions like conduct of common national entrance examinations for various courses, exit tests for professional practice, setting and maintaining academic standards, including curriculum, infrastructure, clinical affiliations, research and quality of faculty and approval of nursing institutions. It will regulate institutions, professionals and associates and promote nursing and midwifery ethics.

Other important functions include assessment of nursing and midwifery requirements in healthcare and advising the government, enforcement of professional code of conduct, promotion of nursing and midwifery ethics, regulation of standards of practice of registered nurses and midwives and nursing associates and nurse practitioners (NPs). Besides ensuring rights and obligations of registered nursing professionals, the NNMC will also put in place.

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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. Explain the terms occupation, job and career.
2. What is the difference between occupation and profession?
3. What are the main characteristics of a profession?
4. What is the importance of statutory professional bodies?
5. What are the functions of statutory regulatory bodies?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **The term profession is derived from Latin word:**
 - a. Professor
 - b. Professional
 - c. Professio
 - d. Profess
2. **Which of the following is not a characteristic of profession?**
 - a. Pastime
 - b. Occupation requiring specialized knowledge and skills
 - c. Principal source of livelihood
 - d. Activity to which one devotes maximum time
3. **_____ is not a profession.**
 - a. Teaching
 - b. Journalism
 - c. Politics
 - d. Professor
4. **Professionals enjoy a _____ status in the society.**
 - a. Lower
 - b. Equal
 - c. Higher
 - d. None of these
5. **Professionals have a moral obligation to the _____.**
 - a. Employer
 - b. Clients
 - c. Society
 - d. Both (b) and (c)
6. **Professionals must strive to work for the benefit of the _____.**
 - a. Government
 - b. Relatives
 - c. Society
 - d. Clients

Answer Key

1. c 2. a 3. d 4. c 5. d 6. c



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CHAPTER 3

Professional Responsibility

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- The concept of professional responsibility.
 - The difference, between personal and professional responsibility.
 - The importance of accountability.
 - The professional responsibilities of nurses.
 - The role of professional codes in ensuring ethical conduct.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Personal and Professional Responsibility
 - Responsibility and Accountability in General
 - Responsibility and Accountability in Nursing
 - Roles and Responsibilities of Nursing Professionals
 - Role of Professional Codes
-

KEY TERMS

Ethical behavior: Taking actions in accordance with moral standards set by the society in professional conduct.

Ethics: Ethics are a set of moral principles to guide human actions by differentiating appropriate and acceptable from inappropriate and unacceptable.

Onus: Duty or responsibility to do something.

Professional accountability: Being answerable and willing to assume responsibility for one's actions and decisions.

Professional autonomy: Having the authority to make decisions and the freedom to act using one's professional knowledge.

Professional responsibility: It mandates that nursing professionals should use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of patients and society adhering to moral values and ethics without causing harm.



INTRODUCTION

Professionals play an important role in modern knowledge-driven societies. They cater to the needs of the society by providing specialized services the people require. An individual attains the status of a professional in a particular field by acquiring requisite specialized knowledge and skills through formal education and training.

The special knowledge and skills professionals possess in areas of their specialization accords them some privileges like a higher status, autonomy and self-regulation. However, the privileges the professions carry also impose certain obligations on the practitioners.

As experts in their respective fields, they have the responsibility to serve the people who need their services. The society is dependent on them for such specialized services. As professionals have requisite knowledge and experience, they are in the best position to judge issues, possibilities, risks and constraints and make decisions. Their clients and public do not have much idea about that field and they are not in a position to properly evaluate the quality of services provided by them and assess their performance and conduct. The conduct, performance and quality of work of a professional can only be reviewed and evaluated by the members of profession and the fellow professionals. Unless the practitioners maintain a high level of professional standards, the society will not get quality services and the public will eventually lose faith in the profession itself.

This is where the concept of professional responsibility comes into play. The notion of responsibility is an ethical concept based on moral values. Every community, group and society has an established system of beliefs and values and ethics emanate from the moral values. The ethical conduct is evaluated against the value system and it is relevant in every sphere of life, whether personal or professional.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

An individual has multiple roles in life and there are responsibilities associated with each of them. The nature of responsibilities in the society depends on the hierarchical level in the social structure. For instance, as a member of a family, an individual has responsibilities toward the family. Taking care of children is an obligation for the both father and the mother. Similarly, there are other personal obligations to be fulfilled toward friends and community. In the moral sense, responsibility is a virtue: a 'responsible person' is careful, considerate, and trustworthy; an 'irresponsible person' is careless, inconsiderate and untrustworthy.

Every job or position held by a professional carries a set of responsibilities depending on the nature of functions one has to perform. Professionals are deemed responsible for the tasks or functions assigned to them. They are obliged to fulfil the obligations to accomplish the job. Without discharging the associated responsibilities, the job cannot be accomplished.

Professional responsibility is associated with the actions and conduct of an individual at the workplace. Nurses can maintain high professional standards only by adhering to ethical practices and moral values. Professionals are as bearers of formal knowledge and skills in their respective fields. They have a moral responsibility to work for the benefit of the society and their clients. They are bound to provide their services to the society and have an obligation to the public and to the profession ahead of an obligation to their employer.

RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN GENERAL

It is quite a common tendency among individuals to blame others for failure to effectively discharge their responsibilities. The blame game is a ploy to shift responsibility to someone else. In healthcare settings, teamwork is involved in taking care of patients, the culture of blame undermines the quality of care and can lead to adverse outcomes with long-term implications for the organizations. If the blame game is not

Table 3.1: Differences between responsibility and accountability

Responsibility	Accountability
It is an ongoing process	It starts after a situation happens
It can be shared	It rests on one individual only
Onus to respond and complete tasks	Requires ownership of actions and decisions
Associated with roles	Accept responsibility for outcomes
Explanation is not expected	Explanation is owed

checked by taking appropriate corrective measures, it becomes an accepted method to shift responsibility and encourages irresponsible behavior among professionals at workplaces. Differences between responsibility and accountability are given in Table 3.1.

Responsibility

It is essentially an obligation to respond to situations, perform and complete the assigned tasks. There can be many persons responsible for completing a specific task or working toward a common goal performing different tasks. Thus, responsibility can be shared among the members of a team.

Accountability

It goes beyond responsibility and makes one answerable for the outcomes of one’s actions, decisions and errors. It means one is accountable for ensuring that the assigned tasks are accomplished to the required standards and within the permissible timeframe. Accountability also means that in case of failure of completing the assigned task the person concerned is liable to face the consequences from some authority.

Accountability is an acknowledgment of responsibility, being responsible means being accountable. Conversely, anyone not responsible for something cannot be held accountable for it. Responsibility comes first and accountability comes into play afterwards. While responsibility is a continuous ongoing process, the question of accountability arises only after an event has taken place or a situation has occurred. Accountable means one is under the obligation to report, give an account, explain what has happened or justify something.

Unlike responsibility, which can be shared among several persons, accountability rests on an individual, the buck stops there. Even if a team comprising several persons is responsible for executing a task, only an individual will be held accountable for any consequences. An individual held accountable has to own the consequences and provide an account of the actions taken and explain what happened after an event has taken place.

Those accountable for the outcome can be asked to explain the whole process and lapses can be pinpointed to make amends to avoid such situations in future. In case of serious mistakes on the part of the individual responsible for completing the task, punitive action may be taken.

RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN NURSING

Nursing professionals have a primary obligation to provide care to the patients. Safe nursing practice, conforming to the prescribed standards, is essential for effective patient care. Responsibility and accountability are cornerstones of safe nursing practice and integral to the nursing profession.

Healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, have multifarious responsibilities, depending on different roles they perform and positions they occupy. Their functions are not restricted to giving care and monitoring the treatment process, they work in the community, undertake counselling and educate people on health issues, write reports, maintain patient records, take up teaching and research.

A nursing practitioner is responsible for achieving the required level of scientific knowledge and professional competence, maintaining confidentiality, being honest and having appropriate relations with patients and acting in the interest of the patient to provide optimal care.

Accountability, on the other hand, is mainly based on established moral values, ethics and professional codes. Accountability implies that individuals have to be answerable for their actions and decisions and, if required, can be asked to provide explanations. It is inherent in nursing practice to give an account of actions performed and decisions taken by care providers. In short, nursing professionals are individually accountable for actions and decisions taken during their practice.

Responsibility

Nurses are responsible for providing care to patients in the clinical settings but they are also expected to follow up their progress and well-being subsequently.

Their role is crucial in patient advocacy. They have to overcome communication barriers to act responsibly and ensure that the concerns of patients are considered and taken care of.

Rapid advancements in medical science make it imperative for nurses to keep abreast of the latest developments and continuously upgrade knowledge and skills in nursing, particularly delivery of patient care.

The nursing profession is altruistic by nature and nurses must show respect to patients and treat them with compassion, empathy and fairness, irrespective of their cultural background, socioeconomic status and type of health problem. Patients' nursing needs have to be fulfilled without prejudice.

Nurse professionals have to demonstrate cultural competency by appreciating the personal beliefs, values and wishes of patients and take all actions and decisions keeping in view their comfort level.

Accountability

In precisely, the term accountability means that nursing professionals are answerable for their judgments, decisions and actions and own responsibility for honest and ethical conduct.

Nursing professionals must be accountable to the organization they work for and to their peers. In healthcare settings, organizations depend on competent nurses with high levels of integrity, who take personal responsibility for their actions and decisions, a vital attribute characterizing accountability in nursing practice.

Ownership of responsibility for actions not only ensures accountability but also helps to build trust of the society in the profession and benefits organizations. They must function as per the values of the organization and reflect its ethos.

Working as a part of healthcare teams, nurses are accountable to the members. They must not blame a colleague, a team member or someone else for mistakes, which are a part of the profession.

The quality of patient care largely depends on the ability of nurses to work as part of a team.

Nurses are accountable to people as the healthcare system is collectively funded by society.

Legal accountability is very important in the nursing profession as failure adhere to rules and regulations can have serious consequences for nurses, including fines and imprisonment.

Advantages of Accountability

Accountability at workplaces ensures transparency and efficiency, strengthens teamwork, encourages health professionals and enhances their performance. Individual ownership of the outcome of a task helps to empower the professionals and makes their contribution noticeable. It also avoids confusion among the members of caregiver teams by bringing clarity in roles and functions of nurses.



When all the members of the healthcare delivery teams are held accountable for performing their respective assigned tasks, it helps to create trust among individuals and teams. It strengthens team spirit at workplaces as individuals can count on each other for completing various tasks within the stipulated time limit. The productivity of the entire team is improved as members can seek help from each other without hesitation and discharge their responsibilities efficiently and effectively.

Enhanced productivity of individuals and teams leads to better patient care and reinforces trust of the society in the profession. It is essential to maintain the trust of people in the profession.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NURSING PROFESSIONALS

As already discussed, professional responsibilities depend on the type of service provided. The sole purpose of the entire healthcare system developed over the years is to protect to people and help them to live a healthy life. The basic role of nurses is that of caregivers, though they have multiple duties to perform.

They undertake teaching in nursing schools and colleges dealing with students. They work in the community to create awareness about health issues or function as counselors. They can be in the role of project managers or pursue research. In each role, the responsibility of nurses may differ slightly but their profession is dedicated to service of patients in which nurse-patient relationship has a vital role. Their ethical obligations and moral considerations will be mostly related to patient care.

The multiple roles nurses perform also entail a range of responsibilities including professional, legal and ethical responsibilities along with cultural safety at workplaces. Nurses have to adhere to professional standards of patient care, engage in teamwork with colleagues and other medical professionals and maintain a high level of integrity. Nurses also function as the agents of change and they are responsible for effecting social change.

Like all health-related professions, the nursing profession involves a high degree of individual responsibility. The nursing professionals, in all roles and settings, have the responsibility to pursue ethical practice, display their specialized knowledge, clinical competency, training and skills in decision-making and actions, and be accountable for their own actions.

Professional accountability is the key to ensuring responsibility. In simplest terms, accountability means that professionals are answerable to themselves and others for their actions and conduct at workplaces. They not only have to exhibit and maintain high standards of clinical practice and ethical behavior but also be prepared to accept responsibility if they err or fail to adhere to professional standards.

Still mistakes can and do occur during the course of nursing practice. At times mistakes can put precious human lives at risk. A responsible nursing professional will act ethically and immediately report the error so that remedial action can be taken to save life without any loss of time. The nursing professionals have to keep in mind the likely implications of their actions and decisions for their professional reputation and the organization they are working.

Willingness to be evaluated by others and taking responsibility for errors, misjudgments, negligence and other lapses are cornerstones of professional competency. Professionally responsible nurses apply their specialized knowledge, skills and judgment in nursing practice and take responsibility for their own nursing actions, decisions and professional conduct. They also have to take notice and manage any conflict of interest.

Workplace responsibilities play an important role in creating a conducive environment for ethical functioning and promote trust and security. In clinical settings, ethical environment facilitates assessment, reflection and ensures dignity of both patients and nurses. A thorough grounding in ethical principles is essential for nurses to fulfil their responsibilities at workplaces.



ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL CODES

Developed through the processes of specialization, professions entail a high degree of individual responsibility. The code of ethics and professional codes take care of the obligations and help to make decisions concerning ethical issues and professional responsibilities. Various codes help to promote ethical behavior and maintain high professional standards. Written codes serve as guides for the professionals to act ethically and responsibly. Codes are not meant for the 'bad' people, they are designed to guide the good people who are keen to act ethically.

Various professions entail different levels and types of responsibilities depending on the kind of service being provided. For instance, a journalist is responsible for presenting an impartial account of events and unbiased facts to enable the people to make informed decisions. Journalists have the responsibility to keep the public well informed and updated. If they distort facts or spread misinformation, they are guilty of professional misconduct. Ethical principles vary for different professions, ethics for medical practitioners and lawyers are not the same.

Codes of conduct are based on ethical principles applicable to a profession. They lay down the required standards of behavior for members of different professions. Professional codes serve as a guide of principles to help professionals carry out their duties with honesty and integrity. Professional codes differ significantly for various professions but there are some ethical principles that are universally applicable to all the professions.

A 'code of conduct' is not the same as a 'code of ethics,' though purpose of both is to encourage ethical behavior at workplaces. A code of ethics provides guidance about values and choices, whereas a code of conduct specifically lays down whether a particular action is appropriate or not. It specifies do's and don'ts for professionals. Nowadays, the two codes are often combined into one compact "code of ethics and professional conduct".

The universal ethical principles include honesty, loyalty, trustworthiness, beneficence, respect for others, adherence to the law and accountability. A professionally accountable nurse must adhere to the principles of conduct and maintain the prescribed standards to ensure that the trust of patients in the individual nurse and the nursing profession as a whole is further strengthened.

Benefits of Codes of Ethics and Professional Conduct

Professional codes of conduct help to create an environment of trust, ethical conduct, honesty and integrity, which reinforces the confidence of people in the profession. Codes ensure transparency and reassure clients about the behavior of professionals and how their issues will be handled.

Clients repose confidence in the organizations, which adhere to professional codes, and encourage ethical behavior. Professionals are in better positions to resist pressures and avoid unethical actions. Effective enforcement of professional codes not only enhances the stature and reputation of organizations but also underpins public confidence in professions. It also fosters better cooperation among members of teams, improving overall productivity.

Ethical organizations attract best professionals as they are assured of fair and just treatment and an environment where they will not be pressurized to take unethical actions.

Significance of Code of Ethics in Nursing Profession

Ethical behavior is a prerequisite for quality healthcare as it involves human lives. Ethically inappropriate decisions and actions can not only undermine the quality of healthcare but also endanger lives of patients. The code of ethics and professional conduct serve as important instruments for the nursing professionals in

ensuring safe and effective care. Negligence, inappropriate conduct, poor quality care and unethical decisions are unacceptable in healthcare settings.

Code of ethics and professional codes provide the framework in respect of legal requirements, responsibilities of nurses, professional conduct, ethical issues and the rights of the patients. The code also clearly outlines the conduct and behavior expected of professional nurses in dealing with patients, members of healthcare teams and other colleagues and the community and society as whole.

Professional codes are framed with the objective of ensuring safe nursing practice, delivering quality patient care and protecting the rights of the patients. The expectation is that nurses will follow the code to deliver the best possible outcomes in their respective fields of practice. Eventually, adhering to the code helps to shape the professional behavior of the nurses based on ethics and moral values and they get attuned taking care of patients professionally.

ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What do you understand by the term 'professional responsibility'? How does it differ from 'personal responsibility'?
2. Explain the differences between 'responsibility' and 'accountability'.
3. Why are responsibility and accountability essential in nursing profession?
4. What is the need for code of ethics and professional conduct and what are its benefits?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. _____ means authority to make decisions, take action and self-regulation.
 - a. Professional responsibility
 - b. Professional accountability
 - c. Professional autonomy
 - d. Personal responsibility
2. **Owning responsibility for one's actions and decisions and being answerable is _____.**
 - a. Professional respectability
 - b. Professional accountability
 - c. Professional autonomy
 - d. Personal responsibility
3. **Code of ethics and professional conduct does not encourage:**
 - a. Professionalism
 - b. Accountability
 - c. Unethical conduct
 - d. Safe nursing
4. **Which of the following is a characteristic of accountability?**
 - a. Ongoing activity until the task is completed
 - b. Happens after a situation occurs
 - c. It can be shared
 - d. Irresponsible

Answer Key

1. c 2. b 3. c 4. b

CHAPTER 4

Importance of Professional Values

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- The importance of values in professions.
 - The difference between personal and professional values.
 - Importance of professional values.
 - The implications of conflict in values.
 - The ways to avoid conflict of values.
 - The role of professional codes in ensuring ethical conduct.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Personal and Professional Values
 - Conflict of Values
 - Avoiding Conflict of Values
 - Necessity of Professional Values
 - Common Professional Values
 - Benefits of Professional Values
 - Professional Values in Nursing
-

KEY TERMS

Autonomy: Ability to make decisions independently.

Compatible: Matching values, agreeable combination, able to work together in harmony.

Conflict: A clash of opinions, values or ideologies.

Diversity: Arises from differences in basic values, culture, age, gender, ethnicity, education, preferences and priorities of individuals.

Personal values: The real priorities that motivate one's actions and guide one through life.

Professional values: Guiding beliefs, attitudes and principles that influence one's work behaviour.



INTRODUCTION

Values play an important role in the development of individuals, organizations and societies as they serve as a compass to help navigate in the right direction and with a purpose. They guide the thought process, attitudes and actions and help the individuals to develop. While individuals imbibe their value system from family and society, it is also influenced by personal attributes like, intelligence, education and ability.

Personal values are concerned with individuals and societal values evolve over a period of time when a number of individuals interact. The commonly acceptable behavior becomes the norm and a standard that members of the group are expected to follow. Societal norms play a key role in regulating individual behavior and ensuring organized functioning of the society.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL VALUES

Values determine what is important in professional practice and personal life. Personal and professional values are both important as they manifest consciously or unknowingly in all the decisions and actions of individuals. The core values define the personality and guide the individual through all situations, whereas the professional values and principles help an individual to evaluate what differentiate right and wrong in a professional environment.

Personal Values

These core values guide actions and behavior of individuals. Personal values are part of the moral code of society that evolves over a period. Values are important life goals or standards that motivate individuals to act in a particular manner in different situations. People are mostly inclined to embrace and acquire the values of the society they are brought up. They are deeply influenced by their core values and strongly believe that the values are right being part of their culture.

While values differ from one social group to another and from one person to another, some values, like honesty, love, respect, truth, integrity and freedom are universal and have inherent worth. Values are also, what one considers important for one's well-being and happiness. They serve as guiding principles and play an important role in shaping the character of individuals. There are other values, like aspiration, responsibility, and courage, which influence behaviors and serve as facilitators for achieving desired goals or ends.

Personal values, like honesty, integrity, equality, respect, responsibility and positivity are unique to each individual as they are acquired through exposure to society. They largely depend on family, social group, culture, religion and environment and differ from person to person. Divergence in behavior can also arise depending on how individuals prioritize their values. The core values depend on personal priorities, for example, some people may prefer freedom over money, while others may give preference to religion over equality. Their attitude and conduct will be vastly different.

Professional Values

Professional values play a key role in ensuring high standards and maintaining trust of the people in professions. Every profession has different values depending on the nature and priorities of the profession. The values are not given equal weightage, in certain professions some values are considered very important, while in other professions these values may be deemed as insignificant and not paid much attention. However, there are some universal values like honesty, integrity and respect that are applicable to every profession and practiced by all of them.

In simplest terms, professional values are the beliefs, attitudes and guiding principles that influence the conduct of individuals at workplaces. They provide a framework for attitudes, professional conduct and



standards of work for people working within a specific field. They serve as the guiding principles in decision-making and ensuring high standards of professional conduct at workplaces.

Individuals have an obligation to conduct themselves in accordance with the values of the profession they choose to pursue. These values have to be imbibed in a manner that they become an integral part of one's work behavior and personal life.

Professionals have a responsibility toward both the clients and the profession. They have to protect the interests of the clients and maintain the trust of the people in the profession. Professionals have an obligation to adhere to the ethical principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence, which emanate from the core personal values. The interests of the clients must take precedence over their own professional interests.

Professional values are largely an extension of personal values. It is imperative that professionals should be firmly rooted in the universal values, which guide one's attitude and behavior during work. In certain professions, particularly nursing which involves professional relationships, counseling, therapy and issues like privacy, the professional values overlap with personal values. Thus, the core values of professionals matter much at workplaces as they deeply influence their attitude, judgment, decision-making and behavior. Professional values are a prerequisite as they manifest in the work behavior of individuals through their conduct and help to project a professional image through demonstration of integrity, consistency, trust and honesty.

In certain cases, professionals may face problems due to conflict in their personal values and professional values. For example, an individual, who values compassion for animals and strictly adheres to vegetarian food, will not feel comfortable working in a slaughterhouse.

CONFLICT OF VALUES

Individuals quite often face problems in their professional practice due to conflict in their personal and professional values. They also encounter difficulties when their personal and professional values are in conflict with the needs of their clients.

One cannot feel comfortable and secure in one's profession if one's personal values are in conflict with the professional values. Such situations arise due to lack of awareness among individuals about their own personal values. They acquire a whole set of values from the society but their core values are those about which they feel strongly. These values are a major influence on action and decisions one takes. Conversely, the day-to-day behavior of individuals reveals their personal values. Good personal values, like honesty, integrity, loyalty and respect for others reflect the moral standing of individuals and show them in good stead among their friends, relatives, workplace colleagues and all others with whom they interact.

A number of factors, like upbringing, education, culture and other dominant societal influences, shape personal values. Individuals do not consciously choose and prioritize their own values; they tend to adopt the popular values of the society or the values of people around them. Values, individuals acquire consciously or unconsciously often become a hurdle in fulfilling professional mandates. Some professionals remain stressed and unhappy with their jobs mainly because their core values are in conflict with their professional values.

AVOIDING CONFLICT OF VALUES

Value-based decision-making is the key to maintaining high professional standards and ensuring ethical behavior at workplaces. It creates an environment where basic values, like honesty, integrity and trust are reinforced and bring clarity in processes. In contrast, in an environment where basic values are compromised, professionals struggle in making decisions and taking action. In a scenario where personal values of individuals are not compatible with the value system of the organizations, there will be discontent and lack of job satisfaction among professionals at workplaces. Individuals brought up in a family environment or social

conditions where dishonesty, cheating or other immoral acts are acceptable imbibe such values and often face problems at workplaces.

It is important for individuals to know their core values. Once they are aware of their values, they will be able to lead a satisfied and relatively stress-free life in harmony with their value system. Similarly, awareness about one's own core values can help oneself to pursue a profession that is in tune with one's personal values. In addition, organizations must take care while making recruitment and make sure that only professionals with the right values, compatible with its own value system, are hired.

Professionals have to be careful in dealing with clients whose core values may be quite different. They should have to respect the values of clients and refrain from imposing their own personal values on them. Professional values help to determine how an individual should act while dealing with clients when there is a conflict of values. They must closely examine whether their personal values are compatible with their professional values before making a decision.

NECESSITY OF PROFESSIONAL VALUES

Professional values are essential to ensure professionalism at workplaces. Different values have varied importance and relevance in different professions. While values may keep changing with time, some universal values, irrespective of profession, never change. These values are the gold standards for the right living. Some values are considered more relevant and beneficial compared to others in a particular profession but care should be taken to ensure that universal values are not compromised.

Ethical environment at workplaces can only be ensured by adhering to professional values. Besides better work ethics, professional values also help to make individuals responsible and accountable and all these factors go a long way in improving the quality of professional services.

COMMON PROFESSIONAL VALUES

Some common professional values are universal in nature and have relevance for most of the professions.

- **Honesty, integrity, truthfulness, ethical conduct and respect:** Being honest, truthful and respectful helps to build an environment of trust at workplaces.
- **Accountability:** Ability to own up one's actions and take responsibility for their consequences.
- **Reliability:** Being punctual, diligent, high quality work to be counted as dependable.
- **Professional demeanor:** Appropriate behavior, manner of dressing and speaking.
- **Adaptability:** Being flexible to adapt to changing workplace conditions with ease.
- **Teamwork:** Being a good team member, supporting each other and working together to achieve the goals of the group and the organization.
- **Confidentiality:** Maintaining privacy of clients and protecting their rights.
- **Self-motivation:** At ease with assigned tasks, being ambitious and motivated, taking keen interest in work and ensuring that it is executed properly.
- **Continuous learning:** Being curious and eager to learn and gainfully utilizing every opportunity to enhance knowledge and skills.

Besides adhering to ethical conduct at workplaces, individuals should also portray the image of true professionals as expected of them by the community. The mannerisms and the way professionals dress up and make a difference to their image. They must present them besides their behavior at work, what kind of attire

they wear also influences their image. A doctor or a nurse supporting long nails will not portray the image of a thorough professional. They must dress up like professionals at work, improper attire which is not suitable for the job, will only create doubts about their diligence and commitment to the profession.

Similarly, punctuality is another value that affects the image of professionals. A nurse arriving late at the hospital will not leave a good impression on the patients. Such a minor issue but makes a huge impact on the professional image of the nurse.

BENEFITS OF PROFESSIONAL VALUES

The values of professions manifest through the behavior of their professional members and the standards of the profession. The value system of all the professionals is different; they do not share a common value base. Every profession has its own set of values, rules and interpretation based on the work culture within the organization. The value base of individuals reflects their self-worth and mirrors the professional values of the organization they are working for. If they are rooted in values, it will reflect in their work behavior and project a positive image of the organization. The professional value system reflects the ethos of an organization and lends it a distinct identity. Core values define one's character and guide one's conduct at work. Ethical behavior rooted in core values helps professionals to earn respect of colleagues and clients and enhances their reputation, confidence and self-esteem.

The most important advantage professionals derive from awareness of personal values is that they are in a better position to understand that individuals. They have their own different value systems and they will behave differently. With this understanding, they will be able to make out the likely response of others. It will make it easier to accept the choices others make, minimizing scope for misunderstanding, suspicion and distrust. The realization that individuals go by their own core value systems and make choices, which they consider right, but they may be different from one's own choice.

Professional values also enable nurses to advance their career and establish new approaches and protocols for treatment by pursuing research.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES IN NURSING

Professional values are integral to nursing, one of the most trusted professions. It is a value-driven profession and nurses, given the nature of their job, cannot become true professionals without imbibing the right values. Professional values empower the nurses to act independently in taking decisions regarding patient care by virtue of their specialized knowledge and skills.

Patient care is the core of the nursing profession and nurses have to exercise autonomy and make quick decisions in the interest of patients, transcending the barriers of caste, creed, religion, culture and economic status, and irrespective of the nature of disease. Patient care also involves interpersonal relationships not only with patients but also with other healthcare professionals to ensure best possible care. Nurses have to adhere to professional values to establish therapeutic relationships with the patients.

Professional values help nurses to maintain standards of healthcare delivery and they share these values with their teams. The core values, like altruism, human dignity, autonomy, equality and justice are the cornerstone of the nursing profession.

Altruism

It is the core value that motivates nurses to provide selfless care. Altruism signifies selfless concern for the well-being of others and requires nurses to adopt a compassionate and benevolent attitude toward the patients, colleagues and all those with whom they interact professionally.



It is a persistent commitment to the welfare of others that spurs nurses to serve the suffering humanity with dedication. While fully devoting themselves to patient care, they should not expect anything in return. They should be considerate, adopt a sympathetic attitude and address all the concerns of patients to create an environment conducive for their healing.

Nurses can demonstrate their commitment by strongly advocating the concerns of the patient and calling for fair treatment. Lack of commitment on the part of nurses can lead to undermining of the healing environment and may result in adverse patient outcomes.

Human Dignity

It mandates that nurses must respect the dignity of patients and accord same treatment to all. They must recognize the rights of patients and firmly believe in the principle that all human beings deserve respect, irrespective of socioeconomic status, age, gender, ethnicity, ideology and religion. They should give the same treatment to all the patients as they would give to their own near and dear ones.

Patient's right to privacy is also a part of human dignity and nurses are responsible for keeping confidential all the information regarding the health status of patients and the treatment plans.

Integrity

Nursing profession demands a high level of integrity to maintain high standards of professionalism and healthcare. Integrity in nursing practice refers to being honest in intent, making ethical decisions, keeping confidence and trust, practicing forthrightness and being truthful while providing care.

Integrity plays a vital role in connecting with patients as they place more confidence in nurses who perform their duties with integrity. Patients feel more comfortable with nurses who adhere to moral principles and they are willing to receive treatment from them. Healthcare delivery is a teamwork and nurses have to be honest to their colleagues and all others on whom they rely.

Trustworthiness

It is one of the most important professional values that helps nurses to establish therapeutic relationships with the patients. Patients are comfortable with nurses whom they can trust and are willing to cooperate with them in carrying out treatment. Once the patients start trusting the nurses, they have no hesitation in sharing information with them. Thus, nurses are in a better position to understand their healthcare needs and fears and they can formulate a treatment plan accordingly.

Trust in the nursing professionals raises the comfort level of patients and reduces stress, which may help to improve recovery. If patients lack trust in nursing professionals, they do not cooperate and hesitate to share information with them. Such a situation is not conducive to effective healthcare delivery.

Autonomy

Ethical nursing allows patients the right to informed consent. Nurses have to provide all the facts regarding the health condition of patients and explain in detail about the various treatment plans available and their implications. In the nurse-patient relationship, autonomy makes it obligatory on the part of nursing professionals to respect the wishes of the patients even if they have a contrary opinion.

This is an important professional value to ensure that nursing professionals do not influence patient's healthcare choices and enable them to make autonomous decisions about what kind of treatment they want.

Patient's right to refuse procedures or outrightly reject the treatment plan has to be respected. Nursing professionals have to respect autonomy by educating patients regarding the available options and their implications in an impartial manner.

All decisions pertaining to treatment plans and procedures have to be left to the discretion of patients. The responsibility of nursing professionals is to inform and educate the patients about the available options and support whatever choices they make. They have to respect the wishes of the patients and act in their best interests. Exceptions can be made only in case of mentally unfit patients who are not in a position to give informed consent. In such cases, their representatives or attorneys are allowed to make decisions on their behalf.

Accountability

It is another important value in nursing that guides conduct of professionals. They have to take responsibility for their actions and own the consequences. Every action has implications for patients and nurses have to be accountable by acknowledging their actions, owning outcomes and learning from mistakes.

Competent nurses must adhere to professional values; admit mistakes that come to their notice to the superiors. It is part of professional growth as it enables nurses to rectify mistakes and provide the best possible care to the patients.

Empathy and Compassion

Nurses have to be empathic and view situations from the perspective of patients to help understand what they are going through and try to figure out what they might need from the healthcare team. This approach enables nurses to formulate effective treatment plans and implement them successfully.

Compassion is an indispensable value in nursing care. Nurses should demonstrate compassion by patiently listening to the patients and making them feel comfortable. Compassionate care provides respite to the patients suffering from physical pain, emotional distress or mental stress, and improves outcomes.

Diversity

Recognizing and valuing diversity helps nurses to look beyond caste, color, creed, culture and ideologies and extend equal treatment to all the patients. When nursing professionals value diversity, they stay open-minded and in a better position to adhere to ethical principles and maintain high moral standards in nursing practice. Healthcare organizations can also benefit from diversity by hiring nursing professionals from different backgrounds and extending equal treatment to them.



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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is the role of values in professions?
2. Explain the difference between personal and professional values.
3. What do you understand by conflict of values and how to avoid it?
4. What are the common professional values?
5. What are the important professional values in nursing?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Work behavior of a professional is not influenced by _____.**
 - a. Personal values
 - b. Weather
 - c. Professional values
 - d. Organizational values
2. **Which of the following action does not conform to 'autonomy' in nurse-patient relationship?**
 - a. Seeking informed consent
 - b. Nurse taking decision on behalf of patient
 - c. Respecting the choice of patient
 - d. Patient's right to refuse treatment
3. **Which of the following is not a professional value?**
 - a. Honesty
 - b. Integrity
 - c. Nepotism
 - d. Compassion
4. _____ **is not a value of nursing profession.**
 - a. Altruism
 - b. Accountability
 - c. Selfishness
 - d. Human dignity
5. **Valuing _____ helps nursing professionals to stay open-minded.**
 - a. Compassion
 - b. Perseverance
 - c. Integrity
 - d. Diversity
6. **Professionals have job satisfaction due to _____.**
 - a. Absence of personal values
 - b. Clash of personal and professional values
 - c. Compatible personal and professional values
 - d. Absence of professional values

Answer Key

1. b 2. b 3. c 4. c 5. d 6. c

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UNIT II

Professionalism in Nursing

Unit Outline

- Chapter 5** Attributes of Professional Nurses
- Chapter 6** Outcome of Nursing Professionalization
- Chapter 7** Challenges of Professionalism
- Chapter 8** Professional Relationship with Patients

CHAPTER 5

Attributes of Professional Nurses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- Technological challenges in professional nursing.
 - Importance of professionalism in nursing.
 - Qualities of a professional nurse.
 - Role of communication skills in professional nursing.
 - Importance of active listening and nonverbal communication.
 - Significance of leadership quality and critical thinking in nursing.
 - Need for stress management in clinical settings.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Importance of Professionalism in Nursing
-

KEY TERMS

Active listening: Listen attentively to understand what the speaker intends to convey, respond and reflect.

Attributes: Quality or characteristics.

Indispensable: Absolutely necessary or essential.

Nonverbal communication: Transmission of messages through body language such as eye contact, facial expressions, nod of head and other gestures.

Stressors: Specific situations, circumstances or events that cause stress or tension.

Telemedicine: Remote clinical services through real-time two-way communication between the patient and the doctor.



INTRODUCTION

Since its emergence as a profession around the mid-19th century, modern nursing has come a long way. Rapid advancements in medical science have brought about a sea change in the profession making nursing much more complex, with ever evolving challenges for nurses.

Professional nursing has become a key component in the delivery of healthcare, with nurses in a central role.

The new digital technologies, globalization and emerging models of virtual healthcare like telemedicine are fast changing the face of healthcare. Integration and utilization of digital technologies for providing effective and efficient nursing care is a major challenge nurses are facing due to these advancements. Nursing professionals have to upgrade themselves fast into a digitally enabled professionals to keep abreast of the ongoing technological developments and help provide safe, efficient and selfless care amid growing complexity of nursing practice.

Nurses now have an added responsibility of learning the use of new gadgets and getting familiar with new technologies while carrying on with the nursing practice based on traditional ideals and compassionate care. They will need the best of training and skills and become true professionals to meet the technological challenges.

IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONALISM IN NURSING

The term 'professionalism' is more relevant in nursing practice today than the times of Florence Nightingale, who founded the profession. The concept of professionalism combines knowledge, skills, integrity, compassion, trustworthiness, altruism, and these components matter most in the nursing profession, the main objective of which is to provide selfless and dedicated service to the suffering humanity. The expanding body of knowledge and new procedures and medical interventions make professionalism indispensable in nursing practice.

Professionalism essentially comprises the concepts of command over specialized knowledge and skills, a moral code and self-regulation and autonomy in decision-making while providing service. Nurses have to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments and strictly adhere to the ethical principles to become true professionals. Specialized knowledge and skills apart, professionalism is more about ethical behavior, compassion, empathy, dedication, commitment and selfless nursing care.

Nurses are responsible for providing efficient, ethical, safe and selfless care. Adherence to ethics and professional values helps to create trust in the patients regarding the competence of nurses. Trust is an important factor in nursing care, which involves the health, and lives of patients. Nurses are considered the most trusted members in the healthcare delivery teams.

Successful nursing professionals not only possess the required knowledge and skills but also adhere to ethical principles and demonstrate qualities, like altruism, compassion, benevolence, empathy and selfless attitude in their work behavior. It takes many things to make a true nursing professional, some of the desired attributes are discussed here:

Traits of Professional Nurses

In simple words 'being professional' means doing quality work, displaying a certain level of competence, reliability and maintaining high standards. It is more about the integrity and quality of work than other considerations. Nurses enter the profession after obtaining a degree, they possess the necessary specialized knowledge and skills but they require certain other attributes or traits to become a successful professional.

Some of the most important characteristics that help nurses to excel as professionals in healthcare settings are as follows:

Communication Skills

Good communication skills are helpful in every profession but in the field of nursing excellent communicative competence is a prerequisite. Nursing care involves teamwork and nurses have to communicate with patients, doctors, colleagues, members of collaborating teams and others. One has to be a good communicator to become a good nurse. It has been well established that effective communication leads to better patient outcomes.

Nurses have the maximum interaction with the patients. They are the ones who put the patients at ease, boost their spirits, address their concerns and make them understand instructions given by doctors. Good communication ability is an essential skill for the nursing professionals, as they have to rely on communication in every role and every aspect of their job. Besides verbal skills, nursing professionals have to be proficient in nonverbal communication, active listening skills and making presentations.

In the clinical settings, they need to engage in well-structured communication with patients to establish a trustworthy relationship with the objective of delivering patient-centered care. They have to engage in proactive communication with patients to explain to them various available treatment plans, procedures and their implications to facilitate informed consent.

Strong communication skills are required to deal with stressful situations, when patients may feel restless. These are tricky situations nurses need specific communication strategies to take control and put patients at ease. They have to be equipped with the tools and knowledge to communicate compassionately to understand their concerns and take appropriate actions to address them.

The ability to receive and disseminate information effectively and efficiently is essential for nurses. They must be able to read and interpret graphic information, understand treatment plans without detailed instructions and record patient data accurately in a manner that doctors and other healthcare team members can comprehend easily. They should have the capability to provide reliable information to patients about the results of various tests, diagnosis, medical procedures, healing process and prognosis.

A good communicator has to be a good listener first. More so in case of nursing professionals who have to win the trust of the patients by appreciating their concerns and get maximum information from them to ensure effective treatment.

Active Listening

Competent nursing professionals engage themselves in active listening while communicating with patients. They cannot afford to be passive listeners, just hearing out the speaker without paying full attention or seriously trying to understand what the speaker is trying to convey. It is a key skill for effective communication.

Active listening is the opposite of passive listening. The listener is fully engaged and not just hearing out words but completely focused on understanding the meaning of words and simultaneously interpreting and responding to the speaker. Active listening requires nursing professionals to be attentive and make a conscious effort to understand the message or information the speaker wants to transmit.

Active listeners also pay attention to nonverbal clues like physical appearance and mannerisms of the speaker, body language, particularly face expression and tone, which help to understand the message better. In stressful and life-threatening situations, active listening skills enable us to comprehend the scenario and act accordingly.

Nurses also must show to the patients that they are making an effort to listen to them by getting closer and leaning toward them to make it evident that they are interested in what they are trying to say.

Nonverbal Skills

Nurses also need to have the ability to pick up and understand nonverbal clues during communication. They can often encounter situations when the patients are not in a position to communicate verbally and they

can express themselves only by engaging in nonverbal communication. Even during verbal communication with patients, nurses should look for nonverbal clues, which complement the information gathered verbally. Similarly, nurses have to be mindful of their body language while interacting with colleagues and others involved in healthcare delivery. Often the nurse and the patient do not share a language and in such a scenario, it is not possible to engage in verbal communication. Nonverbal communication helps to overcome language barriers.

The body language of nursing professionals also matters as the patients too pick up nonverbal clues. Negative body language can have a demoralizing effect on the patients and it may adversely impact the outcomes. Moreover, it will be difficult for the nurses to establish a trustworthy relationship with the patient. Patients might get influenced more by the nonverbal clues the nursing professionals send through their body language than by the spoken words, particularly if they do not match the body language.

It is imperative for nursing professionals to improve their body language. The first step is that they should become more aware of their mannerisms during conversations. Once they are aware of their nonverbal tendencies, they can work on the areas they need to improve. One of the ways to know the areas of weakness is to take the help of fellow nursing professionals and seek their frank opinion if their nonverbal clues are distracting or a hindrance to smooth and effective communication. Nurses must remain calm, composed and positive in all situations and should not send any negative signals through nonverbal clues.

Presentation Skills

A well-designed presentation is far more effective in influencing fellow team members than a verbal discussion. Presentation skills are essential for nursing professionals, as they regularly need to share ideas, discuss treatment plans or put across their viewpoint to colleagues and members of healthcare teams effectively.

The ability to communicate clearly distinguishes outstanding nurses from their peers. Nurses with excellent communication skills are better placed to establish professional relationships with patients and stand out at the workplace.

Good communication skills help nurses to extract maximum information from the patients and their family members to know their apprehensions, fears and healthcare needs. There is no room for error due to faulty or inadequate communication as the treatment plans and their outcomes entirely depend on the extent and accuracy of information gathered from the patients. Wrong or incomplete information can put lives of patients at risk.

Leadership Quality

Nursing professionals have to play a pivotal role in healthcare delivery and they have to take lead by virtue of their position in the team of caregivers. They have to lead by example by their ethical conduct and consistently maintaining high standards of nursing care. Nurse leaders have the ability to take patient care initiatives and implement them. They also have to address various issues with other healthcare professionals and contribute in policy formulation with a view to improving healthcare outcomes.

The role of nursing professionals is not confined only to patient care, they also work with communities where they are in various roles ranging from educators to counselors and agents of change. Experienced nursing professionals also mentor the young nurses. Working for long hours, compassionate approach to healthcare, effective and clear communication, patience in dealing with patients and other professionals, positive body language and other skills required at the workplace are imbibed by young nurses under the mentorship of senior nursing professionals. The nurse leaders strive for excellence and have the ability to motivate and bring out the best from each member of the healthcare teams and enthuse them to work together for achieving the common healthcare goals.



The nursing professionals have to acquire leadership skills to effectively carry out their multifarious responsibilities. Leadership skills enable nurses to effectively handle tense and tricky situations, which arise quite frequently at the workplace. They have the ability to take control of situations and make quick decisions, which help to achieve positive health outcomes.

However, nurses have to constantly strive for improvement in their skills and work behavior to successfully perform their leadership roles. They must have the capability to learn new skills and remain enthusiastic to learn more and more to become good leaders.

Nursing care is fast changing with advancements in medical science and effective leadership is essential to implement the changes without causing disruptions.

Knowledge

The ability of nursing professionals to provide quality care largely depends on their level of knowledge and skills. They have to constantly update their knowledge and practical skills to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments in nursing care. New medical procedures, healthcare strategies, medicines and policies are devised and nurses, who have a pivotal role in effecting changes, must have in-depth knowledge about them.

Nursing is a dynamic and evolving profession, which makes it imperative for the nurses to constantly upgrade and expand their knowledge base. In the globalized knowledge-driven society, nurses cannot afford to lag on the knowledge front. In the nursing profession, knowledge is power, particularly in providing patient care, as nurses equipped with requisite knowledge can quickly assess situations and take prompt action. Those who lack adequate knowledge are powerless, as they do not have the ability and confidence to take decisions and implement them.

Knowledge is a source of power at workplaces for nursing professionals. Every new device, procedure or healthcare protocol necessitates upgradation of knowledge and nursing professionals have to learn one thing or the other every day to discharge their professional responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

Critical Thinking

Nursing professionals frequently encounter situations in patient care, which call for quick decision-making. They have to think rationally and clearly and make decisions in the best interests of the patients. Despite increasing dependence on machines for monitoring patients, critical thinking is essential for nurses to observe a patient's health status and anticipate changes in condition. There are emergencies where critical thinking on the part of nurses is more important than their technical skills as their actions can put patients at risk in life-threatening situations.

Critical thinking skills of nurses make a huge impact on the quality of patient care. Correctly identifying and assessing problems, coming up with the best possible solution and selecting the most effective method to address the issue are all parts of the critical thinking process. Not all the knowledge and practical skills acquired by nursing professionals can be put into practice without critical thinking. Nurses who have the ability to think critically, reflect on the situations and try to figure out if their decisions and actions were effective in dealing with the situations or they could have done better.

Critical thinking skills are important for professional nurses at every level as it reflects in their work and attracts the attention of seniors. The ability to quickly and correctly analyze emergencies and take prompt decisions, make a difference between life and death. Critical thinking ability sets apart good nurses from their average peers.

At higher administrative or managerial levels, they require critical thinking for optimum utilization of financial, human and material resources at their command. The usually scarce human resources or finances have to be deployed efficiently to ensure smooth functioning of the departments under their command.



Coping with Stress

Nurses regularly face stressful situations at workplaces and as true professionals; they must have the capacity to manage stress. Patient care involves interpersonal relationships and nurses may experience stress due to emotional fallout. Interacting with patients and their family members can be strenuous and mentally exhausting for the nurses. Besides illness, nurses also encounter mortality and grief, which can affect their emotional health.

Stressful situations at the workplace can also arise due to shortage of staff, irate patients, long working hours, and tussle with members of the healthcare team or inadequate infrastructure. Nurses must have the ability to cope with stress as high-stress levels can affect their physical and emotional health and overall well-being. Inability to manage stress can lead to emotional burnout, job dissatisfaction, depleted energy levels and undermine their critical thinking capability. Stress can have short-term and long-term implications on physical health of nurses.

Failure to cope effectively with stress can result in symptoms like stiffness in the body, particularly back or neck, headaches, hypertension and cardiovascular problems. Persistent stress also results in chronic problems like weakening of the immune system, diabetes, insomnia, depression and respiratory disorders.

Stress Management

Stress is a part of nursing care but nurses have to learn to manage stress, particularly in clinical settings, as acute stress can affect their performance and, in turn, the quality of care.

Some of the stressors at the workplace can be eliminated by ensuring clarity in communication and assigning specific roles to nurses. There will be no confusion, nurses will have a clear understanding of what they are required to do, and they will be able to implement the patient care plans confidently and without any stress.

Identification of stress-causing situations and specific stressors can help nurses to avoid such situations or adopt suitable mitigation strategies. An effective way for the nurses to overcome stress is to allow sufficient time to recharge the mind and body after a long or a busy day at the workplace. They can enjoy music, take a walk or read a book to relax. Meditation, practicing yoga, regular exercise or playing some sports can also help. Deep breathing exercises provide immediate relief from stress. Maintaining proper nutrition levels is important as stress hormones may increase cravings for unhealthy fast foods having high levels of sugar, salt and fat contents.

Nurses should not skip meals, which they often do due to heavy workload, and avoid taking coffee and junk food at the workplace. Instead, they should take a regular healthy and filling meal and drink sufficient water during the day. A stressed nursing professional can discuss the issues causing stress with a senior practitioner and seek help in coping with the situation.

Caring and Compassionate Attitude

Care and compassion are indispensable attributes for a professional nurse. Respect and compassion for the patient and a caring attitude is no less important than knowledge and professional skills. Lack of compassion and indifferent attitude have a negative impact on patients and their relatives and affect outcomes.

A professional nurse is expected to provide the same care to the patients, as she would give to her own loved ones. The objective is to provide compassionate care with respect to human dignity. Patient's perception regarding the quality of care at a healthcare facility largely depends on the attitude of the nurses. If nursing staff are caring, compassionate and respectful, they feel confident and tend to trust the quality of healthcare. Professional nurses are aware of the mindset of patients and they demonstrate compassion and caring attitude through their words and actions to win the trust of patients. A trustworthy relationship encourages patients to share their concerns without hesitation and provide all the information required by the nurses, which helps in arriving at accurate diagnosis of the health conditions.

ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is the importance of professionalism in nursing?
2. What are the main attributes of a professional nurse?
3. Explain the role of communication skills in professional nursing.
4. What is critical thinking in nursing?
5. Why is stress management essential for professional nurses?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. _____ is not an attribute of a professional nurse.
 - a. Knowledge
 - b. Wealth
 - c. Communication skills
 - d. Leadership quality
2. Which of the following is not related to communication skills?
 - a. Active listening
 - b. Nonverbal skill
 - c. Presentation skill
 - d. Leadership quality
3. Which of the following is an attribute of a professional nurse?
 - a. Power
 - b. Selfishness
 - c. Nepotism
 - d. Compassion
4. A professional nurse does not require _____.
 - a. Critical thinking
 - b. Caring attitude
 - c. Egocentricity
 - d. Stress management
5. _____ helps nursing professionals.
 - a. Compassion
 - b. Patience
 - c. Verbal ability
 - d. Intolerance
6. _____ may lead to job burnout in professional nurses.
 - a. Sociological knowledge
 - b. Clinical training
 - c. Failure to manage stress
 - d. Absence of professional values

Answer Key

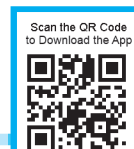
1. b 2. d 3. d 4. c 5. d 6. c



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CHAPTER 6

Outcome of Nursing Professionalization

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- Importance and process of professionalization.
- Implications of professionalization of nursing.
- Meaning and importance of professionalism.
- Difference between professionalization and professionalism.
- Advantages of nursing professionalization.
- How nurses can practice and demonstrate professionalism.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Differences between Professionalization and Professionalism
- Benefits of Professionalization
- Demonstrating Professionalism in Nursing Practice

KEY TERMS

Adherence: Compliance, obedience.

Amateurs: Nonprofessional, a person who engages in some pursuit as a pastime, not for money.

Multifarious: Varied, of many kinds, diverse.

Professionalization: Process that helps to elevate an occupation into a profession of highest integrity and competence.

Professionalism: Display of professional values during nursing practice.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing has come a long way from the times of Florence Nightingale when it started evolving into a profession. The process of professionalization that began in the late 19th century helped it emerge as one of the key professions in the modern healthcare system.



The role of nursing has been from the very beginning focused on patient care, prevention of illness and promotion of health. However, the nursing practice was a haphazard affair as there was no standardization of training and skills required and services rendered.

Professionalization has played a major role in improving the standards of nursing care and opened up new service areas for nursing professionals. The continuous upgradation of knowledge and enhanced standards of nursing due to professionalization have raised the stature of the nursing profession and it now forms the core of the healthcare system along with medicine. Nursing professionals have become much more empowered, they wield more authority and have a say in the organizations.

While patient care remains the primary concern, the role of nurses has extended far beyond the confines of hospitals and they are working in the community, schools, rehabilitation centers, old age homes and other healthcare-related facilities. They are performing multifarious jobs related to teaching, research, and prevention of illness, administration, occupational health, public health and social work. Nurses are now discharging their responsibilities as true professionals and able to realize their full potential as agents of change by playing a pivotal role in raising and maintaining high standards of nursing.

Nursing is now a crucial component of the healthcare system as nurses are constantly monitoring the condition of patients and evaluating the effectiveness of treatment plans and evidence-based practice. Professionalization has put more responsibility on the nurses and they have to demonstrate professionalism through their work behavior.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PROFESSIONALIZATION AND PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalization and professionalism are essential components of nursing practice. They are often used interchangeably but the two words carry distinctly different meanings. Professionalization and professionalism have a crucial role in ensuring continued development of the nursing profession. They enable specialists to better understand the process of professional development and the related outcomes.

Without professionalization, there would be no minimum standards of education, training and quality of service, and without professionalism, it would not be possible to promote ethical behaviors, professional values and ensure the quality of nursing.

Professionalization

It is the process by which a group of people engaged in a specific activity or occupation seeks to control and regulate their occupation. It facilitates setting up of standards in terms of educational qualification, training and skills required for entering the profession. It also helps to set professional standards to ensure quality of healthcare based on specialized knowledge and ethics to be maintained by members at workplaces.

A profession is governed by an autonomous professional body, which oversees the conduct of the members, lays down norms and standards and draws a line to demarcate the qualified professionals from unqualified amateurs through a licensing process. Self-regulation ensures autonomy, status and prestige that elevates the status of professionals in the society.

In short, professionalization is a social process that helps to transform or elevate an occupation into a “profession of highest integrity and competence”.

Professionalism

While professionalization is an ongoing process, professionalism is one of its important outcomes that has a bearing on the standards and quality of nursing care. It is more about the conduct of nurses at workplaces. Committed professional nurses are expected to display various qualities upholding the ethics and professional values in their work behavior. Professionalism is a combination of behavioral and cognitive attributes that nurses must imbibe and display at the workplaces.

Professionalism is a commitment to exhibit professional behavior and it is a projection of the image and impression based on the conduct of the nurses at the workplace. In simple words, the extent to which nurses identify with the profession, uphold the ethical principles, adhere to professional standards, provide a measure of professionalism in their work behavior. Apart from their knowledge and skills, nurses are judged by their personal conduct, appearance, dress, attitude, mannerisms, specialized knowledge, skills and overall presence at the workplace. Nurses have to demonstrate qualities like positive attitude, compassion, respect for human dignity, good communication skills, critical thinking ability, integrity, honesty, courteous behavior, good judgment, team spirit and other attributes of a true professional.

In short, professionalism refers to a set of values that are crucial to ensuring safe patient care and constantly striving to raise the quality of care, besides improving and upgrading the methods, standards and judgments to elevate levels of nursing practices.

A common characteristic of professionalization and professionalism is that both the concepts use the same accepted standards to draw a line between professional and unprofessional conduct. Absence of professionalism in work behavior of nurses leads to unprofessional conduct. Establishing criteria to evaluate the conduct of nursing professionals is part of the professionalization process.

Working in professional environments enables nurses to learn and display professionalism and develop skills that will help them throughout their careers that may span from clinical roles to senior leadership positions. Accumulating work experience and pursuing higher education can create further opportunities to strengthen core professional values.

The concept of professionalism is not confined to clinical settings, it extends far beyond and covers varied roles, nurses perform related to community work, online assignments, administration, teaching, occupational health and other fields. A good understanding of professionalism raises the quality of nursing and makes professional conduct a habit, extending to all aspects of life.

The famous “Wheel of Professionalism in Nursing” model developed by Barbara Kemp Miller in 1984 effectively represents concept of professionalism and its core attributes. The wheel comprises a central hub and eight supporting spokes. The center hub of the wheel represents the two essential attributes pertaining to foundation of nursing education, education in university setting and scientific background in nursing.

The eight supporting spokes represent the characteristics that are integral to the behavior of professional nurses. The essential behavioral traits include:

- Adherence to code for nurses
- Community service orientation
- Theory: Development, use and evaluation
- Professional organization participation
- Autonomy and self-regulation
- Publication and communication
- Research: Development, use and evaluation
- Continuing education and competence

The model was developed to help the nurses to understand the importance of a scientific background for nursing and the essential attributes they must instill in their work behavior.

BENEFITS OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

Professionalization has promoted growth and development of nursing, benefitting all the stakeholders, the patients, the nurses and the healthcare industry.

- The formulation of norms like minimum educational qualification and training to enter the profession, standards of work behavior and other professional criteria improved the knowledge base and skills of nurses. Adherence to ethical principles and adoption of professional codes has led to a remarkable improvement in the quality of nursing care.
- Professionalism in clinical settings promotes the highest standards of patient care, ensuring best quality of care, leading to positive health outcomes.

- Display of professionalism by nurses reinforces the confidence of patients in their competence and helps to establish strong nurse-patient relationships based on mutual trust.
- Nursing has recognition and respect as a profession and the stature of nurses have gained much from professionalization in the expanding healthcare ecosystem.
- It has helped nurses in upgrading their knowledge and skills and opened up avenues beyond clinical roles. They can rise up to senior leadership positions, go for higher education, pursue research and even take administrative and managerial roles.
- The quality of nursing education and training has been raised to global standards and nurses from India are much in demand across the world, particularly, in the developed countries like the USA, Canada, England and other European countries.
- Increased level of accountability at the workplaces has reposed confidence of the society in the profession.
- The risk of errors is minimized when the nursing professionals are accountable to patients and to one another. There is better coordination and caregiver teams reducing scope for negligence and any adverse events in patient care.
- New career avenues like nurse practitioners allow nurses to practice independently. It is a testimony to the competence nurses have acquired after professionalization.
- Affiliation to a professional body enhances the prestige of nurses and helps in career progression.
- Professionalism in nursing enhances the reputation of healthcare organizations and creates a positive image in the eyes of the public, which helps them to attract patients. Competent professionals also prefer to work in reputed organizations.

DEMONSTRATING PROFESSIONALISM IN NURSING PRACTICE

It is not enough to understand and appreciate professionalism; nurses have to demonstrate this quality by their actions at the workplaces. The work behavior of nurses should display their professional competence to patients, colleagues and all others involved in healthcare delivery. Professionalism can only be sustained if the nurses adhere to work behavior that is compatible with the core values of the profession.

Effective Communication

While interacting with patients and colleagues use both verbal and nonverbal modes to demonstrate effective communication. Listening intently, occasional nod of head, seeking clarifications, maintaining eye contact, leaning closer toward the speaker and other body language gestures are all observable signs of effective communication, which will be taken note of by everybody.

Accountability

It is one of the key features of professionalism, which helps to build trustworthy relationships. Nurses should refrain from indulging in blame games and they should not hesitate in accepting and owning responsibility for their decisions and actions.

Positive Attitude

Nurses encounter disease, pain and grief in clinical settings, which can lead to negativity and unsettle the healthcare team members. It is very important for professional nurses to display a positive attitude using their communication skills and taking control of the situation. Professional nurses know that such adverse and challenging situations can be handled only through demonstration of a positive attitude.



Quite often, the workplace environment is vitiated when the pressure of work or individual problems weighs down on members of the healthcare teams. Dispirited caregivers and a negative atmosphere add to the worries of patients who are already distressed due to their health issues. Professionalism mandates that nurses should take initiative to address the issues and use their communication skills to raise the spirits of the team members and encourage them to give their best. Professional nurses with their positive attitude look to convert adversity into an opportunity to learn and grow.

Show Compassion

Nurses have to be sensitive and compassionate in dealing with the patients so that they are at ease and feel comfortable under their care. They can demonstrate compassion by taking keen interest in what the patients and their family members say. They can show their concern by listening to the patients intently and encouraging them to ask questions. Compassion helps in building strong nurse-patient relationships, which enable nurses to understand the situation and feelings of patients and what they need.

Patient-first Approach

Patient-centered care is the core of modern nursing. Nurses can demonstrate professionalism by listening to their concerns, advocating their viewpoint and honoring the patient's wishes, even if they are in conflict with their own views.

They should respect the feelings of patients and take all the decisions and actions in their best interests.

Continuous Learning

In a fast changing healthcare environment, nurses have to constantly update their knowledge and skills to maintain a high level of competency. Knowledge is power and nurses must display their zeal for learning by taking part in seminars, workshops, conventions, continuing education programs and other such events related to nursing.

Medical science is making rapid advancements and nurses have to keep abreast of the latest developments to provide quality care. Professionalism in nursing requires lifelong commitment to learning as the quality of patient care depends on the level of knowledge nurses possess. Higher the levels of knowledge ensure better, making a positive impact on the patient outcomes.

Practice Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness is essential as it helps nurses to effectively communicate with patients and other members of the healthcare team. It allows nurses to appreciate and consider the difference in needs of patients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Nurses must strive to achieve and demonstrate cultural competence as it enables them to relate to patients closely and establish therapeutic nurse-patient relationships, which improve patient outcomes.

Adhere to Ethics

Ethical conduct is pivotal to professionalism in nursing as it helps to make decisions based on values. Nurses should strictly follow the basic ethical principles of autonomy, justice, beneficence, and nonmaleficence to demonstrate professionalism. These broad principles help to uphold autonomy of the patients in decision-making, promote safe nursing by minimizing risk and ensure that all decisions and actions by nurses will be taken to benefit the patients.

Critical Thinking

While taking care of the patients, nurses regularly encounter challenging situations, which call for prompt decisions and action. Such situations provide them opportunities to demonstrate their critical thinking ability. They should use their knowledge and experience to carry out critical assessment of situations to identify problems, issues and the risks involved. Having gathered all the information, they should weigh all the pros and cons to draw conclusions and make decisions in the best interests of patients.

ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What do you mean by nursing professionalization?
2. What is the significance of professionalism in nursing practice?
3. Explain the difference between professionalization and professionalism.
4. What are the benefits of professionalization of nursing?
5. How can nurses demonstrate professionalism at workplaces?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. _____ helps to set minimum educational qualification and training for entering a profession.
 - a. Knowledge
 - b. Professionalization
 - c. Professionalism
 - d. Leadership quality
2. Which of the following is not related to professionalization?
 - a. Setting up of minimum standards
 - b. Self-regulation
 - c. Unethical conduct
 - d. Autonomy
3. _____ refers to a set of values that are crucial to ensuring safe patient care.
 - a. Power
 - b. Selfishness
 - c. Professionalism
 - d. Knowledge
4. A nurse has to demonstrate _____ at workplaces.
 - a. Self-obsession
 - b. Aggression
 - c. Egocentricity
 - d. Professionalism
5. A profession is governed by an _____ body.
 - a. Government
 - b. Autonomous
 - c. Voluntary
 - d. Corporate
6. _____ at workplaces helps to minimize risk of errors in nursing practice.
 - a. Medicines
 - b. Professionalism
 - c. Family members
 - d. Pride

Answer Key

1. b 2. c 3. c 4. d 5. b 6. b

CHAPTER 7

Challenges of Professionalism

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- The demanding nature of nursing profession.
 - Factors that make nursing profession challenging.
 - Challenges nurses face at workplace.
 - Reasons for job burnout.
 - Technological challenges in nursing care.
 - Occupational health risks in the healthcare environment.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Continuous Learning
 - Keeping Pace with Technology
 - Record Keeping
 - Lack of Autonomy at Workplaces
 - Exposure to Diseases
 - Long Hours at Workplace
 - Job Burnout
-

KEY TERMS

Constraints: Limitations, something that restricts or controls what one wants to do.

Job burnout: Physical and mental exhaustion caused by chronic workplace stress.

Long hours: Working longer than the normal working hours.

Multidisciplinary team: A healthcare team comprising members from different disciplines.

Occupational hazards: Workplace conditions that put health of employees at risk.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing is one of the most demanding and challenging professions in the field of healthcare. Professional nurses have the responsibility of providing safe patient care and they are expected to maintain high standards

of professionalism at the workplaces. However, it is not very easy, as nurses have to meet multiple challenges and overcome barriers to achieve the desired degree of professionalism.

Nurses require a good theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply it in clinical practice to deliver safe, effective and efficient patient care. Thus, it is imperative for them to continuously update and upgrade their knowledge and skills to maintain a high level of competency throughout their careers. The main challenges they face include fast changing nursing practice, effective communication, diverse cultural background of patients, lack of autonomy and poor leadership skills. Nurses have to overcome all these challenges to maintain acceptable standards of professionalism.

Heavy workload, long duty hours, constant exposure to infections, shortage of staff, inadequate infrastructure and stressful workplace environment make nursing a taxing job for even the most experienced professionals.

Rapid advancements in medical science, particularly the increasing use of digital technology in patient care, have made it imperative for the nurses to continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills and learn to operate digital devices. Besides, they have to frequently deal with unruly patients and often put up with violence and harassment at the workplaces. Accurate record keeping is also a cumbersome time consuming task for which the overworked nurses do not have enough time.

Organizational constraints, lack of autonomy, unprofessional clinical environment and other such limitations add to the woes of nurses. Patient care delivery involves teamwork but nurses, who are at the forefront, invariably find themselves at the receiving end whenever things go wrong. The challenging and stressful work environment takes a heavy toll on the physical and emotional health of nurses.

All these factors directly affect the level of nursing professionalism in clinical settings. Nurses have to overcome these challenges to achieve the desired levels of professionalism. The fast changing healthcare environment also poses a huge challenge as nursing education and training is not keeping pace with the developments.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the true dimensions of the challenges nurses face in delivery of patient care. Many nurses lost their lives, some developed symptoms of depression as well.

Challenges in nursing are unique due to the nature of work. Nurses have a key role in the patient-centered healthcare model, which requires them to build therapeutic relationships with patients, know their healthcare needs and interact with their family members. They have to invest physical and mental energy to carry out their job effectively.

Nurses can overcome some of the challenges without difficulty but may find others difficult to handle. Some of the major challenges are described here in detail.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

The field of healthcare is knowledge-intensive and doctors, nurses and all others associated with it have to make continuous learning a habit. A knowledge-driven profession like nursing is no exception. Nurses are expected to engage in lifelong learning to keep abreast of the latest developments. Rapid advancements in medical science make it essential for nurses to keep updating their knowledge and nursing skills.

However, continuous learning remains a big challenge for want of effective strategies. Acknowledging the importance of lifelong learning, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had also emphasized the need for continuous learning in the field of health. One of its priorities is to strengthen and encourage policies that help to create lifelong learning systems. It requires updating of curriculum in line with the new approach to build capacity for lifelong learning by encouraging students to search for knowledge that helps to fulfil their professional needs throughout their nursing career.

A major challenge for the nurses is to ensure that the learning process does not stagnate at any point of time during their career. One can attain persistence in learning by improving skills and developing new skills, one can learn by observing colleagues.

The objective of continuing education is to raise the standards of healthcare and improve patient outcomes. Continuing learning enhances competence and nurses must strive to achieve self-development through self-directed learning to develop lifelong learning orientation. They can access online learning resources to update their knowledge.

KEEPING PACE WITH TECHNOLOGY

The increasing use of Information Technology (IT) in delivery of healthcare makes it inevitable for the nurses to be digitally and technically competent. With the pandemic, strengthening the demand for telemedicine and telenursing, nurses must be digitally competent to carry out these services to stay relevant in the coming times. Rapid technological advances in medical science pose a huge challenge to nursing professionals who have to understand, get familiarized and use the digital technology in healthcare services. Nurses, who are already in practice, struggle to update their technological skills due to lack of training. In comparison, the newly educated and trained nurses, who have been acquainted with the new technology, are better placed and find the going easy.

Different healthcare organizations use varied levels of technology, ranging from the very old obsolete systems to the latest technology, which makes the task of nurses all the more difficult. The older generation nurses, who got educated long ago, are reluctant to upgrade their digital technology skills and they mostly fail to keep abreast of the technological advances.

RECORD KEEPING

Maintaining an accurate record of nursing actions is an important part of healthcare delivery. Besides taking care of the patients, documentation of all the nursing decisions and actions taken is the responsibility of nurses. A large number of patients, numerous nursing actions and multidisciplinary nature of healthcare delivery make maintenance of accurate records a big challenge. Nurses have to fill so many forms that they often consider it as a distraction from their main job of patient care.

Nursing documentation has been a professional and legal duty of care, and nurses have been maintaining hand-written accounts. It not only ensured effective communication among healthcare professionals but also helped in nursing education and research and medical and legal matters. Transition to Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) system is a new challenge as it has made record keeping a stressful exercise for nurses who are not proficient in working with softwares which is upgraded frequently. The emerging field of nursing informatics is bringing revolutionary changes in the nursing documentation, which will pose fresh challenges to both the upcoming generations of nurses and those already in the profession.

Besides, ensuring proper implementation of the care plans, the main purpose of record keeping is to have an accurate account of clinical history and treatments provided to patients. As multidisciplinary teams are involved in patient care, gaps in records lead to breakdown in communication. An accurate record provides complete information about previous illness to the members of a multidisciplinary team who can protect the patient as it gives information regarding the previous illnesses and health issues, including allergies, which helps in making safe treatment plans for patients.

Nurses also face record-keeping challenges due to lack of adequate time and repeated movement of patients. Nurses must not ignore the legal significance of nursing records as it provides evidence of the nursing care provided to the patients. Failure to record any nursing action will only mean that nursing actions have not been taken and it may create problems for the nurses if some legal matters crop up. Correct and complete documentation of nursing actions may be a challenging job but it is in the interests of both the care providers and the safety of patients.

LACK OF AUTONOMY AT WORKPLACES

Nurses have frequently come across situations at the workplace requiring quick decisions and actions. However, it is a big challenge as they are unable to do so as they lack sufficient autonomy to make decisions independently. They have all the knowledge and skills to provide safe nursing care to patients but they do not have the power to make decisions even in emergencies. They have to seek approval from doctors, administrators and family members of patients. Autonomy is one of the important principles of nursing but practicing it at the workplaces is a challenge.

Autonomy in nursing is essential as it helps nurses to make quick decisions and act promptly in life-threatening situations. They have a pivotal role in patient care and doctors and administrators depend on their expertise to make critical decisions. It is obvious that nurses have adequate knowledge and clinical expertise to make autonomous decisions at the workplaces.

Autonomy allows nurses to use their expertise, knowledge, training and critical thinking ability to assess patient's conditions, make independent decisions and perform appropriate nursing actions based on their professional competence in their best interests, without seeking approval from doctors or other members of the healthcare team.

Trusting the knowledge and expertise of the nurses, and allowing them to exercise independent judgment and make decisions improve the patient outcomes and raise the overall standards of healthcare delivery. Autonomy empowers the nurses and enables them to exercise better control in clinical settings. It encourages nurses to perform well, also increases job satisfaction, and helps them to become confident and more responsible.

EXPOSURE TO DISEASES

Nurses have the maximum contact with the patients as care providers and they have maximum exposure to various infectious diseases. Despite taking all the precautions even the healthiest of nurses, get infected. It is an occupational hazard, which nurses face at the workplace.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the true dimensions of challenges nurses face at workplaces. Taking care of patients infected with dreaded corona virus was a nightmare. They came under intense mental, psychological, and physical stress, particularly those deployed in isolation facilities as they were separated from their families. They had to wear inconvenient personal protection clothing during duty and take other precautions to prevent themselves from getting infected.

Nurses are the most vulnerable to healthcare-related infections. Many studies indicate that improving conditions at workplaces can help reduce the incidence of healthcare-associated infectious diseases among nurses. Occupational health nurses, who are specialists in dealing with such problems, can help the vulnerable caregivers to cope with the workplace hazards. On their part, nurses must report and highlight the issues and push for better safety policies.

LONG HOURS AT WORKPLACE

A major challenge that nurses have to cope with is long working hours at the workplace. Nursing care is a round-the-clock responsibility and nurses have demanding schedules. They usually have to work for long hours as any negligence in care can undermine patient's safety. Often nurses have to do back-to-back shift duties due to shortage of nursing staff. The excess hours they have to put in frequently take a toll on their physical and mental health. This is not good for patient's safety as physically and mentally tired nurses are more likely to commit mistakes.

Exhausted due to overwork, nurses find it hard to maintain work-life balance. With all their energies sapped out at the workplace, they are not able to pay attention to their families and as a result, they are stressed physically, emotionally and mentally.

JOB BURNOUT

The multifarious challenges nursing professionals face and the stressful environment they have to work in make them susceptible to job burnout. Preventing job burnout is a challenge for nurses whose professional responsibilities demand a very high degree of physical, mental and emotional investment. Job burnout is the consequence of long-term stress at the workplace, which causes emotional depletion, insomnia, fatigue, frustration and other harmful effects on nurses. Heavy workload, long work hours and inability to maintain work-life balance are the main reasons for job burnout. Professions, like nursing, which requires constant high-level energy to remain focused in stressful work environments, are more prone to job burnout.

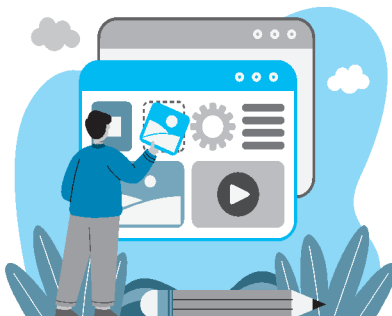
It is a gradual process marked by mental and physical exhaustion, emotional distress, anxiety and a feeling of hopelessness. Often the symptoms of depression also show up indicating the severity of the problem. Burnout can be effectively tackled, if remedial measures are taken at an early stage when first symptoms of burnout are noticed. Without effective mechanisms to cope with stress, nurses may not be able to handle pressure at the workplace and it may have implications for their personal and professional life.

Failure to prevent burnout can seriously affect the health of nurses as it lowers the immunity levels and as a result, the affected persons become vulnerable to various diseases. It also makes them disinterested, which affects both their personal and professional life. Nurses affected by job burnout lose interest in work and they may become liable to commit mistakes or start neglecting patients.



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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What are the main challenges nurses face at the workplaces?
2. Why do nurses need to continuously update their knowledge?
3. Preventing job burnout is a major challenge, why?
4. What are the technological challenges nurses face?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Healthcare is a _____ field.**
 - a. Privileged
 - b. Knowledge-intensive
 - c. Isolated
 - d. Unregulated
2. **Nurses risk job burnout due to:**
 - a. Working for long hours
 - b. Physical exhaustion
 - c. Stressful work environment
 - d. All of these
3. **Exposure to diseases is:**
 - a. An emotional hazard
 - b. An autonomous hazard
 - c. An occupational hazard
 - d. A recreational hazard
4. **EMR stands for:**
 - a. Elders Maintenance Record
 - b. Eye Magic Regression
 - c. Electronic Medical Record
 - d. None of these
5. **Autonomy allows nurses to use their _____ at the workplace.**
 - a. Expertise
 - b. Critical thinking
 - c. Knowledge
 - d. All of these
6. **Failure to maintain work-life balance can lead to:**
 - a. Critical thinking
 - b. Exposure
 - c. Job burnout
 - d. None of these

Answer Key

1. b 2. d 3. c 4. c 5. d 6. c

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CHAPTER 8

Professional Relationship with Patients

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- The significance of nurse-patient relationship.
- The principles of professional nurse-patient relationship.
- The key elements in nurse-patient relationship.
- How nurses can build strong professional relationships with patients.
- The roadblocks in nurse-patients relationship.
- The actions nurses should avoid.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Patient Satisfaction
- Trusting Nurse-Patient Relationship
- Key Elements of Nurse-Patient Relationship
- Principles of Nurse-Patient Relationship
- Roadblocks in Nurse-Patient Relationship
- Behaviors Nurses Must Avoid

KEY TERMS

Active listening: A communication skill that involves going beyond hearing the words to understand the meaning and intent behind them.

Construed: To deduce by inference or interpretation.

Empathy: The ability to sense other people's emotions.

Hinder: Obstruct or stop someone or something from making progress.

Make amends: To do something to correct a mistake that one has made.

Vulnerable: Easily damaged, hurt, or harmed physically, mentally or emotionally.



INTRODUCTION

The nurse-patient relationship is a critical component of the healthcare delivery system. Nurses are most often the primary point of contact for patients and a good nurse-patient relationship helps to build trust. An effective professional relationship between a nurse and a patient is crucial for providing high-quality healthcare and improving patient outcomes.

It is important for nurses to establish strong relationships with patients to facilitate effective communication and collaboration, which can lead to better health outcomes. It also helps build trust between the nurse and patient, which is essential for the delivery of quality care.

Studies have shown that patients are more likely to adhere to treatment plans when nurses establish a positive and trusting relationship with them. A strong nurse-patient relationship helps to build trust and allows the nurse to gain a deeper understanding of the patient's needs. It plays a pivotal role in promoting patient-centred care as it allows nurses to tailor personalized care plans to meet the unique needs of each patient.

PATIENT SATISFACTION

Patients are more likely to trust a nurse who shows genuine care and concern for their well-being. Patient satisfaction is being increasingly recognized as a measure of quality of care. A trusting nurse-patient relationship is essential for delivery of effective care as it facilitates open communication and rapport because patients feel comfortable and communicate their needs and concerns without hesitation. Thus, building trust and effective communication between the nurse and patient is critical for the patient's care.

Patients experience higher levels of satisfaction if they trust the care providers. Once the patients start trusting the nurses they feel that their concerns are being understood, respected and taken care of. They are reassured that they are in safe hands and more likely to report higher levels of satisfaction with their care.

TRUSTING NURSE-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

A nurse-patient relationship is a professional relationship between a nurse and a patient that is built on trust, respect and mutual understanding. Strong nurse-patient relationships facilitate involvement of patients in development and implementation of healthcare plans.

When patients trust their nurses they provide full and accurate information about their health conditions, preferences and needs. Nurses who are able to establish a strong relationship with the patients can communicate more effectively with them and are better placed to know their specific physical, emotional, and psychological needs.

A good understanding of the patient's health concerns and treatment options enables nurses to develop a personalized care plan that meets the specific needs of patients. Effective communication between nurses and patients leads to a range of meaningful interactions involving assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of healthcare plans.

KEY ELEMENTS OF NURSE-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

A good nurse-patient relationship involves some common elements like effective communication, respect, empathy, trust, active listening, and a willingness to work together to achieve the best possible health outcomes for the patient.

A nurse can build trust with a patient by being honest, respectful, and empathetic. It is also important for the nurse to listen actively and respond to the patient's concerns and needs.



- **Educating patients:** Having established a trusting relationship nurses can educate patients about their health conditions, treatment options, what to expect during their stay in hospital and the likely course of recovery. All the information and resources they provide empower patients to participate in their own healthcare plan.
- **Involvement in healthcare plan:** With patients sharing their health and personal information without hesitation, nurses can involve them in care plans and take into account their preferences, values, and goals. The collaborative approach and sense of involvement in the care plan has a positive influence on patients, who feel more invested in their care, and improves their overall experience.
- **Shared decision-making:** Good relationship facilitates shared decision-making and nurses and patients can work together to make healthcare decisions. This can help patients feel more in control of their care and lead to better health outcomes.
- **Patient feedback:** When patients have faith in nurses they do not hesitate to give them an honest feedback on their stay in hospital and overall healthcare experience. They also pinpoint the areas which need improvement and give suggestions to ensure that care is patient-centred.
- **Supporting self-management:** Involvement of healthcare plans helps patients to develop self-management skills and they learn to manage medications, track symptoms and recognize warning signs. Nurses support self-management of health conditions by suggesting lifestyle changes, healthy eating habits, exercise routines and stress reduction techniques.
- **Setting goals:** Nurses can support their self-management efforts of patients by setting realistic goals that can be achieved. These goals may include making changes in their lifestyles, eating habits or better adherence to medication regimen.
- **Monitoring health parameters:** Nurses can collaborate with patients as partners in healthcare delivery by involving them in monitoring health parameters, like weight, blood pressure and pulse rate.

PRINCIPLES OF NURSE-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

Professional relationship between a nurse and a patient is based on some key principles, such as, respect, trust, empathy, professionalism, communication and accountability.

- **Respect:** Nurses must treat patients with dignity and respect their autonomy. It implies they should listen to and appreciate their concerns, provide them accurate information, and involve them in the decision-making process regarding their care.
- **Trust:** Any professional relationship has to be based on trust and is all the more important in the healthcare setting as nurse-patient relationships play a key role in influencing outcomes. Patients must have faith that nurses are working in their best interests to promote their health and well-being.
- **Empathy and compassion:** Nurses are expected to provide care to patients they would give to their family members, they have to treat them with compassion. They should put themselves in the place of patients to understand their feelings and perspectives.

They can provide emotional support to a patient by being empathetic, listening actively, acknowledging their feelings, providing encouragement, and offering resources or referrals to support services, if needed.

- **Professionalism:** Nurses must demonstrate professionalism in their conduct and adhere to ethical standards by following the principles of informed consent, privacy and confidentiality and respecting autonomy of patients in making healthcare decisions, avoiding conflicts of interest, and providing care that is consistent with the patient's values and preferences.



- **Communication ability:** Ability to communicate effectively is essential in building a strong nurse-patient relationship. They have to be patient listeners to understand the concerns of patients and must have the ability to communicate clearly and effectively and provide them with accurate and timely information in a manner they can understand.
- **Barriers to effective communication:** Some common barriers that hinder effective communication and come in the way of the nurse-patient relationship include language barriers, cultural differences, lack of privacy, physical barriers, and cognitive or sensory impairments.
- **Autonomy:** A nurses can promote patient autonomy by respecting the patients' right to make their own decisions about their care. They should provide them with accurate information and all the options to enable them to make informed choices, and support their decisions.
- **Responsibility and accountability:** A nurses must take responsibility and be accountable for their actions and decisions. They should not hesitate to accept and own their mistakes. Instead of indulging in blame game they should make amends, learn from mistakes, and take necessary action to prevent similar mistakes in future.
- **Dealing with challenging relationships:** Nurses often face problems in relationships with patients who come from different religious, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. They can deal with difficult or challenging relationships by remaining calm and actively listening to the patient's concerns, addressing their needs and preferences. If required they can seek support or guidance from colleagues or supervisors, if necessary.

ROADBLOCKS IN NURSE-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

Several potential roadblocks can hinder the development of a positive and effective nurse-patient relationship. Some common issues that come in the way are as follows:

- **Trust deficit:** If patients lack faith and have a feeling that they cannot trust their nurse, they are less likely to share important information and may not follow their recommendations.
- **Communication barriers:** Language barriers, cultural differences, ethnicity and physical impairments can all make it difficult for nurses and patients to understand each other and communicate effectively. Poor communication or lack of effective communication between the nurse and patient can hinder the development of a positive relationship. Patients may not feel heard or understood, leading to their frustration and dissatisfaction.
- **Time constraints:** Nurses are mostly busy and they may have a heavy workload and limited time to spend with each patient. They have to rush through their interactions and as such, they find it difficult to build rapport and gather detailed information.
- **Unequal power equation:** Nurses may hold a position of authority and power in the relationship, which can be intimidating for patients, and they may not feel at ease during interactions. This may hamper effective communication and affect their relationship negatively.
- **Lack of respect:** Nurses have to deal with patients from different backgrounds and they may be unaware of patient's values, beliefs, and preferences. They may lack respect for their values and preferences and this can lead to mistrust and frustration, hindering the development of a positive relationship.
- **Personal biases:** Like all individuals, nurses are also human beings and have their like and dislikes. They may have personal biases or prejudices that can affect their interactions with patients. For example, a nurse may have negative attitudes towards patients who indulge in substance abuse or those suffering

from mental health conditions. It may lead to lack of empathy and indifference toward patients, which is not conducive to good nurse-patient relationships.

- **Physical barriers:** Workplace environment matters much and physical barriers such as noisy or cramped space, uncomfortable seating arrangement and poor lighting lead to negative patient experience and hinder the development of a strong relationship.

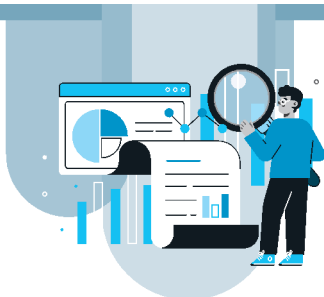
It is important for nurses to be aware of these potential roadblocks and work to overcome them in order to build positive and effective relationships with their patients. They should focus on active listening while interacting with patients, be aware of their personal biases and prejudices, and take steps to create a welcoming and supportive environment for all patients.

BEHAVIORS NURSES MUST AVOID

Failure to maintain ethical and professional standards can undermine the nurse-patient relationships, which can have a negative impact on the quality of care and also affect healthcare outcomes. Nurses should be ever careful and refrain from unprofessional conduct by consciously avoiding behaviors and actions that can compromise their professional relationship with patients. Here are some actions that nurses should avoid:

Nurses must be careful in their relationships with patients as they have a professional responsibility to provide safe and effective care to all patients.

- **Maintain professional boundaries:** They must strictly maintain professional boundaries with their patients to avoid any conflicts of interest and ensure that their judgment is not compromised. Engaging in friendships or any kind of personal relationships with patients can erase the lines of a professional relationship and may undermine the ability of nurses to provide unbiased care.
- **Protect from exploitation:** Patients are vulnerable to exploitation in many situations and they can be manipulated. Nurses must be conscious of the power differential in the nurse-patient relationship and avoid actions that could be construed as taking advantage of their position of authority.
- **Ensuring patient safety:** Ensuring the safety and well-being of their patients in all situations is the primary responsibility of nurses. However, in the process of building relationships with patients they must have to maintain objectivity and should not compromise patient safety.
- **Respecting patient confidentiality:** Nurses must maintain strict confidentiality regarding their patient's personal information. Building personal relationships with patients can lead to the sharing of personal information that could be a violation of patient confidentiality.
- **Upholding professional standards:** Nurses are expected to adhere to high professional standards, and any unprofessional behavior can damage their reputation and potentially lead to disciplinary action by the nursing board.



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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is a nurse-patient relationship?
2. Why is a nurse-patient relationship important?
3. What are the key elements of a good nurse-patient relationship?
4. How can a nurse build trust with a patient?
5. What are some common barriers to effective communication in the nurse-patient relationship?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Tick the wrong option.**
 - a. Nurse-patient relationship is based on trust
 - b. Nurses should demonstrate professionalism
 - c. Nurses should take advantage of their position of authority in nurse-patient relationship
 - d. Nurses should respect privacy and confidentiality of their patients'
2. **Which of the following is not a roadblock in nurse-patient relationship?**
 - a. Trust deficit
 - b. Poor communication skills
 - c. Cultural differences
 - d. Empathy and compassion
3. **Tick the incorrect option**
A strong nurse-patient relationship _____.
 - a. Helps to enhance patient satisfaction
 - b. Can have a negative impact on healthcare outcomes
 - c. Facilitates involvement of patient as partner
 - d. Ensures better compliance of medication.
4. **Which of the following is not a barrier to effective communication?**
 - a. Active listening
 - b. Lack of privacy
 - c. Cultural differences
 - d. Language difference
5. **Which of the following is not an ethical consideration in the nurse-patient relationship?**
 - a. Informed consent
 - b. Patient's autonomy in decision-making
 - c. Privacy and confidentiality of patients' medical information
 - d. All of the above
6. **Nurses must _____ to build a strong relationship with patients.**
 - a. Demonstrate professionalism
 - b. Treat patients with dignity
 - c. Build trust
 - d. All of these

Answer Key

1. c 2. d 3. b 4. a 5. d 6. d



UNIT III

Ethics and Bioethics

Unit Outline

- Chapter 9** Origin of Ethics
- Chapter 10** Role of Ethics in Nursing
- Chapter 11** History of Ethics in Nursing
- Chapter 12** Ethical Issues in Nursing
- Chapter 13** Code of Ethics for Nurses
- Chapter 14** Ethics in Nursing Research

CHAPTER 9

Origin of Ethics

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know about:

- The origin of word ethics.
- Understand the meaning of ethics.
- Differences between ethos and ethics.
- Ethical and unethical conduct.
- Connection between values and ethics.
- Impact of erosion of values.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Ethos and Ethics
- Values Acquired from Society

KEY TERMS

Collective perceptions: The way majority of people in a community, group or society view, understand and interpret human interactions.

Erosion of values: When moral principles and virtues, like honesty and integrity lose value in the collective perception of people.

Ethical conduct: Action driven by honest, integrity and goodness.

Ethics: Moral principles that govern an individual's behavior.

Value system: Set of beliefs, attitudes and basic convictions that provide a sense of right and wrong.

INTRODUCTION

Humans have, since the dawn of civilization, strived to build a society that is sustainable, peaceful and where people can live in harmony. In their quest for peaceful existence, philosophers thought deeply about life, individuals and social interactions and the functioning of the society in its entirety. The society comprises



individuals and their behavior that have implications for the entire group or community. Individuals are the basic building blocks of every human society and their behavior determines the state of society. We cannot have a peaceful, prosperous and flourishing society unless each and every member behaves in a responsible manner.

As societies evolve, humans gain knowledge through experience on the basis of which societal perceptions are formed about human interactions. The accumulated knowledge over a period of time forms perceptions about what is good and what is bad for society. Collective perceptions of people based on long term experience also help to determine and differentiate desirable behavior from undesirable behavior. The social behaviors perceived to be beneficial for the people and the health and sustenance of society were considered desirable. Similarly, behaviors harmful for the people or counterproductive for the society at large were considered undesirable. Ethics emanate from the awareness that being right, just and good is beneficial and being wrong, unjust and bad will lead to negative consequences. The standards of acceptable behaviors that evolve over a period of time give rise to ethics.

The collective perceptions of the people that shape the moral philosophy of the society help to determine righteous behavior or what is morally justifiable. Socially approved behavioral standards enable people to know the difference between right and wrong, good and bad and just and unjust. Thus, ethics evolve from within the society, fashioned by the collective perceptions, beliefs and values of its people.

While ethics play a key role in the life of individuals, communities and society as a whole, there are some fields in which ethics are a prerequisite for professional competence. Nurses, physicians, lawyers, journalists, engineers, accountants and many other professionals are expected to practice the highest degree of ethical conduct.

Various bodies of professionals have come out with Code of Ethics or Professional Code for their respective field to ensure ethical conduct by professionals.

ETHOS AND ETHICS

The term ‘ethics’ is derived from the Greek word *Ethikos* which means ‘relating to one’s character’. *Ethikos* has its root in the Greek word *ethos*, which means ‘character’ or ‘custom’. Ethics and ethos have the same root but have different meanings and are used differently. Differences between ethos and ethics is shown in Table 9.1.

Originally, the word ‘ethos’ was used by a famous philosopher Aristotle to refer to a man’s character or personality. It refers to the convictions, set of values and other characteristics that lend a distinct identity to an individual, community or organization. In short, Ethos reflect the distinguishing features that differentiate an organization or an individual from others. Ethos refer to values, ideology and attributes associated with a community or group and depend on culture and region.

Ethics are derived from moral principles that serve as guidelines for individuals, societies and organizations. Ethos represent the character, attitudes and beliefs that distinguish individuals, groups and organizations.

Table 9.1: Differences between ethos and ethics

Ethos	Ethics
Ethos is the root word from which ‘ <i>ethikos</i> ’ is formed	Ethics is derived from the Greek word ‘ <i>ethikos</i> ’
Ethos refer to character	Ethics mean ‘relating to character’
Ethos refer to the core set of attitudes, beliefs and values that give distinctive identity to an individual, community, institution	Ethics define what is morally good and acceptable by majority of people in the society

Contd...



Ethos	Ethics
Ethos can vary depending on culture, geographical region and country	Ethics are universal and applicable without cultural and geographical constraints
Ethos represent the spirit, attitudes and culture for which individuals, groups and organizations stand for	Ethics refer to a set of moral principles that enable one to have sense of right and wrong, just and unjust, good and bad

Ethics refer to a set of principles that help to differentiate what is good or bad, what is right or wrong and what is just and unjust in terms of human behavior. It is all about righteousness, justice, integrity, virtuousness and goodness. Unlike ethos, ethics are applicable universally. There are no geographical constraints or limitations.

Understanding the Meaning of Ethics

Ethics are derived from moral values and in effect, ethics are moral values in action. Ethics, along with societal values, lay the foundation for sustainable existence of communities, groups and societies. There are some universal moral principles like protection of life, truth, honesty and integrity, which are integral to the value systems across communities.

Ethics and morality are not synonymous but people often use them interchangeably. However, there is a difference between ethics and morals. The word 'moral' is derived from the Latin word *moralis*, which means, "pertaining to manners, morals, convention or practice". Moral values evolve over a period and form the guiding principles and ideals that have a sense of righteousness, justice and judgment of good and bad.

VALUES ACQUIRED FROM SOCIETY

Individuals acquire values from the society in which they grow up. The value system imbibed from society and inculcated in the minds of individuals helps them to judge whether a particular action will be ethical or unethical. If a person is strongly rooted in the value system, he will not require a law or a code of ethics to protect and adhere to the values.

Ethical and unethical behavior are personal traits that depend on the value system imbibed by individuals from society. Ethical behavior comes from within and it is integral to the personality of an individual. It cannot be imposed by merely framing code of ethics.

Abiding faith in values automatically ensures ethical conduct, whereas erosion of values leads to unethical conduct. This is the stage where code of ethics comes into play. Professionals, who are not well grounded in the value system, often indulge in unethical conduct. It becomes necessary to impose codes to ensure adherence to ethics.

Traditional Value System Encouraged Ethical Conduct

The entire concept of 'Paap' (sin or bad deed) and 'Punya' (virtuous action or act of goodness) is based on India's deep-rooted traditional value system and ethics to sustain the society. The conduct and actions which were deemed good for the health of society, were termed Punya and the undesirable conduct and actions were termed Paap, which will attract retributions.

For example, feeding the poor is deemed as Punya. It is based on the moral value that human lives are precious and must be protected. Most people try to help the poor, though there is no written code or law which makes it obligatory for well-to-do people to feed the poor. Philanthropy is an age old tradition and spending a part of earnings on philanthropic activities has been the norm. It is based on the values that one must give back to society, which helps one to earn.

There are hundreds of water bodies, dharamshalas, educational institutions, hospitals and other institutions across the country built by philanthropists. They considered it as a punya or pious act and a moral obligation.

Erosion of Values Leads to Unethical Conduct

With industrialization and modernization of business establishments, individuals were replaced by companies and the focus shifted to making profits and expansion of business. Barring some exceptions, most of the corporates were not contributing much toward social welfare activities. As a result, the government was forced to enact the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) law making it mandatory for the companies to spend 2% of their profits on public welfare activities and projects. However, companies were reluctant to spend on public welfare, despite the law.

Similarly, felling green trees, polluting water bodies, blocking public paths were termed Paap (sin) or impious acts. It helped to preserve life-sustaining natural resources for centuries. With commercial interests taking precedence, large-scale deforestation has taken place, water and air pollution and other environmental related issues have cropped up. All this started happening after focus shifted from preservation of nature to economic exploitation of natural resources. The adverse fallout of indiscriminate commercialization of natural resources led to enactment of laws like Forest Conservation Act and Environment Protection Act. However, the problem of environmental degradation is becoming worse as protection of nature is no longer a priority in the value system. People circumvent or defy the laws to fell trees. It has now become a legal issue and no longer a moral obligation.

This happens due to erosion of values, which keep changing with time. Code of ethics comes into play only when individuals fail to adhere to ethical conduct on their own. Four decades ago, people discarded tainted leaders who amassed wealth by foul means and honesty was an important component of the value system. Politicians also tried to adhere to ethical conduct as they were aware of the fact that if their public image got tainted, it would be difficult to win elections. Thus, it is the moral pressure of the society, which forces people to adhere to ethical conduct.

Today the situation has undergone a sea change. Mafia dons (Bahubali), corrupt and criminals win elections and dominate the political scene because honesty is no longer being valued as before. Unethical conduct of politicians is passed off as 'practical politics' or 'compulsion of politics'.



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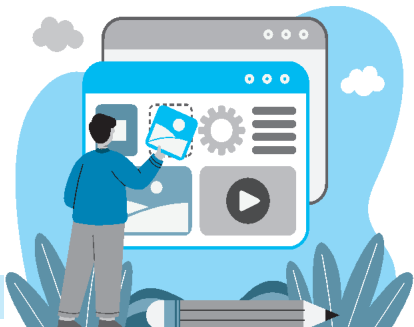
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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. Explain the origin of ethics.
2. What is the role of value system in ensuring ethical behavior?
3. In what circumstances are code of ethics necessary?
4. What is the impact of erosion of values on human behavior?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Word ethics is derived from:**
 - a. Latin
 - b. Greek
 - c. Spanish
 - d. Persian
2. **Which of the following encourages unethical behavior?**
 - a. Moral principles
 - b. Code of conduct
 - c. Law
 - d. Erosion of values
3. **Which of the following does not conform to ethics?**
 - a. Honesty
 - b. Integrity
 - c. Goodness
 - d. Nepotism
4. **Ethics is all about:**
 - a. Beauty
 - b. Intelligence
 - c. Mindfulness
 - d. Conduct
5. **Ethos refers to:**
 - a. Goodness
 - b. Perseverance
 - c. Character
 - d. Positivity
6. **Ethical standards promote:**
 - a. Nepotism
 - b. Negativity
 - c. Goodness
 - d. Injustice

Answer Key

1. b 2. d 3. d 4. d 5. c 6. c



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CHAPTER 10

Role of Ethics in Nursing

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- Importance of ethics in professions.
 - Role of ethics in nursing.
 - Significance of Florence Nightingale Pledge.
 - Ethical awareness and ethical behavior.
 - Importance of ethics in counseling.
 - Confidentiality and countertransference.
 - Necessity and limitations of professional codes.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Importance of Ethics in Nursing Profession
 - The Nightingale Pledge
 - Ethical Behavior
 - Ethical Awareness
 - Ethical Reasoning
 - Importance of Ethics in Counseling
-

KEY TERMS

Altruism: Selfless concern for the welfare of others.

Beneficence: Ethical concept of kindness and doing good to others.

Countertransference: Emotional reaction of counselors to their client.

Dual relationships: Multiple relationships between therapist and client.

Ethical awareness: Recognizing ethical implications of all nursing actions.

Prerequisite: A prior condition required for something.



INTRODUCTION

Ethics play an important role in one's personal life and professional career. Ethics are a set of moral principles that help to distinguish between, good and bad, help and harm, right and wrong to provide a basis for sound decision-making. Ethics help individuals to look beyond their own interests and be concerned about other people's interests and the larger interests of society. They also help to determine situation-specific behaviors of individuals or a group of people.

Ethical conduct is integral to professionalism and every profession, including philosophy, medicine, nursing; business and psychology have its own code of ethics. These codes serve as the guiding principles for the professionals to make decisions in the best interests of clients, organization, communities, and help to maintain standards of service.

Ethical principles matter most in nursing professions as they empower and enable nurses to take the right decisions while facing moral dilemmas. Ethics help to strengthen integrity and build trust in individuals. When nurses think and act ethically, they win the confidence of patients and reassure them that they are in safe hands. The basic objective of ethics in nursing is to protect the rights and dignity of the patients or clients and ensure a safe nursing care environment at the workplace.

IMPORTANCE OF ETHICS IN NURSING PROFESSION

Nursing is a profession that evolved on basic human values like compassion, kindness, beneficence and altruism. The patient-centered role of nurses as caregivers lends far more importance to ethical values in the nursing profession. Ethical decision-making is a prerequisite in the nursing profession as the quality of patient care largely depends on the decisions and actions of nurses. Unethical conduct by caregivers will not only bring down the standards of care but can also have adverse consequences for patients and may even put their lives at risk.

Ethics for the professional nurses involve both attitude and action to provide the best care and support to ensure the physical, mental and emotional well-being of each patient.

Nurses regularly face ethical challenges in every role at the workplaces and they cannot adhere to the best standards of professionalism without having an in-depth understanding of ethical principles.

THE NIGHTINGALE PLEDGE

The Nightingale pledge, the Oath taken by all new nurses on entering the nursing profession, highlights the importance of ethics. Named after the founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale, the pledge is a statement of ethics and principles of nursing care and fundamental values of nursing.

The standards of healthcare largely depend on the quality of patient care and the pledge plays an important role in improving the quality of health as nurses promise to stay committed to the well-being and safety of the patients. The Oath taking is considered as a commitment by nurses to adhere to the ethical values of the profession and maintain standards of nursing care. It is an expression of their sincere intentions to fulfil their professional responsibilities and a promise to the public to serve the suffering humanity with dedication.

The pledge lays the foundation for ethical conduct by nurses at the workplaces and promotes professionalism, integrity and honesty. The pledge refrains nurses from revealing private information of patients, violating the confidentiality of patient-nurse relationship and, thus, helps in cultivating loyalty to patients. It puts the onus of improving the standards of nursing care on nurses, encouraging them to pursue higher education, undertake research and other related activities.



ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Nurses not only have to be familiar with the theoretical concepts of ethics, they need to internalize the meanings to be able to put the knowledge to use at the workplaces.

They need to improve their ethical sensibilities and develop ethical competency to navigate through complex situations and moral dilemmas they frequently come across while taking care of patients.

The fast-changing healthcare environment, and increasing complexity of moral issues and dilemmas, and ethical decision-making ability are considered a core competency for the nurses. Ethical conflicts arise due to clash of competing values and obligations. Nurses require the capacity to make ethical decisions to handle these complex situations and take the right action in the face of moral challenges.

ETHICAL AWARENESS

Individuals imbibe moral values from the environment, the society and the community they grow up in and as a result, they all have their own moral codes. They get a sense of right and wrong from what they see around them in their formative years. It is obvious that their ethical values will vary and it will be reflected in their behavior. They may need to redevelop and remodel their moral codes and behavior to conform to ethics of the nursing profession.

Ethical challenges arise from moral values and it is not possible to practice ethical behavior without having adequate awareness about ethical and unethical conduct. In a healthcare environment, ethical awareness means that nurses must be aware of the ethical implications of all nursing actions. Morally correct and accepted behavioral patterns of the society are considered ethical. Individuals differentiate wrong and right based on the ethical principles. Ethical awareness empowers nurses, they are able to recognize potential dilemmas and steer through complex moral situations as, and when they arise.

ETHICAL REASONING

Ethical awareness helps nurses to identify ethical issues but to effectively address these issues and take right decisions and actions they need to have the ability for ethical reasoning. Conduct of every individual has consequences for others and the society as a whole. Ethical reasoning helps to identify and underscore actions that enhance the well-being and quality of life of others and the actions that undermine the welfare and worsen the quality of life of other people. It enables individuals to arrive at the right decisions and act in a manner that promotes the welfare of others and the society as whole. It enables individuals to foresee the implications of ethical issues and evaluate whether an action will help or harm others.

Actions that help to enhance the welfare of others will be appreciated, while the actions that cause harm to others will attract criticism from others. The positive and negative reaction shapes the ethical standards of individuals.

In some situations, ethical reasoning may also lead to conflicting or opposing conclusions. Some individuals may reconcile to denial of personal rights keeping the larger interests of the society. However, there may be persons who believe that individual rights must be protected at all costs, irrespective of the implications for the society. They are not concerned with the common good of the society and press for the individual rights even if it harms the society. Self-interest and confidence in one's own righteousness are main impediments to ethical behavior.

Ethical reasoning demands that individuals must opt for and stick to 'what is right', disregarding their own selfish interests and concerns. Doing the right action when one has nothing to lose is not ethical, one

has to shun self-centered thinking and overcome egocentric propensities to fulfil ethical obligations at the expense of one's own vested interests. One can develop the ability of ethical reasoning by learning the art of impersonal and detached ethical self-examination.

Social conventions, religious beliefs and other cultural traditions have strong influence on individuals and they believe these to be true. However, some beliefs and traditions have ethical implications, which they fail to realize. One needs to cultivate skilled ethical reasoning acquiring the ability to question and assess the belief system and cultural practices from the ethical standpoint. Ethical reasoning is a skill that requires a conscience that is not subservient to the religious beliefs, social conventions and cultural traditions.

Human beings are by nature self-preserving and it is a major impediment in developing ethical reasoning. They tend to justify selfish decisions and actions through self-rationalization. The concept of ethical reasoning is based on the notion that humankind is meant to preserve and promote the well-being of all sentient creatures. Ethical reasoning entails elimination of egocentric reasoning and considers the consequences of decisions and actions before arriving at a viewpoint that preserves the rights and well-being of others.

IMPORTANCE OF ETHICS IN COUNSELING

Nurses also function as counselors in various settings. Counseling is a specialized service to deal with problematic situations faced by clients. It is one of the areas where ethics play a very important role.

Counseling is an enabling process devised to help individuals cope with their reality and achieve greater maturity to acquire the ability to make their own decisions. It involves personal relationships, confidentiality, financial and moral issues. It requires an accepting, trusting and safe relationship that educates and encourages clients to discuss the cause of their distress and reveal their mind to the counselors without any hesitation.

The field of counseling is wide and there are many specialized areas, which require specific types of training. The areas of specialization include family counseling, marriage counseling, substance abuse counseling, rehabilitation counseling and mental health counseling.

Confidentiality

It is a foremost issue and counselors are bound by ethical principles to respect privacy by protecting sensitive client information. It is mandatory for the counselors not to share whatever information the client provides to them and they will not disclose it without the permission of clients. Nurses are duty-bound to clearly explain the clients before the start of the counseling sessions about the situations or circumstances when they cannot maintain confidentiality.

Failure to maintain confidentiality will adversely impact the nursing practice. Clients will be hesitant to reveal information if they apprehend that their personal information may be shared by their counselors without consent. In the absence of complete information, the counselors may not be in a good position to help the clients and as a result, they may not be able to carry out their nursing practice effectively. It is in the interest of the counselors to explain to the clients the situations in which they may have to share their personal information and reassure them that nothing will be disclosed without their consent, except when necessary, particularly when courts are involved. The clients feel safer when they know that they have control over their sensitive personal information and they will not hesitate to provide complete information to the counselors.

Countertransference

Counselors are also human beings and they do get carried away at times and allow their own biases and emotions to influence their thoughts and reactions to clients during therapeutic interaction. Countertransference is the emotional reaction of counselors or therapists to their client. It is the opposite of transference, the emotional reaction a client has to their counselor or therapist.

Countertransference may be happening without the counselor or the client being aware of it. Counselors must be mindful of countertransference and make conscious efforts to overcome the tendency as overpowering influence of emotions may lead them to treat clients during therapeutic interaction in a prejudiced or unfair manner.

Exceeding Competence

Often counselors misrepresent their qualifications and training in violation of ethical principles and the professional codes. Counseling is a specialized job that can be performed only by professionals with requisite training in their fields of specialization.

Application of counseling techniques by professionals in which they do not have requisite training is against ethics. In some cases, counselors overstate their qualifications and experience, which is not only unethical but also illegal. They may face legal issues as many malpractice lawsuits because of lack of competence arise due to misrepresentation of qualification and training.

Sexual and Dual Relationships

There are always possibilities of therapeutic relationships growing into romantic or sexual relationships. Ethics strictly prohibit sexual relationships with clients as counselors are in a position to exercise power over their clients. A large number of complaints relating to malpractice against counselors involve client-counselor sexual relationships. The ethical responsibility of preventing such relationships rests on counselors. Ethical standards even forbid counselors from engaging in sexual relationships with a former client.

Ethical principles of counseling lay down that counselors should exercise caution in counseling individuals with whom they have or had any kind of relationships, including friendships. Professional counseling requires a detached approach, while relationships undermine objectivity and may compromise the judgment of counselors, affecting their ability to provide effective services.

Code of Ethics and Professional Codes

Thus, adhering to ethical principles helps nurses to preserve the values and morals in their work behavior in the healthcare settings, particularly working relationships involving counselors and their clients. Various codes of ethics and professional codes are designed to guide the work behavior of nurses so that ethical conduct becomes an integral part of their professional practice.

However, merely having a code of ethics may not help as there is no surety that nursing professionals will adhere to it. Further, various professional codes and organizational codes vary and nurses often encounter ethical dilemmas and situations at workplaces, which are not addressed by these codes.

The codes lay down the guiding principles but they are not always clear and precise. There is at times disagreement over what is right and what is wrong and even differences over what is ethical.

Protecting privacy of patients and clients is a major issue addressed by the ethical principle of confidentiality. The ethical responsibility demands that nurses should reveal as little information as possible in cases they have to share information provided by clients to them. Revealing information that is not necessary can create ethical and legal issues and may lead to malpractice suits. The best way to avoid such situations is to err on the side of confidentiality and reveal the least possible.

ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is the importance of ethics in the nursing profession?
2. What is the significance of ethical awareness in promoting ethical conduct?
3. Why are ethical principles important in counseling?
4. Explain the terms countertransference and exceeding competence.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Ethics are concerned with:**
 - a. Human behavior
 - b. Acting in the best interests of the client
 - c. Moral decision-making
 - d. All of these
2. **Exceeding competence is:**
 - a. Using technology
 - b. Having more competence
 - c. Using counseling techniques without necessary training
 - d. Exceptional competence
3. **It is unethical on the part of a nursing professional to:**
 - a. Counsel client's family members
 - b. Have a romantic relationship with client
 - c. Use counseling techniques without having requisite training
 - d. All of the above
4. **Violation of the ethical principle of confidentiality:**
 - a. May attract a law suit
 - b. Is necessary in some situations
 - c. Should not take place without informing the client
 - d. All of the above

Answer Key

1. d 2. c 3. d 4. d

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CHAPTER 11

History of Ethics in Nursing

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- The origin of ethics in healthcare.
 - The importance of Corpus Hippocraticum.
 - The role of Hippocratic Oath in introducing ethics to healthcare.
 - Contribution of Nightingale Pledge in promoting nursing ethics.
 - The contribution of Florence Nightingale.
 - The chronological development of ethical principles in nursing.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Hippocratic Oath
 - Nightingale Pledge
 - Chronology of Codes of Ethics in Nursing Development
-

KEY TERMS

Affirmation: An action of support or approval, positive assertion.

BCE: Before Common Era is used in place of BC (Before Christ).

Corpus Hippocraticum: Collection of 70 philosophical and medical treatises.

Deleterious: Something that has a harmful effect.

Hippocratic Oath: A formal promise made by freshly qualified doctors to adhere to the standards set by their profession.

Nightingale Pledge: A declaration by newly qualified nurses to uphold the standards set by their profession.

Nonmaleficence: The ethical principle of not inflicting harm to anyone intentionally.

Tentative: Unconfirmed and subject to change.



INTRODUCTION

Ethics are the cornerstone of sustainable human society. They are a part of everyday life and guide social behavior. Ethics evolve over a period of time from the long term collective perceptions of the people about acceptable behaviors. They serve as standards to differentiate desirable behavior from undesirable behavior.

While modern nursing founded by Florence Nightingale is a more recent phenomenon, the history of ethics in healthcare can be traced back to the 5th century BCE. Medicine and medical ethics have been going together since ancient times. The evidence is provided by Corpus Hippocraticum, a collection of 70 philosophical and medical works of ancient Greek physician Hippocrates (460–377 BCE) and associated authors. It contains a wealth of information on causes of diseases, prognosis, diagnosis and treatment strategies.

It also discusses in detail the ethical concerns that arise during medical practice and includes a well-structured code of ethics for physicians. The concept of ethics in healthcare originated from the Hippocratic Oath and it will be worthwhile to discuss it in some detail.

HIPPOCRATIC OATH

Hippocrates laid the foundation of the basics of clinical medicine as practiced today and the Hippocratic Oath, is the first and most widely known code of medical ethics. He believed medicine was an art based on the highest moral standards and compassion. The Hippocratic writings, especially the famous Oath, which underlines the duties and responsibilities of doctors has in relation to patients. Besides detailed guidelines for dealing with specific clinical situations, the texts contain instructions for physicians, articulating ethical principles to promote safe patient care such as “do no harm, maintain confidentiality, exercise self-restraint, never administer poison and act without fear or favor, be polite and adhere to high moral standards”.

Hippocrates laid emphasis on the religious and moral integrity of his students and took no one under his apprenticeship without administering the Oath, which was a charter of ethical principles that physicians must follow. Apprenticeship was the normal route for acquiring knowledge and skills to enter any profession in that era.

He strongly believed that medical practitioners should have impeccable morals and their conduct should be flawless in every sphere of life. The charter laid down that practitioners should acquire thorough knowledge of every type of disease and the best form of treatment.

The concern for ethical behavior in Hippocratic writings is evident from instructions like “the physicians must treat their patients kindly and with respect.” They should only use those medicines approved by the majority of the profession, cautioning against employing improper or dangerous remedies.

It underscores the ethical principle of nonmaleficence or “do no harm to the patients.” If patients want to be treated using popular remedies, the practitioners must caution them but leave the final decision to their discretion. It clearly reflects Hippocrates’ concern for the rights of the patients. Medical practitioners should always be ready to deal with all emergencies and provide relief to those suffering.

Thus, the Oath provides the basic ethical frameworks for healthcare settings and specifies the duties and privileges of those associated with the medical profession. It clearly states the responsibilities of doctors toward the patients and emphasizes that they should respect their teachers and colleagues within the medical community. It is evident that medical ethics have been integral to the practice of medicine from the very beginning.

Revival of Hippocratic Oath

The Hippocratic Oath for some reason remained obscured until the 1500s when it was rediscovered by medieval German scholars and updated in accordance with the prevailing Christian practices. However, it

still did not attract much attention and it was only in the 1700s that the document was translated into English and the medical schools in the west started incorporating the Oath in convocations.

The basic concepts and tenets of caring and treatment as outlined by Hippocrates have been appreciated by physicians and thinkers and amended from time to time, keeping in view the advancements in medicine. Building on the works of Hippocrates, the subsequent generations of physicians developed more effective therapies to treat patients and make treatment.

The Oath has been amended many times and several updated versions of the Hippocratic Oath have been published which are vastly different from the original one but have the same intent of promoting ethical behavior. There is a version that includes Hippocrates' general principles as well as a pledge "not to use medical knowledge to violate human rights or civil liberties and to practice medicine without discrimination or bias." The 20th century modern versions which include the Declaration of Geneva, adopted by the World Medical Association in 1948 and periodically updated, are the ones medical students commonly swear upon graduation.

Developed on the principles of the Hippocratic Oath, the Declaration of Geneva is one of the World Medical Association's (WMA) oldest policies adopted in 1948. Besides, this modern version of Oath also pledges not to use medical knowledge to violate human rights or civil liberties and to practice medicine without discrimination or bias. With very few revisions, it is the most consistent document of the WMA that safeguards the ethical principles of the medical profession.

The World Medical Association (WMA) has also framed the International code of Medical Ethics as a canon of ethical principles for the members of the medical profession practicing across the world. It encourages all those involved in healthcare delivery to adopt the code to help maintain high ethical standards at the workplaces.

NIGHTINGALE PLEDGE

Just like Hippocratic Oath taken by medical doctors, the nursing students swear upon the Nightingale Pledge at graduations. While ethics for medical practitioners were in place since ancient times, nursing-specific ethics formalized only in the 19th century. The first code of ethics for nurses was created in 1893 by nursing pioneer Lystra Gretter and a Committee for the Farrand Training School for Nurses, Detroit. It was aptly named after Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing.

The pledge is largely an amended version of Hippocratic Oath for doctors, modified specifically for nurses. The pledge reads as, "I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly to pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully. I shall abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous and shall not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug. I shall do all in my power to maintain and elevate the standard of my profession and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping and all family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my calling. I shall be loyal to my work and devoted toward the welfare of those committed to my care."

The pledge was revised in 1935 to improve and enlarge its scope. In the updated Pledge, the last line was tweaked and it read as, "With loyalty will I endeavor to aid the physician in his work, and as a 'missioner of health' I will dedicate myself to devoted service to human welfare."

Modern Practical Nurse Pledge

The Nightingale Pledge has not changed much in terms of intent and objectives and many nursing schools still use its updated versions. A major change was made to assert the autonomy of the nursing profession and promote independence of nurses as professionals by deleting the phrase, "loyal to physicians". The main

objection to the phrase was that it undermined the autonomy of the nursing profession. As professionals nurses must have the capability of independent decision-making, they compliment the physicians in healthcare delivery. Nurses cannot be put in a subservient role to physicians as they belonged to two parallel professional streams, each having its own ethics and professional boundaries.

Besides, the pledge was also seen as feminist in the light of the fact that the nursing profession remained an exclusive preserve of women, while male physicians dominated in medicine and other medical fields for many years. The promise to support physicians in their work was seen as an affirmation of male dominance over females.

The Historical Role of Nightingale Pledge

There was no code of ethics for nurses for a long time, though the necessity to have some kind of ethical guidelines was being felt ever since the profession of modern nursing started taking shape in the middle of the 19th century. The first code of ethics for nurses came up only in 1950, until then the Nightingale Pledge served as the guide for nursing professionals.

The newly established American Nurses Association (ANA) had taken initiative to frame a code of ethics as early as 1896 but with more compelling issues like accreditation of nursing schools and registration of nurses requiring immediate attention, it lost priority.

The importance of ethical principles was underscored in the beginning of 20th century by the works of American nursing theorist Isabel Hampton Robb who authored two books which also dealt with the ethical aspects in detail. The book, “Nursing’s Ethics for Hospital and Private Use,” published in 1900 described at length the role and ethical responsibilities of nurses in healthcare settings, particularly the obligations of the nurse to the patient, the most important aspect of nursing care. It provided ethical guidelines for nurses for providing good nursing care. The second book, “Educational Standards for Nurses With Other Addresses on Nursing Subjects,” published in 1907 was about the type of education and training was required for providing quality healthcare.

However, the first concrete step toward framing a code of ethics was taken by the ANA in 1926, when it published a “suggested” code, delineating the guidelines for ethical behavior of nurses. The instructions focused on relationships of nurses with patients, medicine and their profession. The relationship of the nurse to the patient entailed “bringing all of the knowledge, skills, and devotion” to the work.

It took another 14 years for the ANA to come out with a ‘Tentative Code’, published in 1940, which had many provisions similar to those outlined in the suggested code of 1926. The code centered around relationships of nurses with patients, colleagues and the profession.

It was as late as 1950 when the first formal Code for Professional Nurses with 17 provisions outlining all ethical aspects, ranging from the fundamental responsibilities to conserve life, alleviate suffering to accountability for decisions and actions and work behavior. The code was revised in 1960–1968, the second revision of the code saw many significant changes.

The revision was effected to make the code precise by reducing the number of provisions from 17 to 10. Another salient feature of the revised code was that it carried interpretation of the listed provisions to help the nurses to understand how they can be applied during practice. There were major changes in the language in the 1968 revision. The generalized responsibilities of the code were made more specific duty-based obligations like “respect human dignity, regardless of nationality, race, caste, color or status and protect the patient’s right to privacy to improve the profession and maintain an ethical work environment.” The code was revised by ANA in 1976, 1985, 2001–2015.

In the meanwhile, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) approved the first International Code of Ethics for Nurses on July 10, 1953. It happened at a time when the need for ethics in medical science was being strongly felt in the wake of atrocities perpetrated on prisoners in concentration camps during

the second world war. The prisoners were used for various experiments without explaining any procedures and without obtaining their consent.

The ICN revised the code in 1965 and adopted a new code in 1973. It was reaffirmed in 1989 and revised in 2000.

CHRONOLOGY OF CODES OF ETHICS IN NURSING DEVELOPMENT

- 1893**—Nightingale Pledge created by nursing pioneer Lystra Gretter and a Committee for the Farrand Training School for Nurses, Detroit, which served as the guide for nursing professionals for decades until a formal code of ethics was adopted in 1950.
- 1897**—The American Nurses Association realizes the need for a code of ethics for nursing.
- 1900**—Isabel Hampton Robb authored the book “Nursing’s Ethics for Hospital and Private Use” which dealt with various ethical aspects of nursing, particularly the relationships of nurses with patients, physicians and institutions.
- 1926**—The ANA for the first time published a ‘suggested’ code outlining the contours of ethical behavior for nurses.
- 1940**—The ANA published a ‘Tentative Code’ which had features similar to the ‘suggested’ code.
- 1950**—The ANA first formal Code for Professional Nurses was adopted.
- 1953**—International Council of Nurses (ICN) approved the first International Code of Ethics for Nurses.
- 1960**—The ANA came out with a Code for Professional Nurses outlined 17 provisions.
- 1965**—The ICN revised the International Code of Ethics for Nurses.
- 1973**—The ICN comes out with a new International Code of Ethics for Nurses.
- 1968**—The ANA revised the Code to reduce the number of provisions from 17 to 10.
- 1976**—The ANA Code emphasized on nurses relationship to the ‘client’ and not the ‘patient’.
- 1985**—Code was again updated by ANA.

The ANA adopted the first code of ethics to guide the nurses in 1950 and the ICN approved the first International Code of Ethics for Nurses in 1953. In the absence of any formal codes, the Nightingale pledge framed in 1893 provided ethical guidance to nurses for decades.

It laid a solid foundation for ethics and encouraged ethical behavior by nurses at the workplaces. It infused moral values in the profession and took care of important ethical issues like safety, privacy and nurse-patient relationship. The pledge had a positive influence on nurses in every role, caregiver, administrator, teacher, researcher and manager, as it helped to enhance their ethical decision-making abilities.

The code of ethics for nurses will be covered in detail in chapter XIII.



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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is the importance of Corpus Hippocraticum in healthcare ethics?
2. Write in detail about evolution of ethics in nursing.
3. What is the significance of Hippocratic Oath in healthcare ethics?
4. Explain how the Nightingale pledge promoted ethics in nursing care.
5. What is the contribution of the American Nurses Association in the development of code of ethics?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **The history of ethics in healthcare dates back to:**
 - a. 10th century BCE
 - b. 10th century AD
 - c. 5th century BCE
 - d. 5th century AD
2. **Hippocrates was an ancient _____ physician.**
 - a. British
 - b. Greek
 - c. German
 - d. American
3. **Nightingale pledge was created in the year:**
 - a. 1700
 - b. 1850
 - c. 1893
 - d. 1905
4. **The Hippocratic Oath was rediscovered by the medieval _____ scholars.**
 - a. Spanish
 - b. Greek
 - c. American
 - d. German
5. **American Nurses Association adopted first formal code of ethics for nurses in the year:**
 - a. 1950
 - b. 1893
 - c. 900
 - d. 1940
6. **The ICN approved the first International Code of Ethics for Nurses in the year:**
 - a. 1893
 - b. 1950
 - c. 1953
 - d. 1960

Answer Key

1. c 2. b 3. c 4. d 5. a 6. c



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CHAPTER 12

Ethical Issues in Nursing

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- The ethical issues in nursing.
 - The reasons for ethical dilemma.
 - Various situations that raise ethical concerns.
 - Ethical dilemma involving competing options.
 - Ethical dilemma: autonomy versus informed consent.
 - Ethical concerns raised during COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Reasons for moral distress.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Ethical Issues and Ethical Dilemma
 - Reasons for Ethical Issues in Nursing
 - Conflict between Law and Ethics
 - Distribution of Meager Resources
-

KEY TERMS

Adherence: Compliance or behavior that obeys rules, values.

Confidentiality: The principle and practice of keeping sensitive personal information, which cannot be shared without the consent of the concerned person.

Ethical dilemma: A situation where choice has to be made from among two or more options, none of which conforms to accepted ethical guidelines.

Ethical insensitivity: Not paying attention to ethical principles, particularly in a situation fraught with conflict or insensitive to ethics.

Incongruent: Out of place or incompatible.

Terminally ill: Last stage of a disease that cannot be cured and is expected to result in the death of the patient.

Veracity: Based on the concept of honesty, it mandates truthfulness in nurse-patient interactions. In dictionary, it means conformity to facts, accuracy.



INTRODUCTION

Nursing is a humanistic science mainly concerned with promoting health, welfare, and safety of all people, preventing illness and caring for the sick, disabled and elderly. Nurses have an obligation to provide safe and high quality care to patients. The basic principle that guides the decisions and actions of nurses is that human life is precious and it should be protected at all costs. By nature of their work, they have to encounter difficult situations in their clinical practice. They have to make difficult ethical choices to serve the best interest of the patients.

While carrying out their job responsibility of providing safe care to patients, nurses are tasked with making vital decisions that make a difference between life and death. It can be a stressful exercise, as they have to examine all aspects of the situation and the possible outcomes of their actions before making a decision.

Advancements in medical science have facilitated speedy and accurate diagnosis of diseases and introduction of new treatments and advanced medical procedures, throwing up new ethical and legal challenges for the healthcare professionals.

Ethical issues emerge when the answers are not very clear and the options are not good enough to make a perfect choice. Nurses have an obligation to act in the best interests of the patients and provide safe care but it is not always easy to fulfil in situations that throw up ethical dilemmas.

They must examine the situations from all angles and assess the pros and cons to determine the best possible option for their patients and the impact their decisions will have on others. It is not easy to navigate through situations that may also involve moral and legal issues, besides ethical dilemmas. Nurses need to have a good understanding of the ethical dilemmas to cope with complicated situations. Their effort should be to make the best decisions that help to maximize the benefits.

ETHICAL ISSUES AND ETHICAL DILEMMA

Before discussing specific issues, nurses encounter at workplaces, particularly in the clinical settings, it is important to understand the difference between an ethical issue and an ethical dilemma.

Ethical Issues

An ethical issue in healthcare settings is a problematic situation that requires healthcare professionals, mostly doctors and nurses, or organizations to choose from among several available courses of actions that need to be analyzed and evaluated as right or wrong, ethical or unethical. It has both aspects of right and wrong.

An important healthcare-related ethical issue, nurses deal with pertains to professional boundaries that have to be observed vis-a-vis the patients. They have to ensure that patients do not rely on them beyond the professional mandate and they are not encouraged to have romantic liaisons, close friendships or offer gifts to them. Ensuring patients' privacy and confidentiality of their medical records is another ethical issue as the entire healthcare team has access to the records.

Similarly, most common ethical issue arises when family members want nurses to withhold the medical information from the patients to protect them emotional stress and anxiety. It is a touchy and tricky situation as patients have the right to know about their medical conditions. The code of ethics for nurses emphasizes on the principle of veracity, which mandates that nurses to be honest in their interactions with patients and colleagues. It is based on the concept of honesty and provides basis for nurses to establish a trusting relationship with patients.

Veracity implies willingness on the part of nurses to provide facts to patients. They should not comfort them with any false assurances. They must demonstrate ethical competency to ensure safe and accurate patient-centered care.



Ethical Dilemma

In healthcare settings, an ethical dilemma is a problematic situation that requires healthcare professionals or organizations to choose from among several competing options, usually wrong, undesirable or unethical, and there is confusion over deciding which is the most ethical route. A clearly right or ethical option is not available in a dilemma, a choice has to be made from among less unethical or illegal as perceived by any and all the stakeholders. There may be two or more options but no clear choice based on ethics seems to be ideal. Nurses face situations where they have a difficult choice to make from among two or more options, none of which conforms to accepted ethical guidelines.

Ethical dilemmas arise in situations where moral obligation mandates that healthcare professionals to choose from among two or more of the available alternative actions and they are confronted with a confusing situation as there is no clear choice. In certain situations, each of the possible routes of resolution can be justified in moral terms but each option entails some benefits and some costs. It means that the benefits to an individual or a group will come at the cost of the other whichever option one chooses.

An ethical dilemma cannot be usually resolved without due deliberations, there are no quick fix rules that can be applied going by facts of the situation to resolve it. Dilemmas also arise when two or more options seem reasonable.

There are real-life examples of ethical dilemmas where decisions are not easy to make. For instance, a youth seriously injured in a road accident lapses into coma and put on life support. The chances of his recovery are bleak and he will die the moment the life support is taken off. The youth was in the pink of health at the time of accident and he had pledged to donate his organs. There are three critically ill patients, who can survive only through organ transplant. The doctors approach the parents of the youth and explain the whole situation. They have to decide whether to continue with the life support and let three other patients die or let their comatose son die by taking off the life support and donate his two kidneys and heart to give a fresh lease of life to the three patients. There is no perfect course of action both choices have a wrong or unethical aspect.

REASONS FOR ETHICAL ISSUES IN NURSING

Nurses face a variety of ethical issues at workplaces as they frequently come across situations when they have to make decisions in the best interests of the patients from two or more options but the choices are not very clear. Besides, there are situations when their own values are in conflict with their professional obligations or the legal regulations.

They have to keep the interest of the patients in the mind and make choices in personal, clinical, and organizational situations all the time.

Nursing practice is governed by law and professional ethics and nurses often encounter situations fraught with interlaced legal and ethical issues. They are guided by both laws governing their practice and ethical principles while making decisions in situations. While law and ethics both have the same objectives and address similar issues, they are not the same. The law has its own limitations, particularly in respect of professions like nursing in which integrity, compassion and a caring attitude are essential. While law prescribes penalties for violations, it cannot help to make people honest, compassionate, just and caring. Ethics are moral principles, which help individuals to differentiate right and wrong, good and bad. Adherence to law is mandatory and it is uniformly applicable to all but ethics are voluntary and may vary from one person to another.

Ethical issues arise in various situations, one such scenario emerges due to conflict between ethics and law.

CONFLICT BETWEEN LAW AND ETHICS

In some situations, ethics and law may be congruent and there will be no problem in making ethical decisions. Problems arise when ethics and law are in conflict. What is ethical can be illegal and what is legal can be unethical. For example, telling lies or betraying the trust of a friend is not illegal but unethical.

A very common ethical dilemma that healthcare professionals have to cope with is when a pregnant woman has little chances of giving birth to a normal delivery and continuing with the pregnancy that involves high risk of miscarriage. The ethical issue is whether to abort the baby to avoid future complications or continue with the pregnancy. While abortion is legal in most countries, it is considered unethical.

Competing Options

Besides conflict in ethics and law, ethical problems may also arise when the nurses have to choose from two or more options, which are incongruent with their professional ethics.

There are also situations when nurses have several competing options each of which benefits the patient in a different way and such ethical issues pose challenges to nurses.

Competing options that nurses frequently face relate to the ethical principles of autonomy and beneficence, healthcare needs and resource distribution, honesty and withholding information.

For example, what course a nurse choose in a situation where a patient with a terminal illness is against any life-sustaining interventions but the family members are insisting on taking all possible measures to prolong his life. It is obligatory on the part of healthcare professionals to obtain an informed consent to start treatment and the continuation of treatment. Once started it is very difficult to withdraw a life-sustaining treatment in real-life situations. It also raises the larger ethical question whether terminally ill patients should be kept alive through medical intervention.

It also involves the issue of autonomy of patients who has the right to choose the kind of treatment he requires and the right to refuse treatment.

Identifying Ethical Dilemmas in Nursing

Healthcare professionals, particularly doctors and nurses, have to regularly face ethical challenges at workplaces. It is not easy to cope with the challenges unless they are well grounded in ethics and have requisite knowledge and experience to identify ethical dilemmas. Nurses are often not able to perceive and recognize ethical issues as they lack requisite ethical insensitivity. The new entrants to the nursing profession can always learn from the more experienced seniors how to identify situations involving ethical issues and discuss the ways to navigate through such tough ethical situations.

Nurses have to be aware of what an ethical challenge. It implies they should be able to identify an ethical dilemma only then they can consider the course of action to be adopted. In simple terms, an ethical dilemma can be described as a situation in which the two available options are both ethically correct but the implications of one option may be more troublesome than the other. Choosing one of the options has negative implications on the other and the result is an ethical dilemma for the nurses. It is an ethical dilemma whenever a nurse feels there is no clear choice from the available options.

Some ethical situations nurses frequently face at workplaces are discussed here.

Improper Conduct of Colleagues

Ethical concerns also arise when a nurse observes that a colleague healthcare professional is shouting and maltreating patients. Being ethically aware and competent, the nurse is upset with the work behavior of the colleague but faces a dilemma whether or not to report the matter to the higher authorities. In case the nurse chooses to remain silent, it will be unethical and unfair to see patients being ill treated and take no corrective action. Informing about unethical conduct may harm the colleague professionally.

Autonomy versus Informed Consent

There are common situations like patients wanting to know about the probable course of their medical condition but the nurse apprehends that truth may cause them stress and anxiety which may affect the recovery. However, not apprising the patients about the prognosis will undermine their ability to take important decisions regarding treatment options. Withholding such important information will undermine the process of informed consent.

Patients have the right to make independent decisions and choose their own treatment plans. They have the right to refuse treatment. However, they can exercise their right to autonomy only if they are well informed about their health status, various treatment options and their pros and cons. Healthcare professionals are duty bound to provide all the information to the patients and explain the treatment plans so that they are in a position to choose the best option. Thus, failure of nurses to provide adequate information will undermine the patients' right to autonomy.

Ethical Dilemmas Involving Right to Confidentiality

Right to confidentiality mandates that the medical information of a patient given to a healthcare provider shall not be divulged to others unless the patient gives his consent to disclose such information to others. The healthcare professionals faced an ethical dilemma involving the patients' right to confidentiality and duty to protect others from getting others infected. Confidentiality of personal and medical information is the right of the patients and must be protected. Confidential information should remain between the healthcare professionals and the patients under their care and it should not be divulged to others.

Privacy of patients' data is one of the areas, which presents ethical challenges to nurses. The patients' right to privacy is not only an ethical concern but also a legal issue. Nursing professionals have an obligation to maintain confidentiality of the medical information but there are situations when they are forced to disclose patients' information. For instance, not disclosing the COVID-19 positive status means putting at risk the lives of those who daily come in contact with the infected person. Besides taking care of patients, nurses and doctors have a wider responsibility to safeguard and promote the health of the public at large.

In certain situations, the confidentiality rights of patients have to be balanced against the duty to protect and promote the health and welfare of other people. If it becomes necessary to disclose the information, nurses and doctors must explain the situation to the concerned patients and obtain informed consent. They should also ensure that only bare minimum information, which is essential to disclose, is shared. They must also take into consideration the legal implications of their decisions. In certain situations even if the patient refuses to give consent, disclosure of information may be justified if it serves the larger public interest. Nurses have to ensure that the benefit to society or other people must outweigh the harm it causes to the patient.

This mostly happens when nondisclosure of patient information may pose a threat to others. The information is revealed keeping in view the welfare of those who may be harmed by concealment of the information. For instance, if a patient is diagnosed with a dreaded contagious disease, not revealing this information may put the family, friends and others at risk of catching the infection. It is unethical to expose healthy people to risk of infection. In all such situations where other people may be adversely impacted by concealment of patients' medical information, nurses have to weigh the pros and cons and decide how to and to what extent share the information.

In an actual case, a youth tested HIV positive but wanted the nurse to keep the information confidential. There was nothing unusual as the youth was only trying to ensure that his right to privacy was protected. However, the nurse found herself in a difficult situation when a young girl, who was set to get married to the youth over the next few months, got suspicious and wanted to know the outcome of the HIV test from the nurse.

It was indeed a difficult ethical dilemma for the nurse to resolve as divulging the confidential medical information is unethical and illegal, while nondisclosure of such sensitive information would put life of the



girl at risk. Using ethical reasoning the nurse chose to disclose the HIV positive status of the infected youth to the girl to protect her from the risk of being infected by the deadly virus. The action was motivated to prevent her from harm but it violated the infected youth's right to confidentiality. The benefit clearly outweighed the potential harm that the youth would have suffered due to the disclosure of his HIV positive status. The nurse followed the principle of nonmaleficence and protected the girl from potential harm.

The youth proceeded against the nurse in the court of law; however, the action of the nurse was upheld and the case was decided in the favor of the nurse.

Ethical Aspects of COVID-19

The outbreak of the dreaded COVID-19 pandemic, which took a heavy toll on healthcare professionals, raised all sorts of ethical issues for doctors and nurses who had to deal with an unprecedented medical catastrophe. Confidentiality, fair distribution of meager resources, social isolation, mandatory quarantine, exposure to infection, vaccination and many related issues raised ethical concerns as healthcare infrastructure broke down. Thousands of doctors and nurses lost their lives while caring for the COVID-19 infected.

Issue of Confidentiality

Initially, the social stigma attached with the highly infectious virus raised the ethical issue of confidentiality. Those who were infected virtually became untouchables in the society and as a result, everyone wanted to hide the infection.

There can be situations when disclosure of information may be in public interest to help protect individuals or society from serious harm. COVID-19 created such a situation, being a highly communicable virus infection.

DISTRIBUTION OF MEAGER RESOURCES

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented situations in healthcare facilities as the rush of infected patients not only led to severe shortages of corona testing kits, beds and protective gears but also of lifesaving medicines, ventilators and oxygen. Hundreds of infected persons were gasping for breath in the hospital premises but no beds were available. Nurses faced ethical dilemmas, whenever a bed was vacated, as the condition of a majority of patients was serious. They included their own relatives, friends and colleagues making it extremely difficult for the nurses to determine which patients needed to be given bed and treated on a priority.

Vaccination

The efforts to contain the pandemic led to development of vaccines for emergency use. Vaccines were developed in record time but the requirement was too high, as every country needs jabs to protect the population. Ethical concerns like who should get vaccinated first arose as the entire population was exposed to the infection. The ethical decision was to vaccinate the healthcare professionals, who were treating COVID-19 patients at the risk of getting infected, and the elderly people above 65 years, who were most vulnerable.

There was another side of the problem, many people were hesitant to get vaccinated as they were not sure about the efficacy of various vaccines, developed in haste, and also feared side effects. It was an ethical challenge for the healthcare professionals whether to respect their right to refuse vaccination or administer vaccines to them in the larger interest of the society.

Moral Distress

Nurses need to acquire ethical competency and become comfortable in dealing with ethical issues. Ethical decision-making processes have to be an integral part of their work behavior. They are likely to suffer the adverse consequences if they do not adequately address the ethical issues. Besides decline in quality of patient care, failure to make ethical decisions may lead to moral distress, which in the long run results in job burnout and other problems. The inability of nurses to make ethical decisions due to various reasons leads to moral distress. These are situations where the nurses know what is the right thing to do and they are keen on making ethically correct decisions but they are held back by organizational constraints, legal regulations and other limitations at the workplaces.

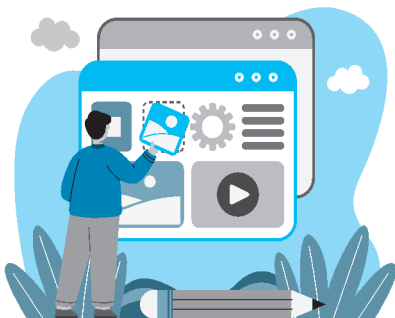
Inability to address ethical and moral dilemmas causes maximum anguish and pain to nurses as they are overtaken by a feeling of powerlessness. Moral distress can affect the ability of nurses to provide good care and they may start losing interest in their work, which will lead to job dissatisfaction. The degree of moral distress varies and its impact varies from one individual to another.

Severe moral distress can have health consequences for nurses and they may face problems like anxiety, insomnia, heart arrhythmias and depression.

The code of ethics for nurses provides valuable guidance for ethical conduct at workplaces. It focuses on the basic values, obligations and duties of nurses and provides concise statements of the ethical values and interpretative statements that provide specific guidance for practice.

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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is the difference between an ethical issue and an ethical dilemma?
2. What are common ethical issues nurses encounter at workplaces?
3. Discuss the main ethical issues faced by nurses during COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Why is addressing ethical issues important for nurses?
5. Explain with example a situation of ethical concern involving confidentiality and nonmalefeasance.
6. What is moral distress? What are its consequences?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. _____ is a situation requiring a choice between two equally desirable or undesirable alternatives.
 - a. Legal concern
 - b. Ethical concern
 - c. Dilemma
 - d. Moral problem
2. Nurses should effectively address ethical issues to avoid _____.
 - a. Legal problems
 - b. Moral issues
 - c. Confidentiality
 - d. Moral distress
3. The principle of veracity is based on the concept of _____.
 - a. Confidentiality
 - b. Honesty
 - c. Autonomy
 - d. Compassion
4. A nurse, who does not pay much attention to ethical principles, displays _____.
 - a. Professionalism
 - b. Moral principles
 - c. Ethical insensitivity
 - d. Legal acumen
5. _____ have both aspects of right and wrong.
 - a. Legal matters
 - b. Professional values
 - c. Principles of veracity
 - d. Ethical issues
6. Nurses require _____ to deal with ethical dilemmas.
 - a. Clinical skills
 - b. Legal knowledge
 - c. Compassion
 - d. Ethical competency

Answer Key

1. c 2. d 3. b 4. c 5. d 6. d

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CHAPTER 13

Code of Ethics for Nurses

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- ➔ The necessity of code of ethics for nurses.
 - ➔ The salient features of the ANA code of ethics.
 - ➔ The interpretative statements related to ANA code of ethics.
 - ➔ The main provisions of ICN code of ethics for nurses.
 - ➔ The INC code of ethics for nurses.
 - ➔ The INC code of professional conduct for nurses?
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- ➔ Introduction
 - ➔ Importance of Code of Ethics for Nurses
 - ➔ Role of Nurses in Upholding the Code of Ethics
 - ➔ The American Nurses Association Code of Ethics for Nurses
 - ➔ International Council of Nurses Code of Ethics
 - ➔ The Indian Nursing Council Code of Ethics
-

KEY TERMS

Code: A set of rules that are accepted as general principles or a set of written rules that guides the behavior of people in a particular organization, profession or country.

Genetic information: Information about a gene, gene product, or inherited characteristic of an individual derived from the individual's family history.

Interpretive: Explaining or making understand the meaning of something.

Navigate: Steer through a situation, i.e., an ethical situation in nursing.

Performance appraisal: Regular review of an employee's job performance and overall contribution to an organization.

Transparency: In healthcare settings, transparency implies nurses share information openly with patients and families without hiding anything.



INTRODUCTION

The focus of the nursing profession is on providing safe and effective care to patients based on mutual trust and respect. Patients rely on nurses to provide them with compassionate and competent care. It is not possible for nurses to provide competent care without building trusting relationships with patients. Ethics play a critical role in building a trustworthy relationship between healthcare providers and their patients.

In healthcare settings, ethical practice is the key to delivery of compassionate, safe and competent care. Ethics help in building trustworthy relationships with patients by promoting autonomy in healthcare decisions, confidentiality, honesty, transparency and professional conduct. Nurses are expected to adhere to ethics and when they uphold the ethical principles, they are able to establish strong professional relationships with their patients.

IMPORTANCE OF CODE OF ETHICS FOR NURSES

Nurses cannot afford to indulge in unethical practice as lives of patients are at stake. Any unethical conduct by nurses, such as neglecting patients, providing substandard care or engaging in other kinds of unethical behaviors, can have serious consequences for patients' health and well-being. For instance, breach of patients' confidentiality can cause immense harm to them by exposing their personal and medical information to unauthorized individuals or organizations.

Adhering to the code of ethics helps to promote safe and competent care by ensuring that nurses act in the best interests of their patients and avoid actions that could harm them. It also helps to prevent nursing errors and misconduct that could compromise patient safety.

A code of ethics is important for nurses as it helps them to maintain the integrity and professionalism of the nursing profession. It provides a set of guidelines to help nurses make ethical decisions, which is particularly important when faced with difficult situations or ethical dilemmas. The code of ethics helps to ensure that nurses provide safe, high-quality care to patients and maintain the trust and confidence of the public.

However, ethical practice is not easy as the healthcare work environment frequently throws up ethical situations which are difficult to resolve. A code of ethics provides guidance for nurses in making ethical decisions and carrying out their responsibilities in a professional manner. It clearly states the values, principles, and standards of behavior that nurses are expected to follow. It also helps them to avoid unethical actions and navigate through tough ethical situations and resolve dilemmas.

It promotes safe and effective care by helping care providers to prevent nursing errors and misconduct that could compromise patient safety. A code of ethics also promotes transparency and accountability in nursing practice and helps to enhance patient confidence and build trust between nurses and their patients by ensuring that nurses act with integrity, honesty and respect.

ROLE OF NURSES IN UPHOLDING THE CODE OF ETHICS

The role of the nurse in upholding the code of ethics is to ensure that their actions align with the principles and guidelines outlined in the code. This includes being aware of the code of ethics and staying up to date with any changes or updates, using the code of ethics to guide ethical decision-making, advocating for patients and their rights, maintaining confidentiality and privacy, avoiding conflicts of interest, providing competent and safe care, and maintaining a professional and respectful demeanor.

There are several codes of ethics that are being followed by different healthcare organizations across the worlds. The most widely adopted codes of ethics have been included in the chapter, along with the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Nurses published by the Indian Nursing Council (INC) to provide

guidance to nurses in India. The American Nurses Association (ANA) has been among the leaders in promoting ethical nursing and it was the first to come out with a code of ethics for nurses in 1950. The International Council of Nurses (ICN) adopted a code of ethics for nurses in 1953.

THE AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION CODE OF ETHICS FOR NURSES

The ANA has been a global leader in promoting ethical standards and providing guidance and resources to help nurses to uphold the prescribed standards in their practice. The ANA has made significant contributions to the development of ethics for nurses and the code of ethics for nurses. The ANA first published its code for nurses in 1950, providing a framework for ethical practice for nurses. The code has been revised and updated several times to keep pace with the needs of the changing healthcare environment. The latest revision was carried out in 2015.

The ANA has also developed various position statements and guidelines to help nurses to effectively deal with main ethical issues at workplaces, including end-of-life care, confidentiality, informed consent and nurse-patient relationships. The Interpretive statements provide additional guidance and clarification for each of the provisions in the code.

The ANA code of ethics with interpretive statements has nine provisions in all.

The ANA Code of Ethics

Provision 1

The nurse practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and unique attributes of every person.

Interpretive Statements

Nurses should recognize the unique needs, preferences, and values of each person and respect their right to make their own healthcare decisions. They must provide care in a manner that is sensitive to the cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs of the person and their family.

They should work in the best interests of the patients and protect and promote their rights, such as informed consent, autonomy in decision-making and the right to receive safe and quality care. They should be able to identify situations where right to self-determination may be restricted or outweighed by rights, welfare and health of others. They should help patients in making informed decisions about their own care and respect their choices.

Provision 2

The nurse's primary commitment is to the patient, an individual, family, group, community, or population.

Interpretive Statements

Nurses should give preference to the needs and interests of patients over their own preferences and personal and professional interests. They should collaborate with patients' families and other healthcare professionals to prepare individualized need-based care plans and ensure delivery of effective, comprehensive and well-coordinated care.

Provision 3

The nurse promotes, advocates for and protects the rights, health, and safety of the patient.

Interpretive Statements

Nurses must be aware of the laws and ethical standards that govern nursing practice. They should not hesitate in reporting any unsafe or unethical practices that could potentially cause harm to patients.

Nurses have an obligation not to disclose personal and medical information communicated within nurse-patient relationship. Nurses should respect the privacy and confidentiality of their patients, uphold their right to informed consent, promote, and advocate for their right to receive safe and need-based high-quality care.

Provision 4

The nurse has authority, accountability and responsibility for nursing practice; makes decisions; and takes action consistent with the obligation to provide optimal patient care.

Interpretive Statements

Nurses should always keep in mind that they are responsible and accountable for their own nursing practice and all the decisions and actions they take while providing care.

They must work within their scope of practice and seek out appropriate resources and guidance when necessary. Nurses must keep themselves updated with the advancements and changes in their practice as they have a duty to maintain competence and constantly hone their professional knowledge and skills.

Provision 5

The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, maintain competence, and continue personal and professional growth.

Interpretive Statements

Nurses are responsible for maintaining their own health and well-being to provide safe and effective care. They should seek support to take care of their health whenever required.

They must maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct and practice with honesty and integrity. They should strictly adhere to their own professional boundaries and refrain from any conduct that could compromise or undermine their therapeutic relationship with patients.

Integrity of nurses may be threatened when they face pressure or to deceive patients, hold back information, tamper with records or misrepresent research aims.

Provision 6

The nurse, through individual and collective effort, establishes, maintains, and improves the ethical environment of the work setting and conditions of employment that are conducive to safe, quality healthcare.

Interpretive Statements

Nurses are expected to coordinate and collaborate with their colleagues, other healthcare professionals and healthcare organizations to create a work environment that is conducive to ethical practice and promotes patients' safety and high quality of care.

They have a responsibility to pinpoint and address ethical issues and conflicts that crop up frequently in their practice. They should advocate policies and practices that promote fairness and equality in the workplace.

Provision 7

The nurse, in all roles and settings, advances the profession through research and scholarly inquiry, professional standards development, and the generation of both nursing and health policy.



Interpretive Statements

Nurses must set their goals keeping in mind that nursing involves life-long learning, continuing professional development and dissemination of nursing knowledge. They should engage in research and scholarly pursuits to advance the nursing profession, besides enriching their own knowledge.

They should participate in professional organizations and activities that promote the advancement of the nursing profession. They should be proactive in facilitating development of healthcare policies and regulations that promote the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.

Provision 8

The nurse collaborates with other health professionals and the public to protect human rights, promote health diplomacy, and reduce health disparities.

Interpretive Statements

Nurses should work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals, organizations, government agencies and communities to promote equitability in healthcare and address health disparities.

Nursing actions can often have implications for human rights and it is imperative for nurses to make thorough assessments, weighing all possible options and possible outcomes, to avoid any unintended consequences. They may subordinate human rights concerns to other considerations only in exceptional circumstances or emergencies.

They have a responsibility to identify social determinants of health that influence the health outcomes of individuals and communities and support policies and practices that promote social justice, human rights, particularly the right to healthcare, and access to healthcare services.

Provision 9

The profession of nursing, collectively through its professional organizations, must articulate nursing values, maintain the integrity of the profession, and integrate principles of social justice into nursing.

Interpretive Statements

Nurses should actively participate in professional organizations and activities that promote nursing values, maintain the integrity of the profession, and integrate principles of social justice into nursing and health policy. They must engage in addressing legislative and regulatory concerns that have implications for the public's health and the profession of nursing.

They should also advocate for policies and practices that advance social justice and promote health equity for all individuals and populations. Global health and common good are ideals that can be realized when all nurses unite their efforts and energies.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES CODE OF ETHICS

The ICN adopted the Code of Ethics for Nurses in 1953. It has been revised several times and major revisions were carried out in 1973, 2000 and 2021, the latest.

The 1973 version contained several new provisions, which included obligation to maintain confidentiality and report unethical conduct by colleagues. In the revised version of 2000 the scope of the code was expanded by including issues related to patient autonomy, informed consent, and end-of-life care. It was a widely recognized set of ethical standards and principles for nursing practice.

The latest 2021 revision reflects significant changes in both language and content of the code. It addresses issues related to health inequities and the use of technology in healthcare. It highlights the evolving nature of the nursing profession and the rapid changes in the healthcare delivery systems.



The ICN code has four principal elements that provide a framework for ethical conduct. Each element is followed by charts that describe it with examples to assist nurses to translate the standards into action.

1. Nurses and Patients or Other People Requiring Care or Services

The primary professional responsibility of nurses is to patients (people requiring nursing care and services), whether individuals, families, communities or populations and foster an environment that respects human rights, values, beliefs and customs of patients.

Nurses demonstrate professional values such as respect, justice, responsiveness, caring, compassion, empathy, trustworthiness and integrity.

Nurses have to ensure that the individual and family receive understandable, accurate, sufficient and timely information in an appropriate manner to patients to facilitate informed consent for care and related treatment.

Nurses have an obligation to respect the privacy, confidentiality and interests of patients, they must not disclose their personal and medical information unauthorizedly.

Nurses should advocate for social justice and equity in resource allocation, access to healthcare and other social and economic services.

Nurses should ensure cultural safety by recognizing and addressing threats to delivery of safe care and also ensure that the use of technology and scientific advances are compatible with the safety, dignity and rights of people.

Nurses have to provide evidence-informed, person-centered care, recognizing and using the values and principles of primary healthcare.

2. Nurses and Practice

Nurses have to maintain their competence by pursuing continuous professional development and lifelong learning. They should practice within the limits of their professional competence and scope of practice and use their professional judgment when accepting and delegating responsibility.

Nurses must value their own dignity, well-being and health by adopting sound management practices and paying attention to occupational health and safety.

Nurses must maintain standards of personal conduct at all times and take appropriate actions to safeguard patients by promoting ethical conduct, reporting errors and speaking up when patient safety is threatened. They are accountable for data integrity to support and facilitate ethical standards of care.

They must uphold patients' right to give and withdraw consent to access their personal, health and genetic information. They have to protect the use, privacy and confidentiality of genetic information and human genome technologies.

In their professional role, nurses must maintain personal relationship boundaries, share their knowledge and expertise and support the professional development of student nurses, novice nurses, colleagues and other healthcare providers.

3. Nurses and the Profession

Nurses have to assume the major leadership role in determining and implementing acceptable standards of clinical nursing practice, management, research and education.

Nurses and nursing scholars have to actively engage in expanding current professional knowledge based on research that supports evidence-informed practice.

Nurses must sustain core professional values and through their professional organizations, participate in creating a positive and constructive practice environment to facilitate a nurse's ability to practice to their optimal scope of practice and deliver safe and timely healthcare.

Nurses must challenge unethical practices and settings and collaborate with nursing colleagues, other health disciplines and communities to engage in ethically responsible research and practice to help improve outcomes.

Nurses should be ever prepared to respond to disasters, conflicts, epidemics, pandemics, social crises and other emergencies. They should assess risks, develop and implement and resourcing plans to mitigate the impact.

It requires nurses to collaborate with colleagues, dissemination and use of research related to patient care, nursing and health. Develop position statements, guidelines, policy and standards informed by nursing research and scholarly inquiry. Practice ethical behaviors and develop strategies to deal with moral distress during emergent crises, such as pandemics or conflicts.

Emphasize the nature, function and importance of professional nursing associations and highlight the importance of membership in professional nursing organizations and promote participation in national nurses' associations.

4. Nurses and Global Health

Healthcare be deemed as a human right, accessible to all and nurses must oppose all forms of exploitation, such as human trafficking and child labor to uphold the dignity, freedom and worth of all human beings.

They should recognize the significance of the social determinants of health, contribute to sound health policy development and work toward the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It will require updating of knowledge and increased awareness about the UN SDGs for population health and strategies for effective participation of nurses to help achieve these goals.

Nurses should be aware of the health consequences of environmental degradation and strive to preserve and protect the natural environment. They should facilitate initiatives to reduce environmentally harmful practices.

They should collaborate with other health and social care professions and across countries to develop and maintain global health and to ensure enabling policies and principles. They should support the ethical and proficient use of social media and technologies to improve population health consistent with the values of the nursing profession.

THE INDIAN NURSING COUNCIL CODE OF ETHICS

The INC has also published a Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct for Nurses in India. The purpose of the code is to apprise nurses and the society of the minimum standards for professional conduct. It provides a basis to regulatory bodies for making decisions involving issues related to professional conduct.

The code has two sections, one dealing with ethics and other with professional responsibility, accountability, advancement of knowledge and conduct. The code of ethics has seven provisions and the code of professional conduct has six provisions.

Code of Ethics for Nurses in India

Some of the salient features of this code are as follows:

1. **Respects the uniqueness of individuals in the provision of care:** Provides care for individuals without consideration of caste, creed, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic and political status, personal attributes or any other grounds.

Individualizes the care based on beliefs, values and cultural sensitivities and facilitates participation of family members and significant others in the care. Recognizes the uniqueness of response of individuals to interventions, adapts accordingly, develops and promotes trustful relationships.



- 2. Respect the rights of individuals, helps in making informed choices:** Appreciating individuals' right to make decisions about their care, nurses should provide necessary and accurate information enabling them to make informed choices and respect their decisions.
Nurses protect the public from misinformation and misinterpretations and champion the cause of special provisions to protect vulnerable individuals and groups.
- 3. Respects individuals' right to privacy, maintain confidentiality and share information judiciously:** Maintains confidentiality of privileged information except in life-threatening situations. Obtain informed consent and maintain anonymity when information is required for quality assurance, academic or legal reasons. Limit the access to all personal records written and computerized to authorized persons only.
- 4. Nurses have to maintain competence to ensure quality nursing care:** Care can only be provided by registered nurses, it is essential to ensure quality of care. Nurses must strive to uphold the standards of care to maintain quality of nursing care.
They should focus on continuing education, initiate and utilize all opportunities for self-development. Nurses should value research as a means of development of the nursing profession and participate in research adhering to ethical principles.
- 5. Nurses have to practice within the framework of ethical, professional and legal boundaries:** It is mandatory for nurses to adhere to code of ethics and code of professional conduct developed by Indian Nursing Council. They must have knowledge of relevant laws and practice accordingly.
- 6. Nurses have to work harmoniously with members of the health team:** Nurses must be good team members and they should appreciate team efforts in providing healthcare. They have to cooperate and collaborate with healthcare team members to provide need-based care.
- 7. Nurses must reciprocate the trust invested in the nursing profession by the society:** Nurses should maintain high standards of professional conduct and demonstrate personal etiquettes and professional attributes in all dealings.

Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in India

Some of the salient features of this code are as follows:

- Professional responsibility and accountability:** Nurses are expected to maintain the highest level of professional integrity, uphold the dignity and rights of patients, and maintain confidentiality. They should maintain standards of personal conduct and carry out responsibilities within the framework of the professional boundaries.
They are accountable for their own decisions and actions and have an obligation to maintain practice standards set by the Indian Nursing Council. They have the responsibility to provide adequate information to patients to help them make informed choices.
- Nursing practice:** Nurses should provide safe, effective, and compassionate care to patients and their families, and be accountable for their actions and decisions. They must treat patients and their families with human dignity and provide care in accordance with set standards. They should engage in culturally safe and healthy practices and discourage harmful practices.
They have an obligation to present a realistic truthful account in all situations to facilitate autonomous decision-making and encourage participation of patients, their family members and significant others in the care.
In situations where the care needs exceed the nurses' competence, they must consult, collaborate and follow-up appropriately.
- Communication and interpersonal relationships:** Nurses have to maintain effective interpersonal relationships with individuals, families and communities. They must uphold the dignity of team members and appreciate their professional role. They should cooperate with other health professionals to meet the needs of the individuals, families and communities, if required.

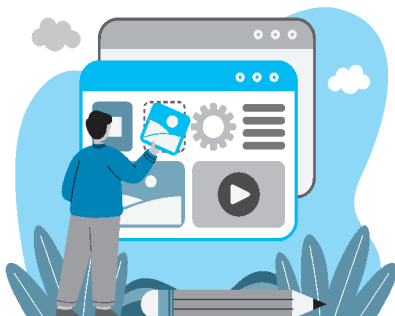
- Valuing human being:** Nurses are responsible for protecting individuals from harmful unethical practices, they should take appropriate decisions based on conscience in the best interest of individuals in such situations. They should respect the cultural, religious, and social beliefs of patients and their families, and provide care that is sensitive to their needs.

They must support individuals’ right to speak for themselves on issues affecting their health and welfare and respect the choices made by them.
- Management:** Nurses must ensure equitable allocation and utilization of resources and facilitate work culture conducive to achieve the organizational goals. They should be aware of individual competence and use their judgment while accepting and delegating responsibility.

They should communicate clearly using appropriate channels, participate in performance appraisal and evaluation of nursing services and involve actively in policy decisions to ascertain accessibility of services.
- Professional advancement:** Nurses are expected to continuously develop and maintain their professional knowledge, skills, and competence through lifelong learning. They should contribute to the development of nursing practice and take responsibility for updating and upgrading their own knowledge and competencies. They should participate in determining and implementing quality care and in research to enrich their of professional knowledge.

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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. Why is a code of ethics important for nurses?
2. What is the role of code of ethics for nurses in ensuring quality of healthcare?
3. What are the main provisions of ANA code of ethics?
4. What is the focus of ICN code of ethics?
5. What is the role of the nurse in upholding the code of ethics?
6. What are the main features of INC's "code of ethics and professional conduct for nurses"?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **The first organization to come out with a code of ethics for nurses was the _____.**
 - a. International Council of Nurses
 - b. Indian Nursing Council
 - c. American Nursing Association
 - d. None of these
2. **The code of ethics for nurses is _____.**
 - a. A law to regulate nursing care
 - b. A regulation to guide nurses
 - c. A set of principles to guide nurses work behavior
 - d. None of the above
3. **The first code of ethics for nurses was adopted by ANA in the year _____.**
 - a. 1953
 - b. 1950
 - c. 1973
 - d. 1963
4. **The _____ has issued interpretive statements to explain the application code.**
 - a. WHO
 - b. UNICEF
 - c. ANA
 - d. None of these
5. **The code adopted by the _____ has two separate sections to deal with ethics and professional conduct.**
 - a. International Council of Nursing
 - b. American Nursing Association
 - c. Indian Nursing Council
 - d. None of these
6. **What are the likely consequences of violating the code of ethics for nurses?**
 - a. Disciplinary action
 - b. Loss of licence to practice
 - c. Legal action
 - d. All of these

Answer Key

1. c 2. c 3. b 4. c 5. c 6. d

CHAPTER 14

Ethics in Nursing Research

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- The evolution and importance of ethics in research.
 - Rights of human subjects involved in medical research.
 - Concept of informed consent.
 - Role of ethics committee.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Role of Ethics in Research
 - Codes for Ethical Decision-Making
 - Research Ethics Committee to Ensure Compliance
 - Nursing Research Guidelines in 2016
-

KEY TERMS

Beneficence: The welfare of participants must get priority over the interests of the researchers, society and advancement of science.

Ethics: A set of moral principles that helps to differentiate between right and wrong in human behavior.

Helsinki declaration: Code of ethics for research framed by World Medical Association with core principle that the well-being of individuals and is more important than advancement of scientific knowledge and social interests.

Justice: The needs of the participants must take precedence over the interests of the researchers and the objectives of the study.

Nuremberg code: Ten basic principles for permissible medical experimentation involving human beings laid down in 1947 in the wake of unethical experimentation on human subjects.

Nursing Research Guidelines in 2016: The Nursing Research Society of India framed guidelines keeping in view the specific needs of nursing research to help the researchers.

Research ethics committee: An independent committee comprising experts that reviews and monitors research studies with human participants to ensure that they comply with international and local accepted ethical guidelines.



INTRODUCTION

Research is an important component of studies in any discipline. It helps to enhance our understanding of issues, address concerns and expand the knowledge base. It is a continuous process as creation of new knowledge is essential for advancement of science and tackling the emerging problems. The aim of nursing research is to generate knowledge to promote health, develop improved protocols to take care of patients, persons with disabilities, elderly people and help people to cope with their health problems.

Nursing research complements biomedical research, which focuses on developing new remedies and protocols for treatment and prevention of diseases. The objective is to advance knowledge and develop new strategies to improve patient outcomes. Nursing research takes care of clinical needs and it is an effective tool for determining best practices and developing better treatment protocols for effective delivery of healthcare. Research makes available all the information required for problem solving, making informed decisions and devising new interventions. Research has to be conducted for scientific validation of new treatment protocols.

It is imperative to maintain high standards in research, as quality matters the most and makes the efforts of researchers worthwhile. Ethics play an important role in ensuring quality of research work, particularly in healthcare settings, which mostly involve clinical practice.

ROLE OF ETHICS IN RESEARCH

Researchers are required to follow certain norms to ensure quality of their work. These norms also take care of issues like plagiarism, fraud and deception, ensure academic integrity, transparency in data collection and address privacy issues and other related matters.

In disciplines like nursing, ethics play an important role as it is not purely scientific research, it involves rights of patients, privacy, protecting dignity, justice, informed consent and other issues, which bring ethics into play. Most of the nursing research involves human participants, who may be exposed to various types of risks, with or without their knowledge. Different academic institutions and regulatory agencies have framed rules and guidelines to maintain high standards of research. In addition, there are professional codes to ensure ethical conduct.

Laws, rules and codes are not enough to address all issues that arise during the research process. Nursing research involving human subjects, which is mostly the case, throws up complex ethical issues. The researchers have to do meticulous planning and take into consideration the rights and welfare of individual subjects, groups and communities involved in the study. Ethics play a more important role when researchers have to conduct experiments, trials or gather sensitive personal information.

There are situations where law and ethics come in conflict and researchers face ethical dilemmas. It is essential to understand the role of ethics and have in-depth knowledge of ethical principles, the key to ensuring responsible conduct of research and to cope with such conflicting situations.

Evolution of Research Ethics

Research involving human subjects has been going on since long but the need for research ethics was felt only in the 20th century after cases of human exploitation became known during horrific Nazi experimentation carried out as part of medical research. The Nazi's attempted to achieve racial purity through biological means. The subjects were exposed to harm and a large number of them lost their lives. They were forced to participate in the studies, as they had no right to refuse. In recent times, major instances of unethical research studies, involving trials of measles vaccine (1991) and testing of experimental AIDS drug (2005), have come to notice.

The first code of ethics for research, called Nuremberg Code, was framed in response to the Nazi atrocities in 1947. An American military tribunal instituted criminal proceedings against 23 German physicians and

administrators for crimes against humanity. The judges confronted the issue of legal and illegal human experimentation. They laid down a set of ten basic principles for permissible medical experimentation on human beings, which later became famous as Nuremberg Code.

Nuremberg Code

1. Voluntary consent is mandatory. The aim of research, processes and risks involved has to be made clear to the research subject for obtaining informed consent, without any coercion or fraud. Onus of ensuring the quality of consent lies on the researcher.
2. The experiments should be for the larger good of society and human subjects should be involved only if there are no other methods possible to obtain such results.
3. Outcome of animal experimentation and knowledge of natural history of the disease or other problem should form the basis for the study.
4. Physical and mental suffering or injury to research subject must be avoided during experimental study.
5. If there is a priori reason indicating possibility of death or disabling injury, the experiment should not be conducted, except when physicians are also research subjects.
6. A favorable risk-benefit balance must be achieved and it should be ensured that the potential risk involved does not exceed the humanitarian importance of the problem.
7. Effective measures should be put in place to prevent any potential injury, disability or death.
8. Only scientifically qualified person with highest degree of competence should be engaged through all stages of experiments.
9. The research subject should be free to opt out any time if physical or mental state of the person makes continued participation in the experimental study impossible.
10. The researcher must be prepared to end the experiment at any stage if there is sufficient cause to believe that experiment will result in injury, disability, or death to the human subject.

However, it was self-regulatory in nature and left ample scope for researchers to conduct studies ignoring the ethical principles. The loophole was plugged in 1964 with the Helsinki Declaration, which proclaimed that in nontherapeutic research the well-being of individuals is more important than scientific and social interests, making protection of subjects paramount. The World Medical Association (WMA) has modified the Helsinki Code seven times and currently the 2013 version is in force.

Helsinki Code 2013

1. Medical research is subject to certain ethical standards based on the moral principle that the purpose of research can never take precedence over the rights and interests of individual research subjects.
2. Respect for all human subjects: Dignity, privacy, confidentiality of sensitive information, integrity and right to self-determination of participants must be protected.
3. The protection provided to research subjects in the code cannot be curtailed by any national or international ethical, legal or regulatory requirement.
4. Only qualified persons with the appropriate ethics and scientific education and training should engage in research involving human subjects.
5. In case a participant suffers harm in anyway, appropriate compensation and treatment must be provided.

Contd...

6. Benefits of research to science and society must outweigh the risks of human subjects.
7. Involve vulnerable groups in research only if it addresses their health needs and it is not possible to conduct the research in a nonvulnerable group.
8. Medical research involving human subjects must be justified thorough knowledge available in the scientific literature and appropriate animal experimentation.
9. The research protocol must contain a statement of the ethical considerations and information regarding institutional affiliations, funding, sponsors, potential conflicts of interest, and incentives for subjects. Provisions for treating and compensating the subjects who suffer harm must be specified.
10. The research protocol has to be approved by a qualified independent research ethics committee which must evaluate it in accordance with country's laws and regulations and international norms without any dilution of the ethical standards.
11. Participation in research must be voluntary and obtained after providing all the necessary information regarding the research like the purpose, anticipated benefits and potential risks, sources of funding, conflicts of interest and the institutional affiliations of the researcher.
12. The right to refuse to participate or to withdraw consent anytime during the course of study without any reprisal must be informed to the potential subject at the very outset.
13. A person incapable of giving informed consent should not be included, unless the goal is to promote the health of the group represented by the potential subject and in that case informed consent should be obtained from the legally authorized representative.
14. New interventions must be tested against the best-proven interventions. The use of placebo is permissible only where no proven intervention exists.

In India, the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) in 1980 brought out a policy statement, Ethical Considerations Involved in Research on Human Subjects, providing framework for ethical guidelines. In 2002, the council released the Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research on Human Subjects. A revised version of these guidelines was issued in 2006. Another regulatory authority, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) in 2001, issued the Indian Good Clinical Practice Guidelines for clinical trials.

The latest National Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical and Health Research Involving Human Participants, issued in 2017, include some new areas like public health research, social and behavioral sciences research for health and responsible conduct of research and research during humanitarian emergencies and disasters. It also expanded specialized areas like informed consent process, biological materials, bio-banking and datasets vulnerability into separate sections to make the guidelines more comprehensive.

Principles of Ethical Research

Ethics are a set of moral principles that help to differentiate between right and wrong in human behavior. Ethical principles reflect the moral philosophy that has evolved through the ages and set the benchmarks to determine what is good for an individual and the society as whole. In nutshell, ethics provide the bases for acceptable and unacceptable human behavior.

It is not difficult to understand how application of ethical principles furthers the aims and objectives of research. Ethical principles are against fabrication or misrepresentation of data and, as such, they help to promote knowledge, truth, accuracy and transparency in research.

It is in the interest of researchers to follow ethical principles as they help to protect the identity of subjects and ensure that they are kept out of harm's way. Ethics lay down that participation of subjects in research is voluntary. However, researchers inform the participants about the purpose, processes and the risks involved in the study so that they can take an informed decision.

Research conducted without adhering to ethical principles can potentially cause harm to participants. Ethics help to put in place the good practices for conducting responsible research and ensure that benefits outweigh the risks associated with the research.

Ethics lay down the basic principles for conduct of research studies in a responsible manner.

The three core principles of ethical research are as follows:

1. **Respect for Persons**

Respect for persons is the most important principle, which lays down the foundation for research participant's right to informed consent, privacy and confidentiality.

- **Informed consent:** Informed consent is a major ethical concept that helps to protect “the autonomy of research participants and their right to take independent decision.” In a way, it bestows the right to self-determination on the research subjects.

Poor illiterate people often give consent to participate in research without having any idea about the research project and the potential risks they may be exposed to. Informed consent means that a person gives consent after having adequate information and due deliberation, fully aware of its risk and benefits and the pros and cons of the decision.

- **Uninformed consent:** The researchers are bound by ethics to provide adequate information based on which participants can exercise their option to give or deny consent. The consent obtained without providing sufficient information about the goals of the project and the research process involved is a case of “uninformed consent”.

Respect for persons also helps to protect the identity of participants and safeguard their right to exercise their options freely and without coercion. Persons with physical, emotional, cultural and language barriers may have difficulties in understanding the researcher and they may fail to comprehend the information. The researcher must make the extra effort required to make the subjects understand the details of projects and the benefits and risks of participating in it. The freedom to withdraw from study at any stage should also be explained to them.

- **Right to privacy:** The notion of privacy and confidentiality has been in vogue in healthcare settings from early days, particularly with regard to patient-physician relationship. In nursing research settings, it has taken the form of research subject-researcher relationship.

The researcher must provide details of projects like aims and objectives, procedures to be followed and benefits to the subject, science or society by advancing knowledge and possible risks involved in the study. It is mandatory to disclose how the research participants will be compensated in case of any harm, invasion of privacy or undermining of dignity.

The researcher has to protect personal information, like social status, financial standing, health problems or other sensitive data provided in confidence. Extreme caution has to be exercised in sharing the data, if it was unavoidable. The respect for persons protects the subjects from exploitation at the hands of unethical researchers. Protection of the human rights of subjects have to be ensured at all times while pursuing studies for the advancement of knowledge.

- **Confidentiality:** It is essential to maintain confidentiality as healthcare-related studies involve persons infected with disease like AIDS, which carry a social stigma. It is mandatory for researchers to explain in detail to the subjects about the methods or mechanism to be put in place to protect their anonymity and prevent breach of confidentiality.
- **Noncoercive disclaimer:** The research subjects are mostly from the lower socioeconomic strata of society and they are often not in a position to refuse participation in the research study. Also, they could be pressured to give consent. It is incumbent on the researcher to provide the “noncoercive disclaimer”, clearly stating, “Participation is voluntary and no penalties are involved in refusal to participate.”



- **Right to withdraw from study:** Besides informed consent, the research subjects also have the absolute right to “withdraw from research study anytime without giving any reason”. The participants have to merely inform the researcher the decision about leaving the study and they may also give the reasons but it is not a binding. The researcher, in case of a study involving medication, must give detailed instructions to the research subjects about how to discontinue the medication safely. It is an essential requirement for safe termination of participation in the study. The research subjects must be clearly informed whom to contact in case they experience problems or have some queries or concerns after completion of the study.

2. Beneficence

- **Principle of beneficence:** In research ethics, the concept of beneficence implies that welfare of the research participant is paramount. The researchers should keep the interest and welfare of research subjects in mind as a goal of any clinical trial or other research study.

It safeguards subjects participating in research from potential harmful effects of medical interventions. The fundamental principle of beneficence not only mandates non-maleficence, ‘do no harm’, but also “benefit the research subjects and promote their well-being”.

The welfare of participants must get priority over the interests of the researchers, society and advancement of science. The researchers are duty-bound to promote good and welfare of all.

- **Principle of nonmaleficence:** The concept of beneficence also extends nonmaleficence. Beneficence makes it imperative for researchers to minimize risks to participants and maximize benefits of research, while nonmaleficence “do no harm” takes care of the potential risks the participants may be exposed to during the study.

Harm could be in the form of social stigma and discrimination that persons infected with HIV, STD, TB, mental illnesses and other such diseases may experience. Researchers have to make efforts to minimize the harm done to individuals, groups and community, especially while collecting data and its subsequent disclosure. They have to adhere to the principle of ‘nonmaleficence’, the ethical obligation not to inflict harm to subjects.

For example, while planning a research study, the researcher must explore the possibilities of generating the same knowledge in another way with lower risks to the participants.

- **Benefit-risk assessment:** The objective of all research is to promote benefit and welfare of all the individuals, community and society. The potential risk that the research involves has to be justified and weighed out against the social and scientific value of research to strike a favorable balance.

However, it is not easy to balance out risks and benefits of research due to the complex nature of potential harm, which is subject to the value system of the participants. The probability of discomfort or anticipated harm is difficult to assess as it can be physiological, economic, social or emotional. For instance, harm to dignity can occur when research participants are not treated as persons in accordance with their own values, preferences, and commitments but mere as means. They may feel hurt and humiliated.

The researcher must consider various possible consequences to make a proper assessment of the type and extent of risk associated with research to strike a favorable risk-benefit ratio.

The endeavor should be to maximize benefits of research in the larger interests of the society and advancement of science and minimize the potential risks to participants with mitigation strategies. The benefits of the research must outweigh the risk to the participants.

3. Justice

The ethical principle of justice mandates that researchers have to treat the research subject fairly. The needs of the participants must take precedence over the interests of the researchers and the objectives of the study.

Researchers may find it difficult to ensure equal treatment to individuals, groups or communities due to their varied socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds as their levels may vary vastly. Elderly people, children and persons with mental disability may not be in a position to give an informed consent.

However, it will be unfair to leave out or make it difficult for any individual or group to participate in the study. Random selection of participants avoids potential bias and unfairness in sample selection.

In clinical research, the research subjects are often required to spare time for study and it may have financial implications for them due to which they refuse to participate. The researchers must compensate for the financial loss caused to the subjects for participating in the study.

Equal treatment means ensuring inclusiveness in research and fair distribution of benefits and potential risks involved. The approach should be inclusive and individuals, groups and communities should not be denied opportunity to participate in research on the basis of gender, language, ethnicity, religion, disability or age, without potent reasons.

CODES FOR ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

Ethical principles are not easy to follow and it is a challenge for the researcher to adhere to the code of ethics and guidelines for ethical decision-making. Starting from Nuremberg Code framed in 1947, there has been a steady improvement in ethical framework with regulatory agencies and professional bodies coming up with detailed guidelines for observance of ethics in nursing research.

The next important development in evolution of research ethics was Declaration of Helsinki (1964). It was followed by Human Rights Guidelines for Nurses and other Research developed by the American Nurses Association (ANA) in 1968 and revised in 1975–1985. The ANA published Ethical Guidelines in the Conduct, Dissemination and Implementation of Nursing Research in 1995.

The Canadian Nurses Association came up with its own ethical research guidelines for registered nurse in 2002. The International Council for Nurses (ICN) also developed the ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses, which was updated in 2006.

In India, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) focused on ethics for the first time in 1980 with a policy statement on “Ethical Considerations Involved in Research on Human Subjects.” It came up with Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research on Human Subjects in 2000 and revised Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research on Human Participants in 2006.

The latest “National Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical and Health Research involving Human Participants” has been published in 2017. These guidelines are applicable to all biomedical, social and behavioral science research related to health involving human participants conducted in the country.

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE

As per the guidelines, all research proposals will be reviewed and approved by Ethics Committees (ECs), which are competent and independent in functioning. The ECs will be responsible for scientific and ethical review of research proposals to safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all research participants.

The ECs will comprise members selected based on their qualifications, experience and commitment in their personal capacities, and their willingness. Members are appointed for a particular role, they cannot substitute for the role of any other member who is absent for a meeting.

The role of Chairperson/and member secretary is an additional activity to their primary responsibility based on their qualifications. If the Chairperson is a lawyer, she or he can serve as both the lawyer and the Chairperson.

Institutions can set up multiple ECs to review a large number of research proposals. The concerned institutions will specify the scope, tenure and the policy for renewal of the EC. It will be ensured that members do not have any known record of misconduct.

The ECs entrusted with the initial review of research proposals prior to their initiation will be responsible for monitoring the approved research to ensure ethical compliance throughout the conduct of research. They are responsible for continuous review of all scientific, ethical, medical and social aspects of research proposals.

The mandate of ECs includes ensuring privacy of the individual and confidentiality of data, reviewing progress reports, final reports and giving suggestions regarding care of the participants and risk minimization procedures. In case of harm to a participant, the EC should recommend appropriate compensation.

NURSING RESEARCH GUIDELINES IN 2016

The Nursing Research Society of India has also issued the Nursing Research Guidelines in 2016. The Society felt the need for separate guidelines as ICMR guidelines focused on controlled randomized trials, animal and biomedical research, whereas nursing research involved nonexperimental quantitative research and qualitative research. These research methodologies required very specific guidelines. The guidelines are not mandatory to follow but meant to help the researchers how to design and conduct studies. It is more like a compendium of “do’s and don’ts” and the nurse researchers will find it very useful while carrying out studies.

The guidelines are compact and focus on six core areas, namely:

1. Professional Competence

Apart from broad professional knowledge and skills, a nurse researcher should be familiar with research methodology, application of concepts, processes related to various types of research.

Nurses should conduct research only with populations and in areas within their competence, based on education, training, supervised experience and professional experience. For conducting research involving populations, areas, techniques and technologies new to them, they should undertake relevant education, training and supervised experience before undertaking research studies.

Maintaining Competence

Nursing researchers must maintain their competence in the areas of research, particularly new methodology and techniques, by undertaking continuing education programs.

Delegation of Work to Others

Researchers should avoid delegating work to assistants with multiple relationships as it may lead to exploitation or loss of objectivity. Assign only the responsibilities, which such persons can perform competently.

2. Participant Priority

Interests of people participating in the research comes first. Researchers should treat them with respect, ensure their safety, safeguard their rights and dignity and obtain informed consent.

The participants must be informed about how the information will be used and the measures that will be taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality, in case information has to be shared. All records must be completed accurately as soon as possible and kept securely.

3. Preserve Safety

Ensure Safety

Researchers must work within the limits of their professional competence and take due precautions to ensure that research subjects are not exposed to risk or harmed in anyway.

As researchers are both a mentor and clinical supervisor to students they teach in classes, they should take care that they do not exploit the power differential between themselves and students.

Conflict of Interest

They should avoid taking on a professional role involving scientific, legal, personal or financial concern that create a conflict of interest and undermine their objectivity and ability to function effectively as a researcher.

Unfair Discrimination

There should be no unfair discrimination on the bases of gender, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, physical disability or other such factors with participants of the study.

Avoid Harassment

Researchers should refrain from conduct that may be construed as sexual harassment, offensive or creates a hostile environment or demeans the subject.

4. Promote Confidentiality

It is obligatory on the part of the researcher to take reasonable precautions to protect confidential information obtained through or stored in any medium. Only information relevant to the purpose of the study should be included in written and oral reports.

Disclosures

Confidential information may be disclosed with the proper consent of the organization, participant or a legally authorized person on behalf of the participant, unless proscribed by law. Disclosure of confidential information without consent can be made only if required under law for valid purposes like providing professional services consultations and protecting research subjects from harm.

5. Practice Ethical Code of Conduct

Informed Consent

Researcher should inform participants about the purpose of the research, tentative duration and procedures, rights to refuse to participate and to withdraw from the research anytime and the risk involved.

In case of persons are legally incapable of giving informed consent, permission should be obtained from a legally authorized person. All the written or oral consent, permission and assent should be documented in the prescribed format.

While carrying out experimental research, participants must be specifically informed that they must inform about the experimental nature of the research, procedures and potential risks involved.

Informed Consent for Recording Voices and Images

Informed consent has to be obtained from research participants recording their voices or images for data collection.

Dispensing with Informed Consent

The provision of informed consent may be done away with if anonymous questionnaires, naturalistic observations, or archival research is involved which will not put at risk the participant's employability and confidentiality.



Offering Inducements for Research Participation

Researchers should refrain from offering excessive, unjustified or inappropriate financial or other inducements to the potential subjects for participation in research.

Humane Care in Research

Despite ICMR guidelines and various other codes of ethics, cases of unethical research practices and abuse of human participants keep cropping up. Researchers should follow the three core principles of ethical research.

1. **Respect for persons:** Treat individuals as independent and show due respect. Those with diminished independence are entitled to special protection.
2. **Beneficence:** Participants should not be exposed to unnecessary harm and researcher should achieve a favorable risk-benefit balance by maximizing benefit and minimizing harm.
3. **Justice:** Researchers must act in a fair and just manner with individuals by ensuring that they are subjected to fair and equitable procedures.

Deception in Research

Researchers should not deceive prospective participants about research that is likely to cause physical pain or severe emotional distress. They should conduct research involving deception only if the use of deceptive techniques is justified and if no other alternative procedures are available.

Informal Resolution of Ethical Violations

In case researchers during the course of study realize that an ethical violation by another researcher has taken place, the best course is to resolve the issue by bringing it to the notice of individual concerned.

Reporting Ethical Violations

It is not possible to resolve all cases of ethical violation informally. There are instances where individuals suffer significant harm or face the risk of substantial harm by an apparent ethical violation, the researcher should take appropriate action, including reporting to concerned national committee on professional ethics and institutional authorities.

Cooperating with Ethics Committees

It is mandatory for researchers to cooperate in ethics investigations and failure to do so is in itself an ethics violation.

Improper Complaints

Researchers should neither file nor encourage others to lodge ethics complaints on flimsy grounds ignoring the facts. In addition, no individual should be denied of employment, promotion, admission and other benefits merely on the basis of an ethics complaint.

Duties to Environment

It has to be ensured that the research does not affect environment by strictly following the biomedical waste management protocol for disposal of all the waste products.

Data and Specimen Storage

All data and specimens obtained during research have to be stored securely for minimum of two years after publication and for six years in the absence of publication.

6. Authorship

Avoidance of False or Deceptive Statements

Researchers should refrain from making false, deceptive or fraudulent public statements concerning their own research, training, academic degrees and other credentials and the work of other individuals or organizations with which they are affiliated.

Publications or Research Findings

Researchers should only include the degrees earned from accredited institutions in the credentials.

Reporting Research Results

In case significant errors in data are noticed in the published data, the researchers should take corrective steps. Do not ever fabricate data.

Plagiarism

Researchers should scrupulously avoid presenting someone else's research work or data as their own, even self-plagiarism has to be avoided.

Publication Credit

Researcher should take credit only for the work they have actually performed or to which they have made a significant contribution. Holding an institutional position, such as department chair, does not justify authorship credit.

Reviewer

The researcher has proprietary rights on material submitted for presentation, publication, research proposal or tool validation. The reviewers should ensure confidentiality of such information and respect the proprietary rights of the researcher.

Use Standardized Tools and Instruments

Researchers must obtain permission for using standardized research instruments that are copyrighted by others.

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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. Explain the importance of ethics in research.
2. Write a note on evolution of ethics.
3. What is Nuremberg code?
4. Explain the term informed consent.
5. What is the principle of beneficence?
6. What is the role of ethics committee?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **What is plagiarism?**
 - a. Referring to published research papers
 - b. Making use of earlier data
 - c. Copying
 - d. Passing someone else's work as one's own
2. **Which of the following is not included in ethical considerations?**
 - a. Honest reporting of data
 - b. Avoid use of unpublished data
 - c. Plagiarism
 - d. Informed consent
3. **Using data published earlier as new research is:**
 - a. Ethical
 - b. Unethical
 - c. Permissible
 - d. Legal
4. **Research Ethics do not mandate:**
 - a. Top priority to interests of participants
 - b. Informed consent
 - c. Effective measures to ensure privacy
 - d. Compulsory participation
5. **Quality of research can be ensured by:**
 - a. Violating ethical norms
 - b. Withholding data
 - c. Disregarding intellectual property rights
 - d. Ensuring confidentiality of data
6. **A human participant can _____ withdraw from research project.**
 - a. Never
 - b. After informed consent
 - c. At any time
 - d. After 50% work
7. **Conflict of interest arises when researchers benefit:**
 - a. Politically
 - b. Academically
 - c. Financially
 - d. Aesthetically
8. **Privacy of participants can be ensured by:**
 - a. Online surveys
 - b. Assigning pseudonyms to participants
 - c. Personally visiting the participants
 - d. Not obtaining consent

Answer Key

1. d 2. c 3. b 4. d 5. d 6. c 7. c 8. b



UNIT IV

Ethics and Laws

Unit Outline

Chapter 15 Difference between Ethics and Laws

Chapter 16 Ethics and Values

Chapter 17 Illegal and Unethical

Chapter 18 Common Ethical Problems

CHAPTER 15

Difference between Ethics and Laws

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- Importance of ethics and laws in social control.
- Role of ethics in formulation of laws.
- Significance of ethics and law in healthcare.
- Origin, definition and purpose of law.
- Why nurses need to have a thorough understanding of law.
- Difference between ethics and laws.
- Complementary roles of ethics and laws.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Importance of Ethics and Laws in Healthcare
- Ethics and Laws are Interlaced but Distinct
- Difference between Laws and Ethics
- Difference between Legal and Ethical Standards
- Difference between Legal and Ethical Issues

KEY TERMS

Chaos: A state of disorder and utter confusion.

Civility: Polite, courteous and respectful behavior.

Infringement: Violation of law or rules.

Institutional mechanism: Institutions, organizations, systems and procedures put in place for carrying out a task.

Legal responsibility: The ways nurses are required to follow the rules and regulations prescribed for nursing practice.

Legislation: It is defined as “the process of making laws”.

Overlapping: Have some part or something in common.

Regulations: Set of rules framed to enforce law enacted by the government or other appropriate authorities.



INTRODUCTION

Rules and regulations have been integral to social existence from the very early times. Every society, community and social group had its own rules to govern the behavior of members to ensure peaceful coexistence. Even today, every country has its own rules and regulations that take care of social, economic, cultural and other areas to ensure an orderly and peaceful living. The citizens are bound to follow the rules without which modern societies cannot exist.

There would be chaos on roads in absence of traffic rules. If there were no taxation rules, the government would have no funds to maintain the huge administrative infrastructure and implement development projects and schemes for the welfare of people. All these formal rules have been put in place by enacting laws by government or other authorities.

However, all these laws have mostly been derived from certain socially acceptable values and practices that have evolved over a period.

These practices have been the main instrument of regulating behavior of the people when there were no formal rules. The informal rules and practices enabled individuals to understand and appreciate the difference between right and wrong, good and bad and desirable and undesirable behaviors. They served as guidelines and helped individuals to take the right action. These informal rules are known as ethics that sustained societies for centuries.

Laws and ethics have a complementary role in raising the standards of society, improving the quality of social interaction and enhancing righteous behavior, civility, peace, harmony and social order. Ethics, which evolved first in society, strongly influenced the laws formulated much later. The moral values and ethical principles have been duly incorporated in the laws governing the modern civilized societies. Ethics and laws are both means of social control and they govern the actions of individuals in every society on a daily basis. Every society has ethics and laws to govern various spheres of life. Laws based on value systems and ethics of societies are enacted and enforced by governments to regulate individual behavior and social relationships for orderly coexistence. The objective is to make the members of the society act in a certain manner that helps to protect the health, safety and welfare of individuals and promote the collective interests and welfare of the society as a whole.

The common goal of ethics and laws is to regulate human behavior in a manner that promotes an environment conducive to sustained civilized social existence. They play an important role in regulating various professions.

Moral values and ethics in human societies evolve over a long period. Societies are dynamic entities, which keep evolving all the time. Change is the only constant in human societies and the value systems change as societies modernize. The sense of what is right and what is wrong also changes with the value system.

For instance, in the traditional value system of ancient societies, issues like human rights, liberty, animal rights and equality were not considered important, whereas these are the core values of modern societies.

Ethics and laws have overlapping domains but each has its own unique position and role in exercising social control. At times, laws and ethics can go hand in hand and at other times, they may pull in opposite directions but both are equally important.

There are many examples highlighting the strong influence ethics have in shaping individual behavior and the collective attitude of societies. The Jain community, for instance, practices vegetarianism and the members of the community refrain from eating meat. There is no law that prohibits eating of meat but the members adhere to the value system and ethical standards set by the community for itself. In contrast, the practice of giving dowry continues in one form or the other despite the enactment of a law prohibiting it.

IMPORTANCE OF ETHICS AND LAWS IN HEALTHCARE

The healthcare sector is governed by various rules, regulations, laws and ethical standards, which are mostly derived from the value system, beliefs, cultural traits and sense of justice. Nurses are in the forefront and their primary duty is to provide safe and best possible quality of care to all the patients. The role of ethics and law is vital in healthcare as it involves the well-being of people suffering from various diseases.

Nurses and other healthcare providers have a legal and ethical responsibility to safeguard the interests of patients under their care. It is now well established that legal and ethical considerations are central to delivery of quality healthcare. Any lapses on these two areas will affect the quality of care and may cause suffering to patients.

Rapid advances in medical science along with growing awareness about human rights have added to the complexity of the healthcare environment. Doctors and nurses frequently face ethical dilemmas and an increasing number of complaints in the clinical settings. Nurses spend the maximum time with patients and they are the ones who are held responsible for negligence in patient care.

Such situations arise due to failure of healthcare givers to adhere to ethical principles. The basic ethics of healthcare mandate that nurses should do the right thing for the patient in every situation. Negligence or laxity in fulfilling the professional responsibility means failure to provide appropriate care and constitutes unethical behavior. The main objective of various codes of ethics for healthcare-related professions is to ensure the quality of care and protect patients from any harm, intentional or unintentional, by the decisions and actions of caregivers.

It is very important for nurses to know the difference between ethics and laws. Ethics shape the behavior of the individuals, whereas laws codify the rules and regulations of conduct. Laws normally align with the basic ethical principles but in healthcare settings, there are situations where ethics and law are in conflict. One of the major issues that nurses face frequently is conflict between nursing ethics and laws.

An ethical action may not be legal, while an ethical decision may be illegal. Besides knowing what is ethical and unethical, they must have clarity about legal and illegal actions.

Given the complex nature of healthcare, conflicts between law and ethics are inevitable. Nurses have to use their knowledge, expertise and experience to navigate through such dilemmas. Some nurses may prefer to adhere to ethics, while others may go with the law or strike a balance by combining ethics and law, if the situation allows. While taking into consideration both the legal and ethical aspects, nurses should make appropriate decisions in the best interests of the patients.

Definition of Law

In general, the term law is defined as a set of rules to promote certain behavior that is considered right and important by the majority of people for moral, religious, or emotional reasons.

There was no distinction between ethics and laws in the ancient societies. The ethical principles that allowed people to live together in social groups were considered right and appropriate and became socially acceptable standards for guiding individual behavior and governing societies. The State or rulers adopted the ethical principles which they considered important for the society and enforced rules accordingly. Thus, societies were governed by moral values and ethics.

As moral values and ethics are largely influenced by culture, geographical location, religion and other such factors, different social groups have their own value systems and ethics. What is considered good in one culture may not be acceptable in another.

Thus, ethics and laws have common origins and keeping in view the importance of moral values in human life, the thinkers and philosophers had been from the very outset advocating that laws must be rooted in morality of the society. The Greeks and the Romans maintained that law must conform to moral values and

the same view persisted through the middle ages as the Christian Church insisted that law must conform to Christian morals. There was no change in opinion until the 18th century.

However, with passage of time, there was divergence and laws which were not in conformity with the ethical principles came up. In the modern age, a law is valid and has the same legal force as any other law even if it goes against the moral values. A glaring example is the law enacted in many countries to legalize abortion, which is against morals and considered highly unethical.

In the modern age, laws are enacted by governments or other appropriate authorities to govern the society and are enforceable through institutional mechanisms. Laws are mostly derived from the ethics and moral values of the society to ensure better compliance of ethical guidelines. They help to reinforce the core values and beliefs of the society.

The term 'law' refers to standards of human conduct laid down by government or other empowered authority like Central or Federal governments, state governments and Panchayats. The nursing profession is governed by autonomous organizations like the Indian and State Nursing Councils which enforce rules and regulations related to the profession.

A wider definition of 'Law' means all the manmade rules and regulations by which society is formally governed.

A leading law and sociology scholar Donald Black defined the law as social control by the government. Social controls exercised by the government by regulating the actions of individuals, groups and organizations through various institutions like courts, police, revenue and other departments. He did not recognize customs and traditions as laws and cited the tradition of removing hat during the national anthem to prove his point. He maintained that the tradition was enforced by social pressure and not due to any governmental fine or punishment. The government was supreme, its authoritative rules and regulations were the final word and took precedence over the practices of individuals and private organizations.

The definition of law given by famous sociological theorist Max Weber also underscored the physical or psychological coercion as the basic concept of law. In the opinion of anthropologist E Adamson Hoebel, a law is required to be "regularly enforced, a law that rarely is enforced is not considered law." The coercive nature of law differentiated law from social norms.

The main objective of enacting various laws is to maintain social order, peace, justice in society and to provide protection to the people and safeguard their interests. A law clearly states what is permissible and what is prohibited, it lays down what a person must or must not do. The laws have to be obeyed by every member of the society. Violation of law is an offence and a punishable act, the offender can be penalized in the form of a fine or imprisonment or both as enshrined in the law. Thus, laws help in building a peaceful, just and civilized society.

Definition of Ethics

Ethics are a set of moral principles acceptable in a society that help individuals to determine what is right or wrong and act accordingly. Ethics reflect the moral standards and values acceptable in a society and guide individual behavior. Social behavior depends on the ethical standards, which a society has set for itself.

Every society has its own moral values and ethics are relevant only in the context of a particular society. Ethics help to implement the moral values by helping individuals to guide human conduct and in carrying out an activity usually described in relation to values. Ethics and value systems together represent the moral philosophy of a society. They provide the foundation for infusing morality among the people in a particular social group, society or community.

Ethics teach individuals how to act in certain situations and make better decisions and choices in conformity with the moral values of the society. Ethics deal with what is good and bad and the moral responsibilities and obligations. In the simplest terms, ethics outline the manner in which human beings should behave.

Ethics enable individuals to think in terms of moral values, make decisions and take actions accordingly. They help to improve the moral standards of societies and communities. Various personal or professional ethical codes also give the ability to differentiate right and wrong, and know what is fair, honorable, just and righteous.

ETHICS AND LAWS ARE INTERLACED BUT DISTINCT

The objective of both ethics and laws is to guide the people to behave in a manner that benefits them and all others around them. Ethics and laws are intertwined and neither law nor ethics can stand-alone. While ethics are commonly described as moral values in action, the laws are mostly devised as instruments to enforce the ethics.

However, despite having common objectives, ethics and laws are distinct in many respects though the basic objective of both is to exercise social control and improve the quality of life in society. In nursing, the purpose of code of ethics and various laws is to ensure safe and quality care to patients and maintain standards of healthcare delivery.

Though the terms legal and ethical are often used interchangeably, they are not the same. While morality is an attribute of the inner conscience of individuals which manifests in their ethical behavior, the law is only concerned with their external actions. Laws make individuals yield to the will of organized society, whereas morality subjects individuals to the dictates of their own conscience.

In the opinion of Australian legal scholar George W Paton, “law, positive morality and ethics are overlapping circles which can never entirely coincide. If the law lags behind popular standards, it falls into dispute. If the legal standards are too high, there are great difficulties of enforcement. There may be distinction between law and morals but not a separation.”

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LAWS AND ETHICS

Laws are enacted through legislation by governments or other authorities to help maintain social order, achieve social and economic objectives and promote welfare of the people. Ethics evolve over a period and help the people to decide what is right and what is wrong. Ethical principles help to set standards of acceptable behavior in societies.

The most significant aspect that differentiates laws from ethics is the provision of punishment. Law is coercive and aims to maintain peace, harmony and order in the society by imposing penalties for the infringement of rules. One will not be punished for not following the social ethics, which are observed voluntarily by individuals. There is no provision of punishment for violation but those indulging in unethical acts may suffer the embarrassment on being branded as immoral and looked down upon by others in the society.

Further, laws are applicable uniformly to all but ethics emerge from an individual’s awareness about right and wrong and may vary from one person, organization and geographical location to the other. Thus, ethics cannot be observed universally. However, laws are enacted after much debate and discussions and do not change frequently. Laws are applicable uniformly in a specific jurisdiction and everyone is obliged to follow.

Another significant difference is that laws are not only an effective means of social control but also instruments of social change because of their coercive and authoritative nature in comparison to ethics. Over the years, a number of laws have been enacted to end undesirable social traditions and practices.

The motivation to observe ethical principles comes from within but laws are implemented through institutional mechanisms. Ethics are followed voluntarily, while laws are enforced by state authorities. Ethics are broader in commitment to proper behavior in comparison to law.



Laws deal with outward behavior of individuals, while morals depend on their inner resolve and willpower. The personal ethical standards individuals set for themselves are much higher compared to the woefully low levels of legal compliance.

Ethics and Laws are Essential

Law and ethics are both essential as they have a supportive role in promoting righteous behavior, peace, harmony and order in societies and communities. They complement each other in raising the moral standards of society, though some of the laws may not conform to ethics at times.

Ethics and laws together help to maintain peace, harmony and civilized conduct without which community living is not possible. Ethics provide the basic principles for framing laws to help maintain social order. Some laws may be unethical and their implementation may be difficult. Laws devoid of ethics may pose problems in enforcement.

Healthcare professionals are required to adhere to law but in practical situations that is not all. Ethics go beyond the law and guide their conduct in situations where a law or legal rules are not applicable. Some laws are not based on ethics or go squarely against ethics and morals. For instance, the anti-begging laws enacted by many states to ban beggary are against the traditional practice of seeking and giving alms. It was a socially accepted practice in India and considered ethical as such, the laws criminalizing begging go against the ethics.

However, enactment of laws is essential to carry out social reforms in line with the increasing focus on human rights, gender equality, freedom of speech, right to liberty and other rights that have emerged as the core values of modern society.

Ethics are derived from moral values and ethical decision-making comes from within depending on the personal sense of morality of individuals. Laws provide the legal framework to enforce ethical values and to help regulate professions and the society.

In healthcare settings, there can be four possible scenarios. The action of a nurse may be:

1. Ethical and legal
2. Ethical but illegal
3. Unethical but legal
4. Unethical and illegal

Failure to comply with either the law or the ethics has vastly different implications for the nurses. Violation of law is not permissible, it is a punishable act and the offender can be fined or imprisoned. However, failure to adhere to ethics does not attract any sanctions or punitive action, it may just inflict public shame and social censure.

Thus, unlike morality, law has the power of the state for enforcement behind it. It is important for nurses to be fully aware of what is legal and what is illegal, in addition to ethical awareness. Illegal actions may have serious implications for their career and may lead to lawsuits.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEGAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

It is quite clear that laws and ethics are different as violation of the former attracts penalty but the violation of the other is not.

Ethical standards may vary, depending on the moral values of individuals, which vary from one person to another. There is no compulsion to follow the ethical standards as they are founded on the morality of the society. Statutory laws that regulate the nursing practice set the legal standards. Nurses have to be aware of their legal responsibilities as infringement of law is a punishable offense but breach of ethical standards entails no penalty.

Ethical standards are in an abstract form, while rules and regulations are documented in writing. Another important difference is that ethical standards are usually more relevant in smaller areas, whereas laws are more suitable for larger areas.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

As most laws are based on ethics, legal and ethical issues often overlap, posing difficulties in differentiating the two. However, ethical and legal issues are two different aspects and have to be addressed in different ways. Healthcare professionals strive to make decisions that are ethical and legal but in practice there are tricky situations with possibilities of violating the ethics or the law. In healthcare settings, legal can be unethical and ethical can be illegal. The issue of euthanasia provides a glaring instance, it is widely considered ethical but it is illegal in most countries. Healthcare professionals need to have knowledge about the laws and the legal implications of every decision they make.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues emerge from moral values on the basis of which healthcare professionals have to evaluate situations and make their own judgments about right and wrong to make a choice. Thus, ethical issues are also guided by and subject to the sense of right and wrong of individuals. Ethical dilemmas arise when the choices are not very clear. The code of ethics does provide guidance to resolve ethical issues but ultimately the knowledge, ethical awareness and experience of the nurses that counts in the practical situations. Nurses have to handle such situations with ethical fortitude to safeguard the interests and the well-being of patients and maintain the quality of healthcare.

Ethical dilemmas the nurses often face, involve the issue of establishing professional boundaries as while taking care of patients they may at times get too close to them. In such situations, they should not encourage patients and refrain from accepting gifts, entering a romantic relationship or taking any other benefits as such conduct is outrightly unethical.

Legal Issues

Legal issues arise due to noncompliance of laws or situations that involve application of legal principles. Such issues usually attract penalties and can lead to serious consequences for nurses.

Divergence from the standard care, performing procedures beyond the scope of practice, causing injury to patient, negligence in duty, breach of confidentiality, disclosure of private information and other such mistakes may lead to legal issues.

It is very likely that nurses may not be aware of all such legal issues, unless they are well versed with the laws governing nursing practice and keep themselves updated. Lack of awareness about legal issues may land them in trouble and in some cases there could be a serious fallout for their professional career.

ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is the importance of ethics and laws in social control?
2. What is the significance of ethics and law in healthcare settings?
3. Explain how ethics and law are intertwined and still distinct.
4. What are the major differences in ethics and laws?
5. Why are law and ethics essential?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Tick the correct option.**
 - a. Ethics more important than laws
 - b. Laws are more important than ethics
 - c. Ethics and laws are both important
 - d. Neither ethics nor laws are important
2. **Tick the wrong statement.**
 - a. Ethics and laws are rooted on morality
 - b. Ethics and laws have the same objective
 - c. Ethics and laws are means of social control
 - d. Ethics and laws are not distinct
3. **Tick the correct option. The anti-begging law is considered:**
 - a. Ethical and legal
 - b. Ethical but illegal
 - c. Unethical but legal
 - d. Unethical and illegal
4. **Violation of the ethical principles:**
 - a. Can be penalized imposing a fine
 - b. May cause social embarrassment
 - c. May result in imprisonment
 - d. Can be penalized with a fine and imprisonment
5. **Tick the correct option. Who said “a law that rarely is enforced is not considered law?”**
 - a. Max Weber
 - b. E Adamson Hoebel
 - c. Donald Black
 - d. George W Paton
6. **Tick the wrong option.**
 - a. Ethics shape behavior of individuals
 - b. Ethics are followed voluntarily
 - c. Ethics are coercive in nature
 - d. Ethics are in an abstract form

Answer Key

1. c 2. d 3. c 4. b 5. b 6. c



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CHAPTER 16

Ethics and Values

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- ➔ Importance of ethics and values.
 - ➔ Role of ethics and values in nursing practice.
 - ➔ Significance of ethics and values in healthcare.
 - ➔ How values influence conduct of individuals.
 - ➔ Key nursing values.
 - ➔ Role of ethics in decision-making.
 - ➔ The subfields of ethics.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- ➔ Introduction
 - ➔ Importance of Values and Ethics for Nurses
 - ➔ Values
 - ➔ Ethics
-

KEY TERMS

Articulate: Able to express things easily and clearly.

Authoritarian: Favoring complete subjection to authority, opposed to freedom.

Ethnicity: A large group of people with the same national, racial, or cultural origins.

Inextricably: In a manner that they cannot be considered separately.

Intricately: In a complicated way that is difficult to understand.

Normative: Creating or stating particular rules of behavior.

Paramount: More important than other things.



INTRODUCTION

Ethics and values are important features that sustain human societies. They are the guiding principles, which help the individuals to differentiate right and wrong and make decisions. Societies are a web of relationships and they cannot exist without morals and ethics. The behavior of individuals is governed by their values and ethics and helps them to make the right choices and take the right decisions. The actions of individuals are rooted in their ethics and values.

Values and ethics are the cornerstones that make nursing one of the most trusted professions. They are intricately linked, and they together shape the behavior of individuals and groups. Every profession has its basic standards called professional values, which serve as the guidelines for the members to show professionalism in their work behavior and ensure high standards of service.

Personal values are no less important in influencing work behavior as professional values are rooted in personal values. Thus, the work behavior of professionals is influenced by both professional values and personal values.

However, the impact of personal values can be positive or negative. Personal values like honesty, trust, integrity and loyalty can make a positive impact on work behavior but a conflict in personal and professional values can affect performance and lead to job dissatisfaction. Personal values are acquired over a period through social interaction and they are influenced by family, culture, religion, environment and education. The process is long drawn that continues throughout an individual's life.

Personal values do change with time. For instance, individuals born in a vegetarian family grow up as a strict vegetarian and abhor nonvegetarian food as it goes against their value system. However, as an adult they move out from the family to take jobs and find themselves in the company of nonvegetarian colleagues. Over a period socializing with friends and colleagues in the new environment, some of them may start relishing nonvegetarian food and become nonvegetarian.

Professional values are standards for action that are accepted by professional groups and individuals, and are used to evaluate the integrity of the individual or organization. Professionals, particularly in the field of healthcare, are able to perform much better when their personal values are consistent with the professional values and standards of conduct. Nurses, who have a pivotal role in patient care, are more likely to establish trustworthy relationships with the clients and have genuine interaction to freely discuss with them their priorities and reservations regarding treatment plans.

IMPORTANCE OF VALUES AND ETHICS FOR NURSES

Values play an important role in any profession and nursing being one of the most trusted professions is no exception. Nursing is strongly rooted in ethics and values, which are articulated in the code of ethics. Nurses have to be well versed with ethics, as they will frequently face ethical issues at the workplaces. Professionalism requires nurses to have a good understanding of the concepts and theories of ethics. They have an obligation to carry out their professional practice in an ethical manner. Ethical knowledge is necessary for professional competence. It enables nurses to listen to and appreciate the viewpoint of others, and assess situations dispassionately. Ethical competence is central to the nursing profession and a prerequisite for nurses who are accountable for their actions to the patients and open to public scrutiny.

A good grounding in ethics is essential, as nurses require ethical reasoning ability to justify their moral position. It will also help nurses to make better decisions as application of ethical principles enables them to view situations from multiple perspectives, taking into consideration the cultural background of patients and other relevant factors essential for ensuring safe care. Ethical conduct helps nurses to build trustworthy relationships with patients and they are in a better position to address their spiritual and moral concerns.

Patient advocacy is an important function that nursing professionals are required to perform for delivery of safe care. Nurses have the responsibility to protect the legal and moral rights of patients in ethical situations. Ethical competence helps them to identify the ethical issues and effectively champion the cause of the patients.

Ethical proficiency is a core competency that nurses must acquire to effectively and efficiently discharge their responsibility of providing safe patient care. The inability of nurses to make ethical decisions due to threat of lawsuits or perceived limitations of healthcare environment, which require nurses to work in teams comprising physicians, administrators or colleagues, may cause moral distress. However, ethically proficient nurses are able to overcome such situations, being confident about their decisions. They rely on ethical reasoning to explain and justify their actions in a logical manner to all concerned. Ethical conduct at workplaces empowers and enables nurses to discuss issues relating to patient care with other members of teams and avoid situations that may cause moral distress. They are clear about their choices and priorities in decision-making and more efficient and effective in performing their duties.

VALUES

Values are the fundamental beliefs, which are very important to an individual or a social group. The value system of individuals, communities and organizations reveals their priorities. Values motivate individuals to act in a particular way and indicate the intention behind their attitudes and actions.

Values are the moral principles and beliefs about which individuals or social groups feel strongly. In general, values are considered the accepted moral standards of individual and collective human behaviors in the society. Value reflects the worth, importance or usefulness of some object, idea, attitude or behavior. It is the capacity of an object, idea, attitude or behavior to satisfy a human need or desire.

Individuals acquire values from the social environment, family, school and community, and they are predisposed to imbibe the values they are raised with. It is natural for individuals to have a strong faith in the value system of the community and culture they are born and brought up.

Values may be classified as positive and negative, if a value is regarded to be good, it is positive whereas a negative value is considered as evil. While values may vary from one individual, community or organization to the other but there are certain universal values which are common. Values like truth, honesty and freedom are common and cherished by all. Value systems lend direction to life and provide the basis of behavior in communities and social groups.

Values are the compelling cultural elements and show the differences in various cultures. Some values are retained, while others are lost over a period. The continuity and permanence of these values depend on general acceptance and internalization by individuals.

Some values are universal, accepted in every culture, and considered essential for sustenance of human societies. Kindness, truth, honesty, respect, benevolence, tolerance, peace and justice are universal human values that are accepted across human societies.

Values have inherent worth but all the values are not universally accepted. For instance, freedom of speech is important in the value systems of democratic countries like the United States of America and United Kingdom and guaranteed by law but in authoritarian regimes like China, people do not have the right of free speech.

Similarly, values vary from one person to the other. While truth and honesty are core values in almost every society, still some people do not have any qualms in telling lies to friends or cheating in examinations. Success in examinations is important for everyone. Some individuals study hard to achieve it, others resort to cheating. The approach reveals the difference in the value system. Individuals who value honesty over success will not indulge in immoral acts of cheating. The attitude and conduct of individuals depend on the way they prioritize their competing values.

Values in Nursing

Values play a major role in shaping the attitude and behaviors of individuals and social groups. Values are enduring beliefs about the worth of an idea, action or concept. For example, some people strongly believe in altruism and value charity, others value money. These values will define their approach to life and professional attitude. Altruism is one of the important values in healthcare and an individual who values charity more than money will be more successful in the nursing profession.

Values are important in nursing because they exercise a strong influence in decision-making and actions of nurses. They play a major role in shaping attitudes and the process of ethical decision-making nurses engage in. For example, an individual who values money is more likely to indulge in the unethical act of accepting gifts from patients.

Professional values are inextricably linked to personal values, and often seen as an extension of personal values. One would prefer to have compatibility in personal and professional values as personal values and biases do creep into one's professional practice and influence work behavior. Conflict in competing values does create problems in establishing a therapeutic nurse-patient relationship, which is based on mutual trust and respect. Conflict of values may undermine the collaborative relationship between the nurses and the patients. A therapeutic nurse-patient relationship is the key to safe and effective patient care as it enhances patient well-being and improves health outcomes.

Nurses are under obligation to apply the values of the profession to provide an ethically safe care environment to patients. Nursing values are the moral principles and standards professional nurses follow at workplaces to ensure that they are acting ethically. Sharing of values among the members of the healthcare team enables nurses to deliver care more effectively.

Some important values of nursing profession are as follows:

Human Dignity

Human dignity is a core nursing value that plays a key role in development of ethics. It mandates that all human beings are to be treated with respect unconditionally, irrespective of their age, religion, caste, ethnicity, health or status. Valuing human dignity signifies that nurses not only have to treat patients with respect, kindness and compassion but also acknowledge and honor their right to choose the healthcare plans. Above all, nurses have an obligation to ensure complete privacy of personal information of patients.

Integrity

Integrity is vital in not only nursing but also every field related to healthcare. The degree of integrity nurses exhibit in their work behavior shows the strength of their character. Integrity in nursing means being honest, fair and moral in making decisions and actions. It involves possessing high moral principles. It is all about being truthful and honest in intent, doing the right things and respecting others who do the right things at workplaces.

An important advantage of practicing integrity is that nurses with a long-standing reputation of honesty and righteousness in work behavior, get the benefit of doubt even when they make a mistake. Integrity helps nurses to establish their credentials as dependable and trustworthy caregivers. Patients are likely to have more confidence in nurses who practice a high degree of integrity in performing their duties and they feel more comfortable under their care.

Trust

Nursing enjoys the status of one of the most trusted professions globally and trust is indeed a core value that influences the viewpoint of patients regarding the quality of the health care. Trust involves both confidence

and reliance. An individual who relies with confidence on someone becomes dependent and vulnerable. Nurses need to establish trusting relationships with patients to provide safe and quality care.

Patients will hesitate to share their thoughts, fears and reservations about the treatment plans unless they have full faith in the care providers. Trustworthy relationships help nurses to better understand the needs of patients and they cooperate in the implementation of treatment plans. Patient outcomes improve, as they trust nurses and provide correct information to them, answering all their queries without hesitation.

Altruism

Altruism signifies a selfless attitude and concern for the well-being of others, making decisions and acting with other people's welfare in mind without any reward or benefit in return. Altruism means putting the needs of others before one's own. It is the selfless concern for the welfare of others.

Altruism for nurses means being unselfish, considerate and concerned about the well-being of patients and other members of the healthcare team. One of the ways nurses can display this attribute in their work behavior is by advocating the cause of the patients to ensure best available treatment. While it may be easy to provide altruistic care to normal patients, it is a challenge to handle difficult patients who test their patience. Professionalism mandates that nurses must have the ability to provide compassionate and altruistic care to such patients.

Nurses should not look for acknowledgement or appreciation for the things they do going beyond their duties to help the patients. For example, nurses may even forgo holidays and give their personal time to meet the needs of the patients under their care but without any personal stakes.

Autonomy

Autonomy is an important value in nursing as it empowers nurses to make decisions regarding the treatment of patients independently, without having to consult the physicians. Essentially, autonomy allows nurses to exercise control over their nursing practice. Autonomy signifies the ability of nurses to think critically, make decisions and act in matters related to care of patients. Of course, the decisions based on their knowledge should fall within their scope of practice, training, and expertise. Nurses must have the ability to use professional knowledge and judgment to make decisions and take action to exercise autonomy.

In medical terms, autonomy also refers to the right of patients to accept or refuse healthcare treatments and procedures. This is more of an ethical issue that underscores that nurses should not influence the healthcare choices of patients. It encourages patients to make decisions regarding treatment options, the nurses can explain to them the pros and cons of their choices.

Compassion and Commitment

Compassion is a key component in delivery of quality care to patients. Compassion means nurses should show empathy and respect for the patients, listen to their concerns and address them promptly. Engaging with them in a nonjudgmental way, respecting diversity and culture, upholding their dignity, showing kindness and patience are all elements of compassionate care.

Commitment signifies a patient-centered approach; it is about putting the patients' needs above one's own and giving hope. Nurses can show their commitment by establishing strong therapeutic relationships with the patients through effective communication.

Commitment of professionalism requires nurses to upgrade their knowledge and be aware of latest advancements. It requires a commitment to lifelong learning that is reflected by their level of intellectual engagement in the work behavior.



Ingenuity and Curiosity

Independent decision-making requires critical thinking without which nurses cannot practice autonomy in work behavior. Ingenuity is a value that helps nurses to think critically, use their imagination to overcome challenging situations they come across frequently. However, to make effective use of their ingenuity nurses have to regularly update their knowledge and keep themselves abreast of the latest advancements in medical science.

Healthcare keeps changing with advancements in medical science and ingenuity entails application of the new acquired knowledge to ascertain which aspects of the healthcare services need to be changed to improve patient care. They can be innovative in creating strategies and treatment plans. Continuing learning to keep pace with latest advancements is a good strategy for nurses to practice ingenuity.

Curiosity is also an important value as it encourages nurses to keep learning new things and improve the skills to maintain a high level of professional competence. Curiosity spurs them to investigate and analyze concerns about treatment and ask questions without hesitation to learn more and more as members of healthcare teams.

Accountability

Accountability is not limited to nurses acknowledging their actions, they also have to take responsibility for the outcomes and admit and bring their mistakes to the notice of the supervisors. Accountability means being answerable for the decisions to patients, profession and one ownself.

Accountability is a vital value for improving the standards of healthcare. It is all about learning from mistakes, improving competency to raise the standards of profession and ensuring quality of patient care to ensure better outcomes. Nurses, who are aware of their accountability, tend to be more alive to work ethics and exhibit a higher degree of professionalism in their work behavior. Accountability encourages nurses to continuously upgrade their knowledge and improve competence.

Diversity

Diversity in nursing is a prerequisite to ensure quality of patient care. Valuing diversity helps nurses to stay open-minded and treat patients with respect and dignity, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic and educational status, nationality, physical features and political ideology. Awareness about diversity helps nurses to provide the kind of treatment patients need and make them feel comfortable under their care, which helps them to recover from their health condition quickly.

Nurses who value diversity are able to overcome cultural barriers and they are better placed in communicating with patients as they respect their beliefs, cultural practices and personal values. They are able to build trustworthy relationships with patients, the key to providing safe and quality patient care.

Empathy

Empathy is a core value as it enables nurses to see situations from the point of view of their patients. It helps them to understand the concerns and fears of the patients and know what exactly they expect from the healthcare team. They are able to win the confidence of patients and implement treatment plans successfully, which is helpful when educating them about suggested procedures and understanding their point of view. Nurses can exhibit empathy by explaining to the patients, the likely side effects of a particular medicine and its alternatives so that they are able to make informed choices.

Loyalty

Loyalty is a value of central importance in nursing as it relates to personal and professional relationships and influences the attitude of nurses toward patients and the healthcare facility they are working for. Nurses are expected to be loyal to the profession, the institutions that employ them and the society. They have to take care

of a multitude of loyalties, both as individuals and healthcare providers, due to the nature of their work that requires engagement with a large number of people, groups, communities and organizations.

The term loyalty signifies faithfulness, strong feeling of allegiance or support that is steadfast in the face of any temptation. In healthcare settings, nurses have to earn the loyalty of the patients, colleagues and the administration of the institution. A nonjudgmental approach and certain qualities like patience, resoluteness, flexibility, empathy and compassion help to promote loyalty.

Nurses also have to remain 'loyal' and committed to their personal values, ideals and aims. It is not possible to keep loyalties conflict-free and nurses have to often deal with conflicts of loyalties. Nurses can demonstrate loyalty by advocating the cause of patients, therapeutic engagement with patients and team members and ensuring highest standards of patient care. Workplace and institutional or employer loyalty creates a sense of belonging in the nurses and they benefit when the colleagues and employers reciprocate the loyalty. It helps to strengthen the bonding of nurses with colleagues and institutions that employ them. Similarly, when nurses keep sincerely working upholding the highest ethical and professional standards of healthcare, the patients feel they are loyal to them. The patients are at ease, as they know that nurses are working in their best interests. The bonding based on loyalty strengthens the nurse-patient relationship.

Professionalism and Excellence

Professionalism is an essential value in nursing, which enables nurses to carry out their main professional responsibility to deliver safe and high quality effectively. Professionalism in nursing means providing high-quality patient care while upholding values of respect, autonomy, integrity, and accountability.

Nurses have an obligation to provide best possible healthcare services and they can fulfil this responsibility by upholding the highest standards of professionalism. They have to persistently strive to enhance their knowledge and skills to deliver patient care of the highest standards. Carrying out nursing practice in a professional manner strengthens the integrity of the profession and enhances the role of nurses in the healthcare sector.

Unwavering commitment to professionalism goes a long way in the professional development of nursing and helps in relationship building between not only the nurses and their patients but also among healthcare professionals.

Desire for excellence is also a value of paramount importance in nursing as it drives professional development and ensures high quality care to patients. Excellence means outstanding quality that is appreciated by all and nurses can exhibit this value in their work behavior by providing excellent patient care and getting involved in treatment plans.

Nursing excellence creates an atmosphere that fosters greater interdisciplinary team engagement, which raises the levels of patient care, benefiting all concerned, the patients, the nurses, the healthcare team and the institutions they serve.

Social Justice

The value of social justice enables nurses to provide equal access to quality healthcare and treatment to all the patients, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, age, religion, ethnicity and personal characteristics, as mandated by law. This entails equitable distribution of all the available services, treatments and resources among the patients based on their needs.

Nurses demonstrate the value of social justice in their work behavior by offering equal and fair treatment to all patients, without bias.

Nursing is a noble profession and nurses do care about their own interests but their prime concern is to ensure benefit and well-being of the people who are sick. Social justice is an essential part of nursing as it helps all sick individuals to receive quality healthcare to regain health and wellness. Social justice translates to delivery of high-quality healthcare to all the people.

ETHICS

Ethics are a set of moral principles or rules that help determine what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. They influence the decision-making process and actions of individuals in specific situations and enable them to make the best possible choice from all the available options.

Ethics can be aptly described as the science of human conduct that helps to determine the propriety or otherwise of individual behaviors. While morals specify what is right and what is wrong, ethics govern the behavior of individuals and guide how to make morally consistent decisions in various situations in a systematic manner. Individual behavior is a balance achieved between two desirable but often incompatible competing values.

Ethics involve a logical study of right and wrong conduct and lay down a formal process for making moral decisions. Ethical decision-making entails a rational approach based on specific rules and principles to justify an individual's action in a particular situation. Ethics are universal rules of conduct that provide basis for identifying actions, intentions, and motives that are valued. Personal ethics and professional ethics both influence the work behavior of nurses. The objective of professional ethics is to improve the quality of service provided by professional nurses by guiding their conduct at workplaces.

Subfields of Nursing Ethics

Ethics can be broadly classified into three distinct subfields namely: Descriptive ethics, metaethics and normative ethics (Table 16.1).

Descriptive Ethics

Descriptive ethics is the study of the views of people about moral beliefs to know what people believe, how they reason, and how they act. Descriptive ethics or comparative ethics investigate and analyze what people think to ascertain how they actually behave in a particular circumstance of ethical concern or how they think they should act in a specific situation. It is the objective study of the ethics of a particular community, group or organization or any set of ethical standards.

As obvious from the name, this subfield of ethics describes the behavior of people and what moral standards they follow and present factual accounts of the moral values and beliefs regarding right and wrong, good and bad conduct, within different contexts. Descriptive ethics analyze what people think is right and use

Table 16.1: Differences between descriptive ethics, metaethics and normative ethics

Descriptive ethics	Metaethics	Normative ethics
It is the study of people's views about moral beliefs.	It investigates the origins and meanings of ethical concepts.	It is the study of ethical action focusing on what is morally wrong and right.
It is the study of morality and moral issues from a scientific point of view.	It is mainly concerned with the nature of ethical theories and moral judgments.	The central concern of normative ethics is how to determine the basic moral standards and how to justify the basic moral standards.
It is about what motivates prosocial behavior and what people believe to have overriding importance.	It is philosophical in nature as it explores the foundations of ethical concepts and morals and as such.	It examines the moral standards and analyzes the ethical theories that prescribe how people ought to act and attempt to create moral standards.

scientific methods to study how they reason, what motivates prosocial behavior, what people believe to have overriding importance, how people reason about ethics and how societies regulate behavior.

Thus, descriptive ethics involve narration of moral values, standards and conduct of people. Descriptive ethics also analyze and compare the moral practices of different societies to bring out the differences and similarities and study the development of the standards behind these practices.

Metaethics

Metaethics explores the origin and meaning of ethical concepts and is concerned with theoretical issues involving analyses of nature, language, concepts and methods of reasoning in ethics. This subfield of ethics deals with the definition of terms like 'right', 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad' to bring out the ethical sense of what is meant by being wrong or right. It crucially examines to what extent judgments are reasonable or justifiable.

Metaethics is the study of the meanings associated with the term 'ethics' and in what ways and to what degree the ethical claims are justifiable. It investigates the nature of morality and addresses the meanings of ethical terms like right, obligation, virtue, justification, morality and responsibility.

Normative Ethics

Normative ethics is evaluative in nature and involves prescriptive analysis of what people should do and believe. It is the study of ethical action aimed at determining which actions are right and wrong, or which character traits are desirable and undesirable and what actually has paramount importance for determining how we ought to act. Normative ethics investigate and analyze the ethical theories that prescribe how people ought to act. The subfield typically focuses on what is morally right and wrong and provides a framework for how one ought to behave in different ethical situations.

Often termed prescriptive ethics, normative ethics are concerned with basic moral standards and developing theories to justify the established norms. Normative ethics explore and analyze how one ought to act in terms of morality. Etiquette is considered similar to normative ethics; the only difference is that it is not of paramount importance.

There are two branches of normative ethics, teleological ethics and deontological ethics.

Teleological Ethics

The righteousness or wrongness of actions is ascertained by examining their outcomes. It presumes that morality of an action is dependent on its outcome.

Deontological Ethics

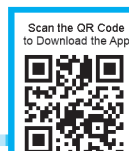
Unlike teleological ethics, this branch of ethics examines the actions to determine their goodness or badness, based on the rules and not the consequences. Normative ethics are important as they help to ascertain what is good and what is bad.



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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is the significance of ethics and values in profession?
2. What is the importance of ethics and values in nursing?
3. What are the main nursing values?
4. Explain the statement “professional values are inextricably linked to personal values.”
5. Explain how ethics influence the process of decision-making.
6. What is the difference between normative ethics and metaethics?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Ethics in nursing can be described as:**
 - a. Patient care responsibilities of a nurse
 - b. Medication carried out by a nurse
 - c. Rules for correct conduct
 - d. Attributes of an efficient nurse
2. **Nurses should _____ in their professional roles.**
 - a. Adhere to their personal values
 - b. Adhere to professional values and ignore their personal values
 - c. Go by the professional values but be aware of their personal values
 - d. Be aware of professional values but go by their personal values
3. **The principles based on experience, religion, education and culture that influence decision-making are called:**
 - a. Ethics
 - b. Professional standards
 - c. Morals
 - d. Values
4. **Ethics lay down that nurses are accountable for their decisions and actions to the:**
 - a. Profession
 - b. Clients
 - c. Community
 - d. All of these
5. **In patient care, autonomy is concerned with:**
 - a. Recommending the right treatment
 - b. Not allowing the patient to choose treatment
 - c. Respecting patient’s right to refuse treatment
 - d. Making the best decision in the patient’s interest
6. _____ **is the subfield of ethics that narrates a factual account of moral behaviors.**
 - a. Normative ethics
 - b. Metaethics
 - c. Descriptive ethics
 - d. None of these
7. _____ **is the study of ethical action focusing on what is morally wrong and right.**
 - a. Metaethics
 - b. Normative ethics
 - c. Descriptive ethics
 - d. None of these
8. **Whether to prolong the life of a terminally ill patient or go for euthanasia (mercy killing) is an example of:**
 - a. Metaethics
 - b. Descriptive ethics
 - c. Normative ethics
 - d. None of these

Answer Key

1. c 2. c 3. d 4. d 5. c 6. c 7. b 8. c

CHAPTER 17

Illegal and Unethical

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- Role of ethics and laws in healthcare settings.
- Importance of laws and ethics in ensuring quality of healthcare.
- Need for awareness about unethical and illegal conduct.
- Unethical and illegal actions.
- Violations pertaining to breach of confidentiality.
- Practicing beyond licence.
- Factors that undermine safe patient care.
- Drug diversion and its consequences.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Importance of Ethical and Legal Conduct
- Awareness of Unethical and Illegal Behavior

KEY TERMS

Fabrication: Counterfeiting, intentional unauthorized alteration of documents.

Falsification: The act of changing something, such as a document to deceive people.

Medication: A drug or any substance used to diagnose, cure, treat or prevent diseases.

Pecuniary: Relating to money, consisting of money or anything that can be valued in money.

Siphoning off: The act of dishonestly taking away money, material or other resources for personal use or monetary gains.

Stereotypes: A preconceived, often unfair and false, notion or a generalized belief about a particular group or category of people.

Swayed: To get influenced.



INTRODUCTION

Laws and ethics both play an important role in maintaining order in human societies. They are both the instruments of social control and serve the same purpose of guiding human behavior. Ethics evolve over a long period and set acceptable standards of behavior. They help individuals to decide what is right and what is wrong and conform to the acceptable social conduct in day-to-day life. In an ethical society, there will be no need for laws to exercise external control to ensure right conduct. Ideally, ethics and laws should go hand in hand but this is not always the case.

In the healthcare scenario, ethics and laws have key roles in ensuring high standards of care. They promote patient safety, maintain confidentiality, protect human dignity and secure the right to quality care by helping patients to make informed decisions regarding healthcare. Well-informed patients are in a position to choose the best treatment plan.

However, laws and ethics also differ in many ways in the manner in which they approach the common goals and methods adopted to achieve them. They have different sources of authority and enforcement mechanisms. Ethics and laws both have their own unique positions and they are both equally important in healthcare settings. Nurses encounter ethical challenges when ethics and laws are in conflict.

IMPORTANCE OF ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONDUCT

Nurses have the responsibility to adhere to ethical principles and comply with the law to provide safe care to the patients. Ethics provide a framework for moral decision-making, while law provides the basis for legal decision-making. It is important for nurses to be aware of both ethical principles and legal requirements, as they are a prerequisite for providing safe, effective, and ethical care to patients. Lack of in depth knowledge about ethics and laws may result in nurses inadvertently taking unethical or illegal actions that may have serious consequences for patients and their own professional career.

Violation of ethical principles will not only harm the patients but also affect the reputation of nurses and may lead to loss of trust in the healthcare system as a whole. A nurse guilty of unethical conduct could face disciplinary action by the controlling professional bodies like the nursing councils and boards. The professional bodies have the authority to take penal actions, including suspension or revocation of licence to practice, against the members.

While ethics provide scope for moral reasoning and discretion in decision-making, law is rigid and clearly lays down what is permissible and what is illegal. Ethical principles are flexible and their enforcement is often less formal and less severe than the enforcement of legal requirements. Failure to comply with the law can lead to serious consequences for the health professionals, which may include criminal or civil penalties, fines and suspension or revocation of licence to practice.

In short, unethical and illegal actions carried out inadvertently or by mistake, may have severe and far-reaching consequences for nurses. They must possess good knowledge about ethics and laws and have to be conscious of what is unethical and illegal that must be avoided.

AWARENESS OF UNETHICAL AND ILLEGAL BEHAVIOR

Nurses have to be aware of what is unethical and what is illegal only then they can guard against taking such unacceptable actions, which can undermine their professional integrity and embroil them in legal cases. Professionalism requires nurses to uphold ethical principles and fulfil their responsibility to the society by providing safe and effective care to patients.

In healthcare settings, ethics and laws do overlap but do not always go hand in hand. Nurses often face situations where ethics and laws are in conflict. What is ethically right may be illegal and what is legal may be

unethical. Nurses have a duty to promote health and well-being of patients and protect them from harm. They must keep it in mind all the time that unethical or illegal actions can compromise patients' safety and may cause harm to them. It is important for nurses to understand the ethical and legal aspects in every situation and be able to differentiate and pinpoint unethical and illegal actions that must be avoided.

Unethical and Illegal Actions

Some common unethical and illegal actions that nurses must avoid are as follows:

Unethical Actions

A majority of unethical actions pertain to autonomy, informed consent, confidentiality and professional boundaries.

Failure to Respect Patient's Autonomy and Facilitate Informed Consent

Ethics mandate that nurses should respect the autonomy of patients by facilitating them in making their own healthcare decisions. Nurses have the responsibility to provide all the information to the patients about their health condition and the treatment options along with benefits and risks involved so that they can make informed decisions.

However, healthcare professionals often violate the ethical principles as they fail to properly inform patients about the treatment options and do not explain the risks and benefits of the medical procedures in sufficient detail. Failure of healthcare professionals to obtain informed consent before starting treatment or performing a medical procedure without explaining the implications also tentamounts to unethical conduct. It violates the patient's right to autonomy and informed consent.

Similarly, unethical action occurs when a patient rejects a treatment plan but a healthcare professional still proceeds with it. In this case too, the patient's right to autonomy and informed consent is violated.

Discriminatory Behavior Toward Patients or Colleagues

Nurses are duty-bound to treat all the patients equally and fairly. Discrimination in healthcare is unacceptable in any form and it has to be avoided at all costs. Healthcare professionals must provide best possible care to all the patients, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, age, gender and other personal characteristics. Ethics make nurses responsible for providing nondiscriminatory care, treating all patients on a par. They have to be fair-minded and provide care without bias.

Any kind of discrimination in providing treatment to patients on considerations, like gender, caste, religion, community, age, economic status or ethnicity is unethical.

Denying equal access to medical services or information to patients, treating colleagues differently based on their gender, religion or other personal traits or using racist or sexist words toward colleagues or patients also constitutes unethical conduct.

Not reporting incidents of discrimination or harassment in the workplace or making snide remarks about a colleague or a patient is also unethical.

Gender bias is still deeply rooted in society and healthcare professionals are influenced by it. They are also swayed by gender stereotypes and often treat male and female patients differently based on their biases. Their discriminatory approach may result in denial of certain medical treatment and procedures to women or they may not take the symptoms or complaints of female patients seriously because of their ingrained gender bias.

Discrimination also takes place because of age and physical disability as nurses fail to respect age and tend to neglect the elderly patients. The disabled patients are denied access to equitable care when nurses fail to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their specific needs.

Breach of Confidentiality and Privacy

Nurses are duty-bound to protect the medical and personal information of patients. Violation of patients' confidentiality and privacy can have serious consequences for patients, including financial loss, social stigma and emotional distress, and undermine public trust in the healthcare system.

However, breach of confidentiality is a common unethical action that can take place in many ways. Sharing personal health information with unauthorized individuals or organizations without specific consent of the patient, failure to secure medical records, discussing a patient's health condition in front of family members, friends, hospital staff and others, who are not involved in care, or using personal health information for purposes other than treatment are all unethical actions.

Failure to secure electronic medical records from unauthorized access, using patient's personal information for nonmedical purposes or selling patients' data for pecuniary or other gains are all serious unethical acts that breach confidentiality and privacy. Nurses must make a conscious effort to fulfil their responsibility to protect sensitive information of patients by taking the required measures.

Fabrication of Medical Records

Falsification and fabrication of medical records is not only unethical but also illegal and can have serious implications for healthcare professionals. This is an important issue for nurses who have a key role in maintaining patients' medical records, writing reports and other documentation. The act of altering or erasing previously recorded patient information or creating of false records with the purpose of deceiving others amounts to falsification and fabrication of medical records.

Adding or removing information to make changes in the medical record of patients and fabricating or falsifying diagnostic test reports or examination findings is unethical. Additions in medication records to falsely show that a patient received treatment, which was not provided, is one example of unethical conduct.

It is important to record all the relevant information as failure to do so is unethical and can have serious implications for the safety of patients and the quality of healthcare.

Backdating or changing time in medical records is another unethical way to cover up lapses in treatment. The objective of such changes is to deceive by making it appear that a certain diagnostic procedure, test or treatment was performed but in reality it was not.

Often the consent forms of patients and other legal documents related to treatment are also falsified. Nurses should scrupulously avoid falsifying patients' consent forms to show that informed consent was obtained for a procedure, whereas in reality it was not. It is an unethical action with potential to undermine their relationship with patients.

Falsification of records is not limited to patient data, at times healthcare professionals also misrepresent their professional qualifications, experience and other credentials. Such acts are both unethical and illegal and can lead to serious consequences, including legal penalties and harm to patients.

Fabricating medical records by adding symptoms or diagnostic reports to justify unnecessary treatments, procedures and tests or to falsely show a procedure was performed, whereas in reality no such procedure was performed. All these actions are highly unethical and nurses should never indulge in such acts.

Failure to Provide the Required Care

The ethical principle of beneficence mandates that nurses have an obligation to provide appropriate, safe, effective care to patients. However, nurses frequently end up in situations when they are unable to provide the required care due to various reasons.

Shortage of staff is one of the main constraints that affects the quality of patient care. Nurses are overworked and they have to attend to many patients at the same time. It is a daily struggle for nurses in most

healthcare facilities that affects the quality of care. They cannot pay due attention to each patient as a result some patients may not receive the required care.

The quality of patient care suffers when nurses lack adequate knowledge, clinical training, communication skills and other professional attributes, as they may not be able to perform specific procedures. A nurse with inadequate communication skills may struggle to establish a trusting professional relationship with a patient, which is the key to quality patient care.

Patients will be denied required care if a hospital lacks adequate resources, equipment and other healthcare infrastructure. Even well-trained nurses will not be able to provide appropriate care the patients need, if they do not have access to the equipment, medications and other necessary supplies required to provide quality care.

Errors in medication by nurses such as administering a wrong medicine or a wrong dosage not only deny patients the care they need but can also undermine their safety. Such mistakes can occur as nurses have to cope with heavy workload and they are not able to pay attention and effectively monitor every patient, as they do not have enough time. Failure to regularly check the condition of patients allows progression of diseases and results in delayed treatment.

Lack of effective communication among healthcare providers can lead to confusion and misunderstandings, which can have an adverse impact on patient care. Nursing is a physically and emotionally demanding profession and nurses have to cope with high levels of stress and emotional fatigue. They spend long hours at workplaces attending to critically ill patients and witnessing human suffering which may cause depersonalization and in the long run lead to job burnout, which can severely undermine their ability to provide effective care.

Nurses must remain mindful and alert toward their ethical obligations and make every effort to avoid unethical actions. Failure to provide ethically safe care can have serious consequences for patients.

Illegal Actions

Besides adhering to ethics, nurses also have to abide by the law. It is essential for them to be familiar with the laws and regulations that govern their practice and have awareness about legal and illegal actions. There are situations where an ethical action may not be legal. Some common illegal actions are:

Breach of Confidentiality

Failure to secure the sensitive medical information of patients is not only unethical but also illegal. Nurses have a professional obligation to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of their patients by effectively protecting their medical information. Disclosure of confidential information without the specific consent of the patients is illegal. Unauthorized disclosure of medical information can have serious consequences for nurses, they may have to cope with civil and criminal action.

In the modern digital era with social media platforms providing instant worldwide connectivity, healthcare providers, particularly nurses, have to be very alert. Breach of confidentiality can take place inadvertently, if they are not careful. For instance, posting the health status of a patient on social media is a serious breach of confidentiality and privacy.

Nurses should always keep this in mind and make sure that they never post anything about the patients under their care on social media that could reveal their identity and medical information.

Sharing confidential information through email and other electronic modes is not fully secure and it can lead to unauthorized disclosure, creating legal problems for the nurses. Similarly, discussing the health status of patients at public places in front of persons not involved in treatment can also lead to unintentional disclosure of medical information.

Practicing Beyond the Scope of One's Licence

Nurses are granted licence to practice based on their education and training by the board or council that regulates the profession. Practicing beyond the scope of licence means that nurses are unknowingly or by design providing healthcare services that fall outside the ambit of their education and training for which they are not legally authorized.

Practicing beyond licence is both unethical and illegal. Nurses should strictly confine their services within their legal mandate as they may lack the required skills to provide effective care and put the lives of patients at risk. Some instances of nurses practicing beyond the scope of their licence are:

Administration of medication is a part of a nurse's job responsibility and they have to perform various procedures. However, when nurses perform certain procedures for which they have not been trained, they are acting unethically by practicing beyond the scope of their licence. Similarly, nurses, who have not been provided requisite training, lack adequate knowledge about the action of the drugs and their likely side effects, will be transcending their legal mandate to practice if they administer medication to patients.

Nurses may venture to perform medical procedures like suturing an incision, for which they have not been trained, without the supervision of a medical professional. It will have legal repercussions as such procedures are beyond the scope of their licence to practice.

Nurses are legally not authorized to diagnose medical conditions of patients, if they do so, the chances of incorrect diagnosis are high. They will be transgressing the legally authorized limits of their licence by providing treatment on the basis of their diagnosis, the patients will be exposed to potential harm.

Nurses are not trained to interpret diagnostic tests like X-rays, MRIs, or CT scans and if they attempt to do that, they may misinterpret the results. It is again a case of practicing beyond the scope of the licence to practice. It may result in patients being subjected to inappropriate treatment.

Practicing Outside Licensed Jurisdiction

The licence to practice is valid within the jurisdiction of the state for which it has been obtained. It is illegal to practice in states or areas for which they have not been licensed.

It is important for nurses to understand the scope of their licence to practice, and work within it. Practicing outside the scope of their licence can undermine patient's safety and have serious legal and professional consequences for them.

Misrepresenting Credentials or Education

Misrepresentation of education qualifications and experience by healthcare professionals is both unethical and patently illegal. Misrepresentation can be in many ways such as:

Claiming a degree in nursing without having actually completed the program or qualifying the required licensure examination. Fabricating or falsifying transcripts and academic credentials or documents related to prior nursing employment.

Falsely claiming experience in a specialty area or overstating knowledge and expertise in a speciality area like critical care.

Most commonly misrepresented credentials relate to professional development activities, particularly the continuing education credits that are mostly overstated.

Nurses should not indulge in such misrepresentations of credentials which can have serious consequences for their professional career, patients and the institutions they are associated with.

Drug Diversion

Diversion of medicines and other material meant for patients by healthcare staff for their own use or distribution to others for monetary gains is highly unethical and patently illegal.

Drug diversion can take place in the following ways:

- Siphoning off medications intended for patients for their own use or for giving it to others. The diversion of medication is often covered up manipulating medical records.
- Healthcare providers can also tamper with medication doses to administer smaller than prescribed doses. They can also take advantage of their access to stores and pilfer drugs for their personal use or sell them for pecuniary benefits.
- Diversion of medication is a serious violation of ethical and legal standards, which can have grave consequences for patients and undermine the professional career of nurses.
- It is important for healthcare facilities to have systems in place to prevent diversion of drugs and ensure the safety and well-being of patients.
- Some other illegal actions that should be avoided include practicing nursing without a valid licence, administering controlled substances without a valid prescription, fabricating medical records or altering patient information, indulging in sexual misconduct with patients and accepting gifts or money from patients in lieu of special treatment.
- Nurses must strive to stay clear of illegal actions, which can cause significant harm to patients and lead to serious legal and professional consequences for them. These actions not only violate the law but also undermine the trust and confidence of patients and the society in the nursing profession.



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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. Why should nurses need to have a good grounding in laws and ethics?
2. Why should nurses need to be aware of unethical and illegal actions?
3. What do you understand by “nurses practicing beyond licence”?
4. What do you mean by drug diversion? What are its consequences?
5. Patients are often denied the required care. Explain why.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Disclosure of patient’s medical information without consent is _____ action.**
 - a. Unethical
 - b. Illegal
 - c. Unethical and illegal
 - d. All of these
2. _____ **means healthcare givers providing services for which they are not trained or legally authorized.**
 - a. Practicing beyond licence
 - b. Practicing within jurisdiction
 - c. Practicing within licence
 - d. None of these
3. **Siphoning off of medications from hospital by healthcare givers is termed:**
 - a. Drug management
 - b. Drug utilization
 - c. Drug diversion
 - d. None of these
4. _____ **is any substance such as a drug that is used to diagnose, cure, treat or prevent diseases.**
 - a. Management of medicines
 - b. Medicology
 - c. Pharmacology
 - d. Medication
5. **Licence to practice is valid:**
 - a. In all the states.
 - b. In all the countries
 - c. Only within the jurisdiction of the licensure state
 - d. Only within a particular healthcare facility
6. _____ **is granted after completion of nursing education and training by council that regulates the profession.**
 - a. Nursing degree
 - b. Nursing diploma
 - c. Certification
 - d. Licence to practice

Answer Key

1. c 2. a 3. c 4. d 5. c 6. d

CHAPTER 18

Common Ethical Problems

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- ➔ The moral dimensions of ethical issues.
- ➔ The differences between ethical and nonethical problems.
- ➔ Moral and nonmoral problems.
- ➔ What is moral sensitivity.
- ➔ Ethical problems that are difficult to resolve.
- ➔ Common ethical issues related to end-of-life care.
- ➔ Difference between palliative care and hospice care.
- ➔ Ethical problems relating to medical assistance in dying.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- ➔ Introduction
- ➔ Ethical Problems in Healthcare Environment
- ➔ Moral and Nonmoral Problems
- ➔ Some Common Ethical Problems
- ➔ Ethical Problems in End-of-Life Care
- ➔ Ethical Issues and Ethical Dilemma
- ➔ Beginning of Life Ethical Issues
- ➔ Ethical Problems Related to Psychiatric Care
- ➔ American Nurses Association Guidelines

KEY TERMS

Euthanasia: Practice of intentionally putting patients with incurable health conditions to death to put an end their pain and suffering.

Hospice: Comprehensive comfort care to improve quality of terminally ill persons who are likely to die over the next few months.

MAiD: In medical assistance (aid) in dying (MAiD), patients with terminal illness are allowed to self-administer medication to end life.

Moral sensitivity: Capability that facilitates the process of ethical decision-making.

Palliative: Specialized medical care provided to improve the quality of life of patients living with serious life-limiting illness.

Tantamount: Equivalent in value, force or effect, almost the same.



INTRODUCTION

The art of nursing not only involves technical skills and knowledge, but also requires an ethical effort to provide safe patient care. Ethical values, beliefs, sociocultural background and attitude of nurses play an important role in decision-making, judging and deciding in a clinical environment.

While ethics are a prerequisite to ensure the integrity of the nursing profession, nurses frequently encounter ethical problems at workplaces that are difficult to resolve. Traditionally ethically safe care is the main objective of healthcare and ethics are aligned toward benefiting and promoting the interests of patients. Ethical theories help healthcare professionals in addressing ethical problems that are an integral part of the healthcare environment.

Nurses play a pivotal role in healthcare and their primary commitment is to promote the health, well-being and safety of the patients. They are the ones who confront all kinds of challenges in carrying out the professional mandate to provide safe patient care. The problems that are tricky and difficult to resolve are mostly those having an ethical component.

ETHICAL PROBLEMS IN HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT

Not all ethical issues develop into problems, only those with a moral aspect are difficult to resolve. Healthcare professionals require moral sensitivity to identify ethical issues that have the potential to develop into problems. It is more a matter of common sense, approach, attitude, moral sensitivity and ethical awareness.

An ethical problem arises in situations when caregivers are confronted with challenges or threats to their own moral obligations and values. The challenges nurses face at the workplaces mostly come up in situations that raise ethical questions. While the right course of action may be obvious in many situations, there are complex problematic situations where making decisions and taking the right action may not be possible. The biggest ethical challenge healthcare professionals face is to overcome resistance using ethical reasoning and drive home their point of ethics against odds.

At the outset, it is important to identify and ascertain the nature of the problem. A distinction will have to be made to differentiate between ethical and nonethical problems to make the right decisions and take the right actions. Application of ethics involves evaluations and judgments to decide the right course of action. In any situation, one may have many options and ethical principles provide guidance about the correct course of action one ought to take.

Nurses face ethical problems in the course of their day-to-day professional practice. While some of these problems are relatively easy to handle, some others may be very complex and difficult to resolve and may even cause distress to nurses. Ethics come into play when judgments reflect moral evaluations but not all the problems nurses encounter have moral dimensions. Thus, it is important to differentiate moral problems from other problems.

MORAL AND NONMORAL PROBLEMS

It is essential for the nurses to develop moral sensitivity to build their ethical decision-making capacity. It requires a systematic analysis to distinguish moral problems from other problems. In many situations, a nonmoral problem can eventually turn out to be a moral issue. For example, if a patient is in discomfort due to severe pain, a possible reason can be inadequate pain management by the healthcare team and as such, the problem is clinical. It can be resolved clinically by administering the right medicines. Another possibility is that the nurse forgot to administer the pain relief medicine and it will be a case of negligence. However, if it emerges that the patient refused pain relief medicine then the problem assumes moral dimensions as it involves the issue of patient's autonomy. Healthcare professionals on one hand have an

obligation to respect the right of the patients to choose the healthcare plan and on the other hand, they have to ensure their well-being.

These are the difficult decisions to make as respecting patients' autonomous decision to refuse pain relief medicines will go against the ethical obligation to ensure patients' well-being and do no harm, as they will suffer intolerable pain. Nurses require ethical competence to identify moral problems and navigate through ethically tough situations. Failure to resolve moral conflicts undermines the capacity of nurses to provide safe patient care and they may also feel low over their inability to maximize the patient's benefits which is not good for their own well-being and professional career in the long run.

Moral Sensitivity

Nurses need to be sensitive to moral issues and they should have the ability to focus on the ethical dimensions of patient care. Very often, nurses are not able to properly assess situations and they fail to readily discern the moral dimensions of problems. They end up treating ethical problems as clinical problems. They are unable to recognize the moral aspect of problems owing to lack of moral sensitivity, also termed moral blindness.

Moral sensitivity is the capability of a person that facilitates the process of ethical decision-making. It is also defined as the quality of awareness and attentiveness to the moral values and being in a specific situation of conflict. In practical situations, it means that nurses are fully conversant with the vulnerabilities of patients so that they are in a position to make moral decisions for them.

Moral sensitivity has a key role in the process of ethical decision-making as it helps the nurses to perceive the ethical consequences before making judgment. In the clinical work environment, moral sensitivity is a prerequisite for ensuring ethical behavior.

SOME COMMON ETHICAL PROBLEMS

Nurses encounter a variety of situations during the course of their professional practice that raise ethical concerns. Quite often, they involve ethical issues that are difficult to resolve. Given their pivotal role in patient care as healthcare professionals, nurses are expected to navigate through such situations by reconciling their own values with their professional obligations. They have to rely on ethical principles to address these ethically problematic situations to find solutions. Nurses cannot afford to ignore the code of ethics to address such situations as unethical actions can have legal implications, which may spell trouble for their professional career.

Nurses require moral sensitivity and a good grounding in nursing ethics to address the tough ethical problems. The most common problems involve ethical principles, like informed consent, patients autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, lack of professional competence among peers, inadequate resources, honesty and veracity, disclosure of medical condition or diagnosis and end-of-life care. However, not every situation of ethical concern leads to an ethical problem and can be handled effectively by nurses. The real ethical problems that are difficult to resolve arise when the nurses have to navigate through conflicting obligations and there are no clear choices. They also require critical thinking ability, besides ethical competence to find solutions.

The conflict between law and ethics further complicates ethical issues and nurses have to use their own critical thinking skills to find solutions that serve the best interests of the patients and their families. The attitude of caregivers in dealing with ethical issues, related to abortion and end-of-life care, which are the most difficult to resolve matters the most.

End-of-Life Care

Nurses encounter a range of ethical issues while providing end-of-life care to patients who are on their last legs or near to death. The terminally ill patients require specialized care aimed at making their life as comfortable

as possible. The focus of the end-of-life care is on pain management to make life of the patient as comfortable as possible. The comprehensive specialized care, often termed comfort care, can be palliative, hospice or both. It also entail emotional, social and spiritual support to patients and their families.

Before discussing ethical problems, it is important to understand the difference between palliative care and hospice care.

Palliative Care and Hospice Care

End-of-life care can be provided at home or in a hospital. It is important for patients to plan and inform their family members and caregivers in advance about the kind of care they would prefer. If patients are no longer in a position to make their own healthcare decisions, a family member or a caregiver will have to make decisions for them.

Ethical concerns emerge, as nurses have to consider several aspects while helping patients to make informed end-of-life care decisions. Nurses face ethical challenges involving life-extending and life-limiting decisions and the preferred setting for care.

Patients rely on information provided by nurses to make healthcare decisions. It is important for nurses to have good knowledge about end-of-life care options like palliative care and hospice care.

Palliative Care

It is a specialized medical care provided to patients living with serious life-limiting illness to make their life comfortable to the extent possible. It is meant to improve the quality of life of such patients. The focus is on pain management and not on the treatment to cure the disease. Medical care is provided for relieving the symptoms without addressing the root cause of the health condition. The aim of the palliative care is to enhance the quality of life of the patients and their families.

Palliative care specialists help patients to understand their choices for medical treatment, they have a major role in guiding end-of-life care. A team of specialist doctors and nurses provides palliative care. It may also include social workers, nutritionists and religious preachers, depending on needs of patients. Palliative care can be provided anytime once a patient is diagnosed with life-limiting health conditions, like heart failure, cancer, chronic Parkinson's disease and other such problems.

Palliative care can also be provided to aged persons or anyone having discomfort due to disability or other reasons late in life. Patients can choose the setting for care, it can be provided in hospitals, palliative care clinics, nursing homes and other specialized care facilities. Patients continue with the treatment that might cure a serious illness along with palliative care. In case the palliative care team at a certain point of time feels that the ongoing treatment is no longer serving any purpose and that the patients may die over the next few months, they may be put under hospice care.

Hospice Care

Hospice care is comprehensive comfort care to improve quality of terminally ill persons and provide support for the families. People who are likely to die within six months or have limited life left are put under hospice care. In the western countries, more and more people in the end-of-life phase are opting for hospice care under which efforts to cure the disease are stopped. However, does not mean discontinuing all medical treatment. For example, if a patient is not responding to chemotherapy, it will be stopped but other medication for controlling blood pressure, diabetes or other such disease will be continued.

Person suffering from terminal diseases, after having exhausted all the available treatment options, may consider hospice care to have better quality of life in their last phase. At a certain point of time, patients may stop responding to treatment, making it evident that it may not be possible to cure the disease, a serious illness, they may decide to stop treatment. They can opt for hospice, which is specifically designed to provide

care to such patients. It also saves patients from unwanted treatments to which they may be subjected to under the normal course of treatment.

ETHICAL PROBLEMS IN END-OF-LIFE CARE

The most difficult ethical problems the healthcare professionals are confronted with pertain to euthanasia, medically-aided dying and end-of-life care. For example, an elderly man is diagnosed with an advanced lung cancer that cannot be cured. However, medical treatment can help to enhance his life by six to eight months and the family members are in favor of it. The patient is not keen on undergoing treatment to enhance life and only wants his health condition to be managed in a way that causes least discomfort to him during his remaining few months of life.

Such scenarios are ethically problematic for nurses as human life is most precious and they must do everything possible to protect it. They also have an obligation to respect the right of the patient to make an independent decision regarding the kind of medical treatment he should undergo.

It is a tough situation for any healthcare professional to handle. The primary loyalty of the nurses is to the patient who is well educated and in a good state of mind to make informed decisions for the kind of treatment he needs. He understands the prognosis and the pros and cons of medical treatment. A nurse who values autonomy will not advise the patient to undergo medical treatment. However, a nurse who is more inclined to preserve life, may want the patient to go for treatment.

In another scenario, a patient suffering from cancer has a 50% chance of survival if he undergoes a surgery, which could cost ₹ 20 lakhs. However, the patient is not very well off and does not have any medical insurance. He seeks advice from the nurse whether he should raise a loan to undergo surgery. The nurse has no easy answers, as there is an equal chance of survival and death. If all goes well and the surgery is successful, the patient will be able to repay the loan. However, if he is not fortunate enough and succumbs to the disease, his family will be burdened by debt.

Giving false hope to the patient is against ethics as nurses have an obligation to remain truthful in their interaction with patients. They have to practice veracity, which forms the basis for a trusting nurse-patient relationship.

Euthanasia and Medical Aided Dying

Patients suffering from incurable diseases often find the suffering unbearable and want to end their life. There are options for terminally ill patients who have the decision-making capacity to hasten death. They can discontinue life-sustaining treatments or stop the intake of food and water.

In some countries, the option of medical aid in dying (MAiD) is also available. It is different from euthanasia, the practice to end the pain and miseries of persons suffering from incurable disease or disabling physical disorder by intentionally putting them to death. The death can be caused by discontinuing treatment or withdrawing artificial life-support measures.

There is a basic difference between 'euthanasia' and 'medical aid in dying', the two terms are not synonymous. In medical aid in dying, an adult patient with a terminal illness, who has the capacity to make medical decisions and self-administer oral medication, is granted permission subject to certain criteria. In the case of euthanasia, also termed as mercy killing, someone other than the patient administers medication with the intention of hastening death.

In some countries, like Canada, clinician-administered death as well as self-administered death is permissible under MAiD. The criteria include minimum 18 years of age, capability to make health-related decisions, incurable medical condition, informed consent and voluntary request for MAiD without any external pressure and the patient must be eligible for health services funded by government. Nurses are



associated in the implementation of MAiD and Canada is the first country to permit nurse practitioners to perform the responsibilities of assessors and providers of MAiD. Registered nurses, other than nurse practitioners, are also associated in the MAiD process for carrying out assessment of self-administration ability, providing information and coordinating the process, clinical preparation and documentation, besides supporting patients.

Thus, nurses have been assigned an important role in the assisted dying process in Canada. In countries like the Netherlands and Belgium, both euthanasia and medical assisted death is legalized and in many cases, nurses have to administer the lethal drugs. It is a major ethical problem as nursing profession has an obligation to protect life and enhance the health and well-being of patients. The act of hastening of a patient is incompatible with the basic values and responsibilities of nurses and it undermines public trust in the profession. Their primary responsibility is to provide high quality, compassionate, safe and holistic care. Palliative care is an important component of nursing care.

Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is commonly used to restore blood circulation and breathing in a person down with cardiac arrest. It is a medical procedure involving chest compressions and artificial ventilation, performed by trained healthcare professionals or even by lay bystanders to help save lives.

It involves ethical considerations, like potential conflicts or disagreements among the patient, their family and their healthcare providers regarding use of cardiopulmonary resuscitation and its qualitative and quantitative impact on other treatments and care provided to the patient.

However, even more important ethical situations are associated with the “Do Not Resuscitate” (DNR), an option by a patient who does not want to receive cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or other life-sustaining interventions in the event of cardiac arrest or respiratory failure.

Healthcare providers are ethically bound to respect the patient’s autonomy in decision-making and preferences regarding end-of-life care. The DNR orders of the patient may be in conflict with legal and professional obligations and liabilities of health care providers who perform CPR.

It also involves the ethical principle of informed consent and healthcare providers have to ensure the quality and validity of informed consent obtained from the patients or their surrogate decision-maker for DNR orders.

ETHICAL ISSUES AND ETHICAL DILEMMA

Some ethical problems nurses encounter at workplaces are as follows:

Valid Consent and Refusal

Healthcare ethics mandate that patients have the right to refuse medical treatment or intervention, even if it may be in their best interest and refusal may result in negative health outcomes. However, refusal of medical treatment by patients must meet the following criteria to be considered valid:

- Patients must have the capacity to make decisions and they should be able to understand the information provided about the proposed treatment, the risks and benefits of the treatment and the implications of refusing the treatment.
- They must be well informed by providing clear and accurate information about the proposed treatment, including its purpose, risks, benefits, and more importantly, the available alternatives. The healthcare providers have to make sure that patients understand the consequences of their decisions.

- The decision has to be voluntary, it means the patients must be free to make decisions and there should be no coercion, manipulation, pressure of any kind or undue influence.
- Patients must be competent adults as minors are not deemed competent to make decisions, barring exceptional cases when a minor is considered mature enough to make his/her own medical decisions.

Refusal to medical treatment by patients will be valid if these criteria are fulfilled and healthcare providers are ethically bound to honor the patients' decision. They should, irrespective of the options patients exercise, provide appropriate care and support that may include pain management, palliative care or other non-invasive interventions.

Resource Allocation

Nurses may face ethical problems in situations when resources are scarce as they have to prioritise allocations as per the need of the patients. Ethics made it obligatory for nurses to ensure:

- Fair and equitable allocation resources based on needs of patients and without discrimination.
- Optimum utilization of the resources by effective and efficient deployment and avoiding waste of resources or providing unnecessary treatments.
- Resources are allocated with a view to maximizing overall benefits, even if it creates conflicts with the individual rights of patients or their families. In such ethical situations healthcare providers may have to sacrifice the rights of individuals.
- Nurses may encounter ethical problems while making triage decisions to determine the urgency of their need for treatment based on preliminary assessment of patients' medical condition and the nature of treatment required. They need to prioritize patients for scarce resources, such as ICU beds, ventilators, oxygen and other medications. They must inform patients about the scarcity of resources and criteria used for allocation.

It is important for nurses to keep in mind the ethical dimensions when faced with difficult decisions related to allocation of resources.

Paternalism and Deception

Ensuring patients' autonomy in decision-making is key to ethical nursing. However, healthcare providers often make decisions for patients without their input, based on what they believe is in the best interest of patients. This is an unethical practice, termed paternalism, as it violates patients' autonomy in decision-making.

There are certain situations when nurses may be impelled to act paternalistically as they believe that decisions made by the patients are not in their best interest or they may harm their cause. Nurses must remain vigilant against paternalism and ensure autonomy in decision making.

Nurses tend to act paternalistically in certain situations like when they are working with patients and their families to make end-of-life decisions. They are often not in agreement about the best course of action but to avoid conflict may withhold information from patients or families.

Similarly, nurses may tend to act paternalistically in administering medications in situations where patients do not give consent or outrightly refuse medication that is essential for their treatment.

Deception is another ethical problem that occurs when healthcare providers withhold information from patients or provide incorrect information. Nurses often avoid providing full information about diagnosis, prognosis, risks or benefits of treatment to the patients for various reasons. This is also unethical and may undermine the trust between patients and healthcare providers and can also cause harm to patients.

Deception in healthcare settings can occur in many ways. For instance, nurses may choose to withhold some information regarding diagnosis or prognosis to patients or their families to save them from anxiety and undue stress.

Providing false, incorrect or incomplete information to patients, including overstating the benefits or underplaying the risks of treatment is a form of deception. Similarly, deception takes place when nurses tell patients that medications being administered will cure their illness to boost their spirits but in reality, they may not be effective. Giving placebo treatments, which have no therapeutic benefits, without their knowledge also amounts to deception.

Telling patients to undergo certain diagnostic procedures and tests or treatment which is not needed also amounts to deception. Breach of confidentiality by sharing a patients' private information without their consent not only violates their right to privacy but can also be considered deception.

It is important for nurses to be aware of these ethical problems and to seek guidance from ethical frameworks, policies, and colleagues when faced with difficult decisions related to paternalism and deception in nursing care.

Refusal to Food and Hydration

Patients refusing food is a common ethical issue nurses have to deal with quite frequently. It involves the basic ethical principles of nursing, including autonomy, informed consent, beneficence and non-maleficence.

Nurses are bound to respect the patients' right to autonomy by helping them to make their own healthcare decisions, which include the choice of food. Patients also have the right to refuse food and nurses can only facilitate them in making independent decisions by explaining the pros and cons of the available choices. As per the principle of informed consent, patients have the right to be informed about the risks and benefits of any treatment or medical intervention, including nutrition and hydration.

The principle of beneficence mandates that nurses should promote patients' well-being as such they must balance the patients' right to refuse food with their obligation to promote their well-being. They should explain to them that refusing food and hydration can cause malnutrition, dehydration and various other health complications. Also, the principle of non-maleficence lays down that nurses should do no harm to patients and refusing food and hydration can cause physical and emotional harm to them.

Nurses have to ensure that patients are not harmed by their refusal to take food and hydration. They have to be ever mindful of patients' right and take care that they are not forced to eat, while promoting their well-being and preventing harm. They should discuss the matter with their families and members of the healthcare team and try to understand the reasons for the patients refusing food.

Conflicts Involving New Technologies

New technologies are emerging rapidly with advancements in medical science. Patients are benefitting a lot from technological advancements but modern equipment and devices are also creating ethical conflicts in nursing care. New technologies generate and collect huge data which helps in diagnosis and treatment of patients but create conflicts with patients' right to privacy and confidentiality. Nurses have to protect patient data and ensure that it is used ethically.

New technologies are expensive and create disparities in healthcare outcomes at times as there are many people who are not in a position to access the intervention based on new technologies. Nurses must strive to ensure equitable access to new technologies and provide the best possible care.

New technologies also pose challenges to nurses as they have to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Nurses must be aware of their limitations and they should provide care within their scope of practice. They should consider the ethical implications of new technologies and adhere to ethical principles as things can go wrong, raising issues of liability and accountability.

Ethical Problems Related to Whistleblowing

Unethical and unsafe actions are not uncommon in healthcare settings and if such instances are not brought to the notice of appropriate authorities the quality of care will be undermined and patients will be exposed to avoidable risks. It is important for nurses to report such matters and also encourage others to do so. Healthcare providers find such situations ethically problematic due to conflict of loyalties. They can either be loyal to their colleagues or to their patients. Normally, they tend to overlook the unethical actions and instances of misconduct by their superiors and colleagues fearing retaliation or simply to avoid picking up fights. Whistle-blowers are often targeted by healthcare organization and not many come forward to report unethical actions as they do not want to earn the wrath of their employers.

It is the responsibility of nurses to ensure ethically safe environment at workplaces and they must not shy away from acting as whistle-blowers, individuals who report unethical, illegal, or unsafe practices, and promptly report instances of abuse, neglect, harassment, misconduct and other forms of malpractice to ensure safety of patients and protect their interests.

Also, ethics demand that nurses should practise veracity or speak out the truth and failure to do so will undermine their integrity. However, nurses must come with required evidence to support their concern about unethical actions and ensure that it helps to improve the working environment and helps to avoid recurrence.

BEGINNING OF LIFE ETHICAL ISSUES

Providing care to neonates, infants, and children is a challenging job for nurses who face a host of ethical dilemmas. They have to ensure that all medical procedures and treatments are taken after obtaining informed consent from parents or guardians. The difficult ethical decisions they have to take pertain to allocation of limited resources, like ventilators among many seriously ill infants.

Extremely Premature Babies and Babies with Birth Defects

The most difficult ethical decisions involve the birth and care of extremely premature babies or those with birth defects. The survival possibility of such babies is bleak and they are most likely to die. Modern medical technology can help to keep such babies alive but opting for such interventions raises a tough ethical question whether babies with severe disabilities be kept alive to undergo suffering. It is a controversial issue and deciding either way involves inconvenient ethical issues.

End-of-life Care

Nurses may have to provide end-of-life care in the cases of neonates and infants having life-limiting conditions or facing poor prognosis. They have to grapple with tough ethical issues of when and how to withdraw the life-sustaining treatment. Also, they have to support the parents and family members during such testing times.

Genetic Testing

Advances in genetic testing have made it possible to identify genetic conditions or predispositions to diseases early in life. The information revealed by genetic testing can help parents to monitor the risk factors for diseases that may develop later in life and take proactive measures to prevent or delay their onset.

Informed Consent

However, it raises several ethical issues which healthcare providers have to tackle. As infants cannot give informed consent, their parents or guardians must make the decision for them. Further, parents are mostly



unaware about genetic testing and nurses have to educate them and inform about its potential benefits and risks along with potential consequences of the results.

Privacy and confidentiality is a major ethical concern as genetic testing results contain sensitive and personal information that can have implications for the infant in the long run. It may stigmatize the infant if the results indicate predisposition to a disease. There could be long-term social and psychological effects on the child and its family as they may have to even face discrimination.

Stigmatization

If the results of genetic testing reveal genetic conditions or predisposition to a disease, it can stigmatize children. Social attitudes in the country are not conducive to using advanced technology and people tend to shame or stay away from individuals with genetic conditions. Not only the individual with genetic conditions but the entire family may be stigmatized and they may also have to face discrimination and bear the brunt of negative social attitudes.

Discrimination

Children with genetic conditions predisposing them to one or the other disease may face discrimination due to negative social attitudes. Genetic testing can have long-term implications as they may be denied jobs, insurance and other benefits later in their life.

Nurses have to educate the parents of infants and other family members about all these aspects and implications of genetic testing to enable them to make independent decisions. Besides, they should also provide support to the parents to cope with the results and they may require counseling to overcome anxiety and distress. Healthcare providers have to ensure that genetic testing is not used for unethical purposes.

Ethical Problems Related to Abortion

Abortion is a sensitive and controversial issue that throws up ethical challenges for healthcare providers. While abortion is legal in most countries, it is opposed on religious grounds and considered unethical. Human life is considered sacred and invaluable in most religions and abortion is considered an immoral act. There are other grounds, besides religious beliefs, against abortion. The most powerful argument is that if the fetus is a separate human entity, its basic human rights including the right to life, must be protected. Abortion violates the basic human right to life of the unborn child. Life is a gift from God, its sanctity has to be respected and maintained.

Abortion involves several overlapping issues from different domains, legal, medical, ethical, philosophical and religious besides human rights. It presents complex ethical situations that involve careful consideration of the health condition of the fetus and the mother. Nurses have to respect the rights of both the mother and the fetus and strictly adhere to ethical principles of autonomy, informed consent and values to provide safe care.

An ethical dilemma that healthcare professionals frequently face arises when they have to make a decision whether to abort a baby that involves high risk of miscarriage or continue with the pregnancy. The principle of autonomy comes into play as the mother has the right to make decisions about her own body and pregnancy. However, the situation gets complicated as the fetus is considered to be a separate entity with its own rights and interests. Healthcare providers have to take into consideration the interests of the fetus along with mother's autonomy and strike a balance.

The ethical principle of informed consent requires healthcare providers to ensure that the mother has access to accurate information, counseling, and emotional support to make an informed decision. They should inform her about the risks and benefits involved in both the options to enable her to make an informed decision based on her values and preferences.

Nurses have to be mindful of their own personal values and beliefs and they may be opposed to abortion. Such situations create a conflict between their personal values and their professional responsibilities. They have to discharge their professional responsibilities to provide care and support to patients.

Nurses must be aware about the relevant laws, which may vary in different states and countries. They have to abide by the law and ensure that they are providing care that is legal and within the scope of their practice. It is important for the nurses to have a proper understanding of abortion laws and how they relate and apply to nursing care so that they are in position to make informed decisions that align with their ethical responsibilities. Violation of law can land them in legal trouble with serious consequences for their professional career.

Abortion can be a traumatic experience for mothers despite nurses taking all the required steps to provide ethically safe care to serve their best interests. Nurses have an ethical responsibility to provide emotional and psychological support to mothers in such situations to help them overcome emotional distress. They have to provide compassionate care to the distressed mothers, irrespective of the fact that they approve or disapprove of abortion. They must remain non-judgemental and should not allow their personal beliefs to interfere with the care they provide as it can compromise the quality of care and in turn the well-being of patients. Nurses must ensure that they provide care that is respectful and protects the dignity of all the patients, including those undergoing abortion.

Some nurses may personally consider abortion unethical, they must set aside their personal beliefs and biases to provide compassionate care to the mothers. They must adhere to professional standards and ethical codes that promote patient-centered care to ensure that mothers receive the care they need and deserve.

Fetal Therapy

With rapid advancements in medical science, particularly the development technology and diagnostic methods for *in utero* abnormalities, fetal therapy is emerging as an option to treat or prevent various health conditions. Fetal therapy refers to medical interventions that are performed on the fetus *in utero*.

Fetal therapy raises a number of ethical concerns as the health and well-being of both the mother and fetus are at stake. The most important ethical dilemma the mothers and the healthcare providers face is when to go for fetal therapy and when it should be rejected.

Healthcare providers have to strictly adhere to the ethical principles to ensure safety and prevent harm to the fetus and the mother. Fetal therapy involves moral and religious issues, informed consent, resource allocation, long-term consequences and ethical conflicts in decision-making. The most important ethical concern is how to strike a balance between potential benefit and harm for the fetus and the mother.

Informed Consent is Special

Unlike other healthcare situations, informed consent in case of fetal therapy is special as the mother gives or denies consent for not only herself but also for the fetus whose future is uncertain. The fetus may or may not survive and even in the long run the future child who may or may not benefit from the intervention. The mother and the family members should be prepared in advance to cope with failure of the fetal therapy by counseling them about the potential risks and eventual morbidities. Further, fetal therapy is not an alternative to abortion and healthcare providers should refrain from presenting it as an alternative to medical termination of pregnancy.

Issue of Morality

Fetal therapy also involves the issue of morality as it may necessitate abortion which is considered immoral in many religions and communities. Even some nurses may have objections to fetal therapy but they must

rise over their personal values and religious beliefs and discharge their professional responsibilities to provide compassionate care and support to patients.

Nurses must ensure that parents are made to understand the potential risks and benefits of fetal therapy, particularly the long-term consequences for the health and well-being of the fetus.

Ethical and Legal Aspects

While fetal therapy may help to prevent birth defects, it raises complex legal, ethical and moral issues. Earlier, if a prenatal diagnosis revealed a congenital or developmental defect, the choice was either to abort or give birth to an impaired child. With the advent of fetal therapy the choice has become difficult. Mothers pin hope on the new technological intervention and they may opt for fetal therapy, which may or may not be successful, instead of abortion.

Mother's Right to Refuse Fetal Therapy

It also raises the ethical and legal question whether mothers have the right to refuse recommended fetal therapy. It is a complex issue, mothers will have the right if “mother and fetus” are considered one organic whole. However, a mother's refusal to give consent to recommended fetal surgery will deny the fetus of life-saving or life-enhancing medical interventions, raising the larger question of health safety and welfare of the health of unborn children.

The emerging rational view is that mothers have the right to make decisions related to fetal treatment or any procedure not offering a clear benefit to the fetus. No mother can be forced to consent to therapy to salvage the life of a fetus if the prospects of a “quality life” are bleak. After all, mothers have to bear the emotional burden of bringing up and caring for an impaired child.

Ethical problems Related to Intrauterine Treatment of Fetal Condition

Intrauterine treatment of fetal conditions is a type of fetal therapy that involves treating a condition before the baby is born. It raises complex ethical issues that require careful consideration as healthcare providers have to balance potential benefits of such treatments with the risks involved and the ethical concerns they raise. Nurses must adhere to the ethical principles of autonomy, informed consent and compassionate patient-centred care to fulfil their responsibilities to safeguard the interests of pregnant women and fetuses.

The ethical issues, which have already been discussed under the topic fetal therapy, are again mentioned here in brief:

Informed Consent

Intrauterine treatment often requires invasive procedures, such as fetal surgery, which can carry significant risks for both the mother and fetus. Obtaining informed consent from the mother is not only essential but also challenging, especially when the intrauterine treatment is experimental and the long-term outcomes are uncertain.

Fetal Autonomy

It involves a controversial issue whether the fetus should be considered a part of the mother's body or a separate entity. While some people argue that a fetus has its own rights and autonomy that should be respected. However, it is unclear at what point during gestation the fetus can be considered a person with its own rights.

The other view is that mothers have the right to make decisions related to fetal treatment. Healthcare providers should respect maternal choice regarding any decision pertaining to intrauterine fetal treatment that might be only partially successful, leaving the offspring with a profound morbidity.

Parental Responsibility

Diagnosis indicating fetal conditions causes distress to parents who face difficult decisions whether to continue the pregnancy, terminate it or pursue intrauterine treatment. Healthcare providers have to ensure that parents are not forced into pursuing intrauterine treatment against their wishes or if it is against the best interests of mother and the fetus.

Unintended Consequences

Intrauterine treatment of fetal conditions has long term implications and there is no certainty about the outcomes. There is always a risk of intrauterine treatment resulting in unintended consequences, including harm to the mother or fetus, or leading to unexpected long-term health issues. All these issues add to the complexity of ethical situations. Nurses must ensure that parents are informed of potential risks and benefits of intrauterine treatment of fetal conditions, including any long-term consequences.

Maternal-Fetal Conflict

The interests of the pregnant woman are mostly aligned with those of her fetus. However, there are situations when maternal interests are in conflict with fetal interests. Ethical issues arise when the pregnant woman declines the recommended treatment that can potentially benefit the fetus. It is a case of maternal-fetal conflict, one of the important beginnings of life ethical issues, that arises when the available options for the well-being of the pregnant woman and the fetus, who are biologically connected, are in conflict.

Maternal-fetal conflict can arise when the mother refuses recommended medical interventions that can benefit the fetus. The most common example of such situations is a pregnant woman refusing surgical procedures, like a cesarean section that can potentially prove beneficial for the fetus. Situation becomes more complex when the pregnant woman insists on home delivery which can pose high risk to the fetus, including death or severe disability.

Maternal-fetal conflict also arises in situations where a pregnant woman disregards the medical advice mandating abstinence from smoking, drugs and drinking, which can prove harmful for the fetus. It is desirable that infants are born healthy, free from preventable diseases and physical disabilities.

Ethical principles mandate that the healthcare providers should go by the informed consent of the pregnant woman and accept her refusal of treatment, respecting the integrity of her body and her autonomy to make her healthcare decisions. They must not impose their own decisions and force treatment, it is unethical. The decision of the pregnant woman has to be respected even if it has the potential to cause harm to the fetus.

Healthcare providers may be inclined to consider fetal interests when dealing with maternal-fetal conflicts but they must remain aware of their ethical obligation to respect the autonomy of the pregnant woman in refusing recommended medical interventions. The potential harm to the fetus by way of maternal decisions has to be assessed on the basis of medical evidence and instead of coercive ways prenatal care and treatment should be supportive and aim at promoting both maternal and child health.

Gender bias is a major issue in many countries including India, where women still face discrimination. Healthcare providers have to keep this in mind and ensure that rights of pregnant women are not infringed or curtailed.

Dealing with Fetal Injury

Ethical challenges arise due to situations where the interests of a pregnant woman and her fetus are in conflict. Cases involving fetal injury present such situations before the healthcare providers which are difficult to resolve. It raises ethical issues such as:



Right to Life

Human life is considered sacrosanct and as such fetal injury raises questions about the right to life of the fetus. Some people may argue that the pregnant woman's right to bodily integrity and autonomy in making decisions related to her own healthcare must take precedence and others may insist that the fetus has a right to life that should be protected.

Autonomy

It is important to balance the ethical considerations involved and make decisions that prioritize the well-being of both the fetus and the pregnant woman. The ethical principle of informed consent has to be followed in letter and spirit to facilitate the decision-making process by providing all the necessary information to the pregnant woman and help her to make informed choices about their healthcare.

Informed Consent

Treating fetal injury often involves medical interventions on the pregnant woman's body. Healthcare providers have to make sure that the pregnant woman clearly understands all the risks and benefits of the treatment while obtaining informed consent.

Quality of Life

Treating fetal injury can also raise questions about the quality of life of the fetus. There is no certainty about the outcome and there can be cases where the fetus may be born with severe disabilities. The moot question that arises is whether it is ethical to continue with treatment that could prolong the suffering.

Infertility Treatment

Medical interventions that are used to help women conceive a child also involve ethical issues such as access and equity, informed consent, non-maleficence, autonomy, embryo disposition and social justice. The two most common procedures performed to treat infertility are in-vitro fertilization (IVF), where fertilization of a woman's egg is performed outside of her body, and intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), in which a live sperm is injected into a person's eggs in a laboratory to create an embryo.

Different countries have different laws or guidelines to regulate fertility treatment, while some have banned it.

IVF can help couples who are unable to conceive naturally due to various reasons. However, IVF also raises some ethical issues such as:

Quality of Consent

It is crucial for ensuring that the persons are fully aware of what they are agreeing to and that they are making an informed and voluntary decision. The quality of consent obtained from the persons involved in IVF can help to build trust and ensure effective communication and satisfaction among them and also with healthcare providers.

Consent is especially important in IVF as it involves sensitive moral and ethical considerations, besides the risks and benefits, costs and outcomes of the treatment. Persons involved in IVF have to be fully informed about their right to choose the characteristics of their child, permissibility of sex-selection, preimplantation genetic diagnosis, religious and cultural views on IVF and the status of the embryo, possibility of multiple pregnancies or selective reduction and other related issues.

Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis

While it is a useful diagnostic technique that can help couples prone to miscarriages or implantation failures, it raises ethical issues as it can also be used for non-medical purposes such as sex selection, tissue typing, or enhancement. Larger ethical questions that arise include the moral status of the embryo and its right to life and respect, social implications of selecting or discarding embryos based on their genetic characteristics and impact on natural process of reproduction and human diversity.

Surrogacy

This is an arrangement where another woman carries and delivers a child for a couple who cannot conceive or carry a pregnancy. The surrogate may or may not be genetically related to the child. Surrogacy can be altruistic, where the surrogate receives no or minimal compensation, or commercial, where the surrogate receives a payment for her services.

It has important ethical implications like the rights and interests and social and psychological implications of surrogacy on the surrogate, the intended parents and the child. It also raises issues of exploitation of the surrogate and objectification of the surrogate's body and the child.

Egg and Sperm Donation

These techniques are for those who cannot produce their own gametes, sperms or eggs. They can have a child with the help of a donor. Like surrogacy, egg and sperm donation can be altruistic, with the donor not receiving any compensation, or commercial, where the donor receives a payment for their donation. Egg and sperm donation can also be anonymous, without disclosing the identity of the donor to the recipient.

It involves ethical issues similar to surrogacy such as social and psychological implications of donation on the donor, the recipient, and the child, potential exploitation of the donor, commodification or objectification of the donor's body and gametes, rights and interests of the donor, the recipient and the child and impact on the natural process of reproduction and human dignity.

ETHICAL PROBLEMS RELATED TO PSYCHIATRIC CARE

There are several ethical issues in psychiatric nursing care as patients with psychiatric disorders may lack the ability to make independent healthcare decisions. Nurses have to keep this in mind and balance the patients' right to autonomy with their responsibility to provide safe care.

Informed Consent

It is an essential ethical principle but it is problematic in case of patients with psychiatric disorders, who often lose their decision-making capacity due to their illness. Nurses have to figure out how to obtain informed consent from such patients and who can give consent on their behalf. They have to make sure that patients fully understand the treatment options and the benefits and risks involved.

Autonomy

Patients with psychiatric problems are often not in a position to exercise their right to autonomy due to their illness. Nurses have to act in the best interests of the patients by balancing the patient's autonomy with the need to provide appropriate care.

Right to Privacy and Confidentiality

It is a major ethical concern as patients with psychiatric disorders may disclose sensitive information during counseling sessions. Nurses have a tough job to protect the patients' privacy and also fulfil the legal and ethical obligations to report concerns about patient safety and the safety of others. At times patients become aggressive and may pose risk to their own safety and also safety of others.

Maintaining confidentiality is all the more important as mental illness carries a stigma, which may have serious implications for self-esteem and social relationships of patients. Stigmatization of patients can affect their access to health care and social and economic opportunities. Nurses must treat patients with respect, compassion and dignity, and they should also ensure that they are not compelled to accept treatment as it could undermine the autonomy of patients in decision-making.

Selective Dedication

Nurses are supposed to take care of all patients with the same dedication as they would treat their own near and dear ones. However, like all human beings, nurses also have their own likes and dislikes that often come into play to influence their priorities that may result in unequal treatment of patients. They may prioritize certain patients over others and devote more time or show much more dedication in taking care of some patients, with whom they feel comfortable, and neglect others. For example, nurses may give more attention to patients, whom they perceive to be of their own community, village or socioeconomic status, and neglect patients who are different.

Selective dedication can happen in many ways. It can be the result of the personal preferences of nurses based on religion, ethnicity, community, region, relationship or other such factors. Some nurses may not feel comfortable with psychiatric patients or children and they may be averse to working in the psychiatric or pediatrics departments. Similarly, some nurses do not like to work in night shifts. They may not show the same dedication when deployed in departments or shifts they are not keen to work.

Nurses should remain mindful of their personal likes and dislikes and ensure that it does not influence their care priorities as selective dedication can have negative consequences for patients and the healthcare system. It is essential for nurses to understand and recognize that their personal likes and dislikes can influence their priorities and attitude toward patients. They must make conscious efforts to overcome their personal biases to provide quality care to patients.

Restraint and Seclusion

The use of physical or chemical restraints is a controversial issue in psychiatric nursing care as it involves the issues of patients' autonomy and dignity and can have a dehumanizing effect.

Restraints may be necessary to ensure patient safety but nurses have to be careful as several ethical issues have to be addressed. They must ensure that the use of "restraint and seclusion" is in accordance with institutional policies and guidelines and that the rights of patients are respected by strictly following the ethical principles of autonomy, informed consent, benevolence, non-maleficence and confidentiality. The legal and ethical obligations to provide quality care can be fulfilled by balancing patients' rights.

Nurses have to be aware of and respectful of cultural differences and beliefs when working with psychiatric patients. They have an understanding of cultural attitudes toward mental illness and ensure that healthcare plans for such patients are culturally appropriate.

Substance Abuse

Healthcare givers engaged in the field of substance abuse treatment face ethical dilemmas relating to personal beliefs and values as patients labeled as drug abusers are perceived negatively in the society. The long history of societal bias has led to misperceptions that have affected the care of drug abusers.

People suffering from substance use disorders (SUD) and even the care providers are mostly unaware of the impact ethics can have on their use and treatment. Nurses have a responsibility to provide safe and effective care for their patients, including those who struggle with substance abuse.

Problematic drug use arises due to several factors, which are beyond the control of patients. Care providers have to navigate through tough ethical situations to make appropriate decisions to serve the best interests of the patients. For example, providing medical treatment to patients in a state of acute intoxication can save them from harm and denying treatment may result in injury, trauma or pain. Similarly, an important ethical consideration may be whether or not to teach patients to inject drugs safely as it will help to prevent infections.

Providing care to patients of substance use disorders is a specialized job that requires knowledge and expertise. Healthcare providers have to assess various aspects like whether the patients should abstain from use of drugs during treatment, management of possible violence, harm reduction strategies, managing resources for providing appropriate care for people withdrawing from substance use and other related issues. Some patients may go through a long withdrawal period lasting for several weeks and they require intensive intervention.

Autonomy

A major problematic ethical issue with patients of substance use is autonomy of patients in decision-making. The addicted patients, particularly adults, wrongly perceive the healthcare providers' concern about the harmful effects of substance abuse as a threat to their autonomy. Nurses can adopt a more conducive approach by engaging such patients in discussions to explain at length how alcohol and various psychotropic substances affect the mental state. They can logically persuade patients and encourage them to reduce the use of substance and allowing them to decide about what kind of intervention they want.

The benefits and risks of all the treatment plans must be explained in detail as some patients may have psychotic symptoms and indulge in violence. Such patients not only pose a risk to their own safety but also to the staff involved in providing care and other people in their vicinity.

SUD patients may not be in a position to make decisions about their healthcare due to acute intoxication or withdrawal but nurses must provide them opportunities to participate in healthcare decisions, wherever they seem capable. They have to assess how capable the patients are of understanding their situation, do they want treatment, what are their preferences and other such issues.

Stigmatization

SUD is highly stigmatized and healthcare providers have to be non-judgemental and understand the reasons for their behavior. The aggressive behavior of SUD patients is directly related to the illness and that they are a vulnerable lot.

Healthcare providers have to ponder over what approach they should adopt to preserve their dignity and humanity, regardless of their current state and behavior. They have to be responsive to the needs of the patients and think of ways to provide the best possible care to them.



Tips for Nurses

Nurses and other members of healthcare teams should be empathic, non-judgmental and approach patients with curiosity and respect. They must be committed to the wellbeing of patients by mitigating risks and making them feel safe, valued and respected.

They must be able to accurately assess and dispassionately appreciate the substance abuse history of patients to come up with plans to provide appropriate care. The physical, psychological and emotional health should be assessed along with associated health problems.

The patients should be constantly monitored and the use of restraints should be the last resort. Substance abuse can blur judgement of patients and they become vulnerable to increased risk of falls, injuries or accidents. Nurses must be aware of these risks and take appropriate measures to keep patients safe.

They must keep in mind that substance abuse leads to neurological changes that make the behavior hard to change. Eventually, substance use becomes a mechanism for survival and no longer remains a matter of choice.

They should ascertain if the patients have undergone neurological changes that will make treatment impossible and change the healthcare plans accordingly. If not, they must provide them appropriate treatment as denial or delay in treatment will harm the patients and may lead to a situation where treatment becomes impossible. The ethical principle of non-maleficence assumes added importance in case of SUD patients. The healthcare providers should focus on working out and effectively implementing harm reduction strategies.

Monitoring

Patients who are actively using substances may require closer monitoring to ensure that they do not experience any adverse reactions or complications. This may include more frequent vital sign checks or assessments of mental status.

Non-Compliance

Patients with psychiatric problems often do not adhere to the prescribed healthcare plan. They may not cooperate with healthcare professionals and even outrightly refuse medication. Such noncompliance by patients may undermine the efficacy of the treatment plan and have negative consequences for their health and wellbeing. The quality of their life will be affected, defeating the purpose of healthcare providers.

Non-compliance in psychiatric care throws up situations where healthcare professionals struggle to uphold the fundamental principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice. They have to navigate through ethical conflicts involving patients' right to autonomy and self-determination, and their professional duty to protect them from harm and promote their best interests. They may come up with plans, they strongly feel, will promote health and improve outcomes but patients refuse the recommended treatment.

The patients have the right to refuse medication but healthcare providers have to assess whether or not they are in a position to make independent decisions in their current state of health. The principle of informed consent assumes added significance as care providers will have to carefully evaluate the capacity of patients to make their own medical decisions.

The healthcare professionals have to make a thorough assessment of patients' abilities to understand information necessary for making the specific decision, clearly communicate their choice, compare and appreciate the pros and cons of treatment plans. They must be made aware of the risk and benefits of various available options and the consequences of the potential decision. Healthcare providers need to consider other aspects like medical indications and the impact on quality of life along with preferences of the patients.

Consider a Simple Situation

An elderly person suffers a fall in the bathroom and assessing his circumstances the healthcare providers recommend that he should be shifted to an old age home with medical facilities. They felt that since the

patient who has some chronic age-related problems that will require medical attention frequently and at his age and multiple health issues he would be better looked after at an old age home where requisite medical facilities are available.

However, the patient, who has been a fiercely independent person and living alone throughout life, was averse to shifting an old age home. He did not want to lose his independence at the fag end of life rather he would prefer to spend rest of his life at home. It will be convenient for him.

His healthcare providers explained all the aspects of his health condition, particularly the kind of medical assistance he would require, and tried to convince him that shifting to old age home will be more convenient. However, the patient did not agree and preferred to get the treatment at home. The healthcare providers agreed as they felt that shifting to an old age home might cause psychological distress to the patient who values his independence more than anything else.

The case provides a good example of how to deal ethically with noncompliant patients.

AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES

The American Nurses Association (ANA) has in its revised guidelines for dealing with MAiD and euthanasia the issue effective from 2019 reiterated that euthanasia is at variance with the core commitments of the nursing profession. It has asserted that nurses are ethically barred from administering medical aid in dying medication. It has made clear the scope of nursing role in the care of patients who request medical aid in dying. Recognizing medical aid in dying is a controversial issue with conflicting views, the ANA that the main argument is based on patients' right for self-determination and that medical aid in dying is a last act of autonomy, besides preventing suffering to the patients. Those against it maintain that it violates the core professional values and apprehend that increased acceptability MAiD may significantly change perceptions of a 'life worth living'.

In its guidelines to help navigate such situations the ANA states that nurses must remain mindful of their personal values and their likely impact on their relationship with patients exploring MAiD as an end-of-life option and be objective in providing information to them. They may not compromise their integrity and have the moral right to express remonstrate. Respecting patients' autonomy does not mean that nurses must support all the patients' choices, they may refuse to participate in the MAiD process on moral grounds. They should never abandon or refuse to provide safe care to such patients and in jurisdictions where MAiD is legal, they have an obligation to protect their confidentiality.

The ANA code of ethics clearly spells out that "nurses should provide interventions to relieve pain and other symptoms in the dying patient consistent with palliative care practice standards and may not act with the sole intent to end life."

The ethical response of nurses to patients' inquiry about MAiD is not based on the intention to end life. Providing correct information in an objective manner or responding to requests of patients to be present during the process, assessing the patient's understanding, capacity to make decisions and the context in which MAiD request has been made do not tantamount. These are nursing actions consistent with the ethical commitment to help patients make informed end-of-life decisions.

Ethically competent nurses are uniquely positioned to help patients and their families navigate through difficult moments in life-limiting diseases at the end-of-life phase. They are better placed than doctors in facilitating patients as they have important information about patient's physical, psychological and emotional state and also have a good understanding of the disease and objective of care.

ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What are the differences between an ethical and nonethical problem?
2. What do you mean by a moral and nonmoral issue?
3. What is the role of moral sensitivity in identifying ethical problems?
4. Why are end-of-life ethical problems difficult to resolve?
5. What are the differences between euthanasia and medical assistance in dying (MAiD)?
6. What are the differences between palliative care and hospice care?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Ethical problems involve _____ dimensions.
 - a. Clinical
 - b. Moral
 - c. Nonmoral
 - d. None of these
2. Nurses require _____ to differentiate between ethical and nonethical issues.
 - a. Clinical knowledge
 - b. Communication skills
 - c. Moral sensitivity
 - d. Strong beliefs
3. In _____, patients are allowed to die by not taking any action that would help prolong their life.
 - a. Active euthanasia
 - b. Palliative death
 - c. Hospice
 - d. Passive euthanasia
4. In _____, patients take their own lives with the help of a caregiver.
 - a. Euthanasia
 - b. MAiD
 - c. Palliative death
 - d. Hospice
5. Treatment to cure the life-limiting disease is stopped in _____.
 - a. MAiD
 - b. Euthanasia
 - c. Palliative care
 - d. Hospice care
6. Nurses may refuse to participate in the MAiD process on _____.
 - a. Professional grounds
 - b. Moral grounds
 - c. Medical grounds
 - d. None of these

Answer Key

1. b 2. c 3. d 4. b 5. d 6. b

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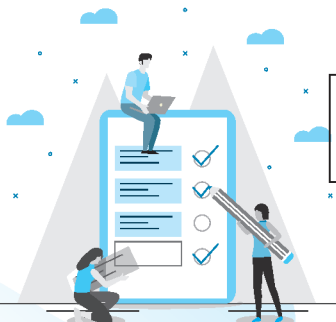
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UNIT **V**

Importance of Ethics and Committees in Healthcare Institutions

Unit Outline

Chapter 19 Code of Ethics for Healthcare Institutions

Chapter 20 Rights of Patients

Chapter 21 Importance of Institutional Ethics Committees

Chapter 22 Ethical Decision-Making

CHAPTER 19

Code of Ethics for Healthcare Institutions

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- Importance of code of ethics for healthcare organizations.
- The role of organizational codes in ensuring quality of healthcare.
- The main features of organizational codes of ethics.
- How organizational codes of ethics help to promote ethical work behavior.
- The salient features of code of ethics for biomedical research organizations.
- Difference between codes of ethics of hospitals and biomedical research organizations.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
- Necessity of Code of Ethics
- Code of Ethics is a Comprehensive Document
- Salient Features of Code of Ethics
- Code of Ethics for Biomedical Research Organizations

KEY TERMS

Biomedical research: Broad area of science that studies the processes of life and prevention and treatment of disease.

Commercialization: Making something available and viable as a profitable commodity.

Comprehensive: Complete, includes details or aspects of something that is necessary.

Innovation: Introducing or creating something new, ideas, devices or ways of doing things.

Motto: A short phrase or sentence that expresses the core principles or belief of an organization, group or person.

Whistleblower: An employee, who discloses malpractices or inside information about activity within a private or public organization that is considered unethical or illegal.



INTRODUCTION

Organizational ethics play a vital role in defining the work environment in every institution. However, in healthcare settings, the organizational ethics have an added importance, as an ethical work environment is a prerequisite for providing safe and effective patient care. The organizational ethics are an essential component of any organization's culture and values. They reflect the ethos of an organization and send a message to the public what they stand for.

A code of ethics helps an organization to align with the ethical principles and values in all aspects of its operation and create a work environment that promotes ethical decision-making and behavior. It sets forth the expectations for ethical conduct and helps to create a culture of integrity and accountability within the organization. It states the core values that guide the organization's behavior, such as honesty, integrity, justice and professionalism.

NECESSITY OF CODE OF ETHICS

An organizational code of ethics, is crucial for promoting ethical behavior and building trust and reputation. Without a strong code of ethics, it is not possible to foster a culture of ethical behavior and professionalism within the organization. Various categories of healthcare professionals are governed by different codes of ethics but they will be able to adhere to ethical principles only if the work environment is conducive to ethical practice.

Stakes are high in healthcare as unethical decisions and actions can put the lives of patients at risk. Commercialization of the healthcare sector has made it imperative for hospitals to adopt a strong code of ethics to provide an ethically safe environment for the health professionals.

Organizational ethos shape the work culture and work behavior of health professionals. The organizational ethics must align with the professional ethics to create an ethical work environment. Problems arise when organizational ethics are in conflict with professional ethics.

In a healthcare organization, the code of ethics outlines the ethical principles and values that guide the conduct of healthcare professionals and employees. More importantly, it provides an indication to the patients what kind of behavior they should expect.

CODE OF ETHICS IS A COMPREHENSIVE DOCUMENT

The code of ethics of most healthcare organizations are comprehensive documents divided into many sections dealing with different sections of employees. It includes the values, objectives and ethics of the organization and deals at length with responsibilities and workplace behavior of employees and the consequences that may follow in case of violations. Some of the common features that healthcare organization may include are:

Values of the Organization

It supports the values for which the organization stands for, such as, compassion, humanity, inclusivity, justice, and diversity, ethical, safe and effective care, service with understanding and responsibility, appreciate concerns of others and open to ideas and viewpoints of others.

Aims and Objectives

The code of ethics spells out the aims and objectives of the organization. It may include the goals in respect of infrastructural facilities, quality of care, upgradation and improvement in healthcare practice, adherence

to acceptable standards and efforts on the research and training front. It updates the knowledge and skills of caregivers to keep pace with advancements in medical science.

Ethics of the Organization

This is the most important section for healthcare organization as it reflects the ethos of the organization and the process and procedures put in place to ensure delivery of ethically safe care to patients.

It generally states what patients should expect and highlights the motto of the organizations such as “Serving patients with compassion is a sacred responsibility” or the organization swears by its motto “Patient comes first at all times”.

Professionalism and Integrity

This section sets forth the ethical standards that healthcare professionals and other staff involved in delivery of care are expected to uphold principles, such as honesty, transparency, justice and accountability.

Patient-Centric Care

This is a very important section as healthcare is all about providing care conforming to the values, beliefs, socioeconomic status, needs and preferences of patients. It focuses on an organization’s commitment to ensure ethically safe care with dignity, respecting the rights of the patients, such as autonomy in making healthcare decisions, informed consent and right to refuse treatment.

Confidentiality and Privacy of Patients’ Medical Information

Healthcare organizations have an ethical and legal obligation to ensure privacy of patients’ medical information. This section of the code refers to commitment of the organization to protect the confidentiality and privacy of patients’ information. The ethical responsibilities of healthcare professionals in ensuring privacy of medical records is also outlined.

High Quality of Care

The code reflects the commitment of the organization to providing safe, effective, and evidence-based care and it promises to continuously strive to improve the quality of care.

Cultural Competence and Diversity

This section outlines the organization’s commitment to providing care that is respectful of cultural and religious differences, and to promoting diversity and inclusion within the organization.

Ethical Research and Innovation

This section outlines the ethical principles that should guide research and innovation within the organization, including the obligation to obtain informed consent, to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects, and to ensure that the potential benefits of the research outweigh the potential risks.

Reporting and Accountability

This section outlines the reporting and accountability mechanisms within the organization for ethical concerns and violations, including the protection of whistleblowers.

SALIENT FEATURES OF CODE OF ETHICS

A code of ethics is an important tool for maintaining ethical conduct and promoting trust and confidence in the healthcare system. It helps to ensure that healthcare professionals uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct and professionalism, which ultimately leads to better patient care and outcomes.

Serves as Guide for Healthcare Professionals

It helps to set standards of conduct and brings clarity about what is considered acceptable behavior at the workplace. A code of ethics outlines the guiding principles that help healthcare professionals to understand what is expected of them in terms of ethical behavior.

Provides Framework for Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

It serves as a reference for ethical decision-making and provides a framework for resolving ethical dilemmas. It guides caregivers through ethical dilemmas with a stepwise approach, which helps them to arrive at right decisions. It motivates them to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the values and mission of the organization.

Ethical Awareness

An organizational code of ethics helps to create awareness among caregivers about the values, standards and expectations of the organization. They are able to understand the importance of ethical behavior in achieving the goals of the organization.

Fosters Ethical Behavior

A code of ethics outlines the organization's expectations for ethical conduct and promotes a culture of integrity and accountability at workplaces. It enables healthcare providers to make informed decisions.

Outlines Ethical Responsibilities

A health organization's code of ethics outlines the ethical responsibilities and obligations of individuals and the organization as a whole. It covers the ethical obligations toward caregivers, seniors, colleagues and subordinate staff toward patients and the community at large.

Patients' Autonomy and Confidentiality

It sets standards for providing high-quality care, maintaining confidentiality, respecting patient autonomy, preventing discrimination and harassment and avoiding conflicts of interest.

Ensures Accountability

A code of ethics not only serves as a guide but also provides a framework for holding caregivers accountable for their actions. Once the caregivers are aware that they will be held responsible for their actions, they are conscious and put efforts to make ethical decisions.

Builds Trust and Reputation

Ethical behavior builds public trust in the organization and a strong code of ethics demonstrates its commitment to ethical behavior. Public trust enhances and enforces the reputation of the organization and helps to win the confidence of all the stakeholders.



Compliance with Laws and Regulations

Every organization is obliged to comply with the relevant laws and any lapses in compliance can land it in serious trouble. A code of ethics facilitates legal compliance by setting standards that may exceed the minimum legal requirements.

Preventing Unethical Behavior

A code of ethics also spells out what constitutes unethical behavior and provides guidance on how it can be avoided. It sets standards for conduct that help prevent unethical practices such as discrimination, harassment, conflict of interests and deceit.

Reporting Ethical Violations

Effective mechanism for reporting cases of ethical violations is essential as it helps to take corrective action and remove deficiencies to prevent recurrence of such events. Code lays down the procedure for reporting ethical concerns and violations, including whom to report to, and outlines the protection available to whistleblowers.

Consequences for Violations

Violation of ethics is a serious matter in healthcare scenarios and it has to be dealt with strictly to prevent recurrence. Every hospital and health institution has its own rules and ways of dealing with ethical violations as contained in the organizational code of ethics. The penalty may range from a warning or disciplinary action to termination from employment.

Continuing Education and Training

Professionals in every field have an obligation to continuously upgrade their knowledge. Rapid advances in medical science, with new research, treatments, and technologies emerging regularly, make it essential for doctors, nurses and other caregivers to regularly update and upgrade their knowledge and skills. This aspect is also covered in the code of ethics which reflects their commitment to providing training and education to caregivers on ethical issues to keep pace with advances in healthcare. Continuing education courses can provide the necessary credits and hours required to maintain licensure or certifications to practice. It enables healthcare facilities to provide better care to their patients and keeps professionals involved in their work, leading to higher job satisfaction.

Review and Revision

Healthcare is one of the fastest evolving sectors and the rapidly changing healthcare environment makes it mandatory to review and revise the organizational code of ethics to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS

The code of ethics for a hospital healthcare facility and a biomedical research organization have many overlapping areas and some distinctive features owing to the difference in the nature of work.

The code of ethics for a healthcare facility is patient-centric and focuses on principles and values that guide the behavior of healthcare professionals with patients, families and other healthcare professionals.

In contrast, the code of ethics for a biomedical research organization focuses on the principles and values that guide the ethical conduct of research. It aims at protecting the research participants and ensuring integrity of data, conflict of interest and honesty and transparency in reporting results.



While both healthcare facilities and biomedical research organizations have similar guiding principles, the specific ethical considerations involved in each field require a unique code of ethics. The main features are as follows:

Respect for Human Dignity

Researchers must respect the inherent worth of human beings and treat them with dignity, irrespective of their race, caste, creed, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and physical disability.

Informed Consent

It is obligatory on the part of researchers to obtain informed consent from participants and ensure that they fully understand the purpose of the research, the risks and benefits involved, and that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Privacy and Confidentiality

It is mandatory for the researchers to protect the privacy and confidentiality of study participants by ensuring protection of their personal information.

Compensation for Harm to Participant

Ethical principles mandate that research participants should be compensated for any harm caused to them during research. The ethical principle of beneficence requires researchers to take steps to minimize the risks of harm to participants. In case harm occurs, they have to provide a fair compensation that may also include lost wages or other financial losses related to participation in the study, or appropriate care or cost of treatment to the affected participants.

Scientific Integrity

Researchers must adopt the best practices and uphold the highest standards of scientific integrity, ensuring that their study is conducted in an objective manner. Any conflicts of interest must be disclosed and addressed appropriately.

Animal Welfare

In case of studies involving animals the researchers have to strictly adhere to ethical standards and ensure that animals are treated with respect and dignity. They have to justify the use of animals by explaining the potential benefits of the research.

Social Responsibility

Researchers have a responsibility to contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge for the betterment of society and they must ensure that the research is conducted in a socially responsible manner.

Professionalism

Researchers have to observe the highest standards of professionalism and strictly avoid behavior that may compromise the integrity of the research or the reputation of the organization.

Compliance with Regulations

Compliance with all relevant laws, regulations and the ethical guidelines governing the conduct of biomedical research have to be followed in letter and spirit. Researchers have to ensure that research is conducted in accordance with the prescribed standards.

Responsible Data Management

All the data generated during the research has to be managed and stored properly and responsibly. Effective safeguards have to be put in place to ensure that there is no unauthorized sharing or disclosure of data.

Accountability

Researchers must take responsibility for the ethical conduct of their research, and be willing to address any ethical concerns that may arise during the course of their research. They must also ensure that all research findings are accurately reported and appropriately disseminated to the scientific community and the public.



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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is the importance of organizational codes of ethics in healthcare organizations?
2. What are the common features of codes of ethics of healthcare organizations?
3. What are the main differences in organizational codes of a hospital and a biomedical research institution?
4. Explain how the organizational code of ethics helps to improve standards of healthcare.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **The Code of ethics of a health organization helps to: (Tick the wrong option).**
 - a. Align with the ethical principles and values in all aspects of its operations.
 - b. Create a work environment that promotes ethical decision-making.
 - c. Illegal actions.
 - d. Promote a culture of integrity and accountability within the organization.
2. **The codes of ethics of a healthcare organization and a biomedical research organization:**
 - a. Are similar
 - b. Have many overlapping areas.
 - c. Are completely different
 - d. None of these
3. **Organizational code of ethics:**
 - a. Does not require revision
 - b. Remains relevant for all times
 - c. Requires periodical revision
 - d. All of these
4. **Code of ethics for a biomedical research organization: (Tick the wrong option)**
 - a. Focuses on the principles and values that guide the ethical conduct of research
 - b. Aims at protecting the research participants
 - c. Helps to ensure integrity of data conflict of personal values and ethical principles
 - d. Focuses on patient care
5. **Upholding scientific integrity requires:**
 - a. Honesty and transparency in reporting results
 - b. Study to be conducted in an objective manner
 - c. Conflict of interest must be declared
 - d. All of the above
6. **Ethical principles mandate that researchers must:**
 - a. Compensate participants for any harm caused during the research
 - b. Take steps to minimize the risks of harm to participants
 - c. Apprise participants of the risks involved in the study
 - d. All of the above

Answer Key

1. c 2. b 3. c 4. d 5. d 6. d

CHAPTER 20

Rights of Patients

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- The status of patients' rights in ancient systems of healthcare.
 - How the concept of patients' rights evolved.
 - The contribution of American Hospital Association in promoting patients' rights.
 - Patients' rights in India.
 - Responsibilities of patients.
 - Patient Care Partnership (PCP) charter.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- Introduction
 - Drawbacks of Ancient Healthcare Systems
 - Concept of Patients' Rights
 - The First Patient's Bill of Rights
 - Patients' Rights in India
 - Patients' Responsibilities
 - Patients' Rights in Developed Countries
-

KEY TERMS

Altruistic activities: Doing things that benefit others even if it brings no advantage to oneself.

Intertwined: To become very closely connected with something.

Coerced: Compelled to do something using force or threats.

Grievance: A cause for complaint, resentment over unfair treatment.

Redressal: The act of remedying something wrong or unfair.



INTRODUCTION

The modern system of healthcare has developed over thousands of years with the sole objective of promoting health and well-being of people. The ancient healthcare systems were rooted in religion and religious institutions, which played a significant role in people's daily lives. The healthcare practices were often intertwined with religious beliefs and religious institutions played a vital role in providing healthcare to the community.

Religion and medicine were closely linked and the priests were the primary healthcare providers. They used a combination of herbal remedies, massage, and magical spells to treat various ailments. For example, the temples of Asclepius, the ancient Greek God of medicine, served as hospitals where people could receive medical treatment and spiritual healing. Ayurveda, one of the oldest systems of medicine, had its roots in Hindu religious texts like Vedas. Religious institutions were the only healthcare providers, they engaged in altruistic activities and even provided care to poor people who did not have the ability to pay.

DRAWBACKS OF ANCIENT HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

The ancient healthcare systems also had a negative side. There was no standardized care and the systems had numerous shortcomings because of which patients often suffered. Ancient healthcare systems had their own constraints such as limited medical knowledge, poor sanitation, strong influence of spiritual practices, superstitions and religious beliefs, which affected healthcare practice of patients.

There was little participation of patients in deciding healthcare plans and medical treatments were administered without informed consent, and patients were often coerced into undergoing treatments against their will. Besides, certain diseases stigmatized patients who were denied fair and just treatment. As healthcare practitioners engaged in research to advance knowledge, medical procedures and experiments were conducted on patients without their knowledge or consent.

Evolution of ethics over the years provided some safeguards to protect the interests of patients but the concerns regarding their safety kept increasing as medical science made advances at a rapid pace. It gave rise to the concept of "patients' rights" to complement the ethical principles to ensure delivery of safe and effective care.

CONCEPT OF PATIENTS' RIGHTS

The issue of patients' rights gained due attention only in the 20th century. It was in the aftermath of the atrocities committed by the Nazis in the name of medical research during World War II that patients' rights got recognized.

People were subjected to medical experiments without their consent highlighting the issue of medical ethics to the center stage. The famous Nuremberg trials held by military tribunals in Germany in 1945–1946, which led to prosecution of German doctors and medical professionals for their involvement in war crimes, established the principle of informed consent for conducting medical procedures.

The right to medical care was recognized for the first time in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948. It turned out to be an important landmark in the development of patients' rights that followed subsequently.

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s brought the issue of recognition and protection of individual rights into sharp focus. Increasing awareness about patients' rights led to the emergence of patient activism and advocacy groups to combat discrimination in the healthcare system and protect rights of patients. They pushed for changes in healthcare policies to involve



patients in healthcare decision-making and adopting a patient-centered approach to care. There was an increasing realization that the only way to ensure safe care and protect the interests of patients was to empower them. They must have certain well-defined rights to protect them against harm and ensure that they are treated with dignity and autonomy.

THE FIRST PATIENT'S BILL OF RIGHTS

The first step toward empowerment of patients was taken in 1972 when the American Hospital Association adopted the Patient's Bill of Rights. It guaranteed patients the right to be informed about various healthcare treatment options with pros and cons to make autonomous decisions, the right to refuse treatment and the right to confidentiality to ensure privacy of their medical records. It outlined the fundamental rights of patients which facilitated their active involvement to make decisions about their own care through provisions like informed consent and the right to refuse treatment.

The patients' right issues have been under focus in all healthcare-related policy matters ever since and patients' rights continue to evolve. The outbreak of dreaded infections like the AIDS in the 1980s led to further advances in patients' rights, particularly the right to access experimental treatments. Patients' rights have continued to evolve to keep pace with advances in medical technologies and the fast changing social attitudes and political environment. The increasing thrust on principles of informed consent, confidentiality, quality care, dignity, transparency and nondiscrimination has empowered patients and it has helped in improving the quality of care. Patients' rights are now an essential component of modern healthcare.

Although the patients are not aware of the available treatment options, they are in a position to be empowered with rights to make own informed decisions about healthcare. They are active partners in formulation and implementation of treatment plans, which help to improve health outcomes. Some of the benefits Patient's Bill of Rights bestows on patients are:

Confidentiality of Personal Health Information

Patient rights help to protect the privacy of personal health information and patients are reassured that their medical information will not be disclosed to anyone without their knowledge and specific consent, except when the information is necessary for their treatment or required by law. Patients are reassured that information will be protected, they share all the information about their medical history and symptoms without hesitation, which enables the healthcare providers to arrive at accurate diagnoses and come up with better treatment plans.

Trusting Relationship

Patients' rights foster trust between patients and healthcare providers. A trusting relationship helps to instill confidence in patients that healthcare providers are committed to their well-being. They are in safe hands and get the best possible medical care. It improves communication and leads to better health outcomes.

Ensure Healthcare without Discrimination

Awareness about patients' rights facilitates fair and just treatment to all, without discrimination or biases. Patients receive healthcare with dignity and aligning with their values, beliefs, and personal preferences. Patient rights help to eliminate disparities in healthcare and ensure equal treatment to all patients.

PATIENTS' RIGHTS IN INDIA

While there are no specific laws covering patients' rights in India, patients do have several rights that are recognized and protected under various other laws, regulations and ethical standards. Legal provisions related to patient's rights are contained in Article 21 of the Constitution of India, Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, the Consumer Protection Act 1986, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations 2002, Drugs and Cosmetic Act 1940 and Clinical Establishment Act 2010.

Today, healthcare providers are under obligation to respect the rights of patients, which are recognized by various legal and regulatory bodies. Patients are now entitled to safe and respectful healthcare tailored to their individual needs and preferences.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the National Human Rights Commission issued the Charter of Patient Rights, which enlists 17 rights to which all patients in India are entitled. The document is intended to be a guide for the union and state governments to formulate concrete mechanisms to protect the rights of the patients and make them enforceable by law.

Many countries have set up regulatory authorities to enforce patients' rights but India does not have a dedicated regulator so far. Some states have adopted the National Clinical Establishments Act 2010, while some others have enacted their own legislations like the Nursing Homes Act to regulate hospitals.

The main rights included in the charter are as follows:

1. **Right to information:** Patients have the right to obtain authentic and relevant information regarding their medical condition, like nature and cause of illness, diagnosis, proposed investigations and management, method and options for treatment and possible complications. It is the responsibility of the healthcare professionals to provide all the relevant information and explain all the proposed medical interventions in a language and manner the patients can understand.
Patients and their designated caretakers also have a right to know the professional status of care providers.
2. **Right to records and reports:** Patients have the right to access original medical records. Healthcare facilities have a duty to provide medical records and reports to all patients or their caregivers. Healthcare facilities have to make available the records to the patients in original or allow them to photocopy at their own cost.
3. **Right to emergency medical care:** It is obligatory for every healthcare institution, government or private, to provide care to all. No patient can be turned away and denied emergency medical care by any institution.

The Supreme Court has laid down that all hospitals are duty bound to provide basic emergency medical care, which should be provided to the patient irrespective of paying capacity. Emergency medical care must be initiated without demanding advance payment.

4. **Right to informed consent:** No medical procedures can be performed without specific consent of the patients. It is mandatory for medical professionals to obtain informed consent before performing an operation on the patient. Informed consent must be sought prior to any potentially hazardous tests and interventions which carry risks. It has been explained in detail in the Drugs and Cosmetic Act Rules 2016.
5. **Right to confidentiality, privacy and dignity:** It is obligatory on the part of medical professionals to maintain the highest level of confidentiality regarding the private information of patients.

All patients have the right to privacy, and doctors have a duty to keep information about their health conditions and treatment plans strictly confidential. Patients' medical information can be disclosed only in specific circumstances to serve larger public interests, such as, protecting other people or when mandated by law.

Female patients have the right to a presence of another female person when male practitioners conduct physical examinations.

6. **Right to second opinion:** Patients are at liberty to get treatment from anywhere and they have a right to have a second opinion for any doctor of their choice.
7. **Right to transparency in rates of treatment:** Healthcare facilities are duty bound to display the rates of all the medical tests, procedures and treatment and maintain complete transparency about the charges.
8. **Right to nondiscrimination:** Patients have the right to receive treatment based on their illnesses or conditions, irrespective of HIV status or other infections, without any discrimination. Healthcare professionals cannot refuse treatment to any patient on considerations, like gender, caste, religion, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and other such factors.
9. **Right to safety and quality care according to standards:** Patients have the right to receive treatment in a safe, secure and hygienic environment. It is the duty of management of healthcare facilities to provide a safe and clean environment for treatment by putting in place infection control measures and making available safe drinking water and other required facilities.
10. **Right to choose alternative treatment options, if available:** Patients have the right to choose alternative treatment options, if available. They cannot be forced to follow any particular treatment course against their will. They can choose alternative treatment or refuse care after considering all available options. Once patients are informed about the available treatment options, they are free to choose the course ahead.
11. **Right to choose a source for obtaining medicines and tests:** They cannot be compelled to purchase prescribed medicines or diagnostic tests conducted from anywhere. No patient can be forced to buy medications from hospital pharmacy. As consumers, the patients have a right to have access to a variety of goods or services at competitive prices, it is up to them to decide from where they want to get the tests done.

Healthcare facilities, particularly corporate hospitals and other clinical establishments should not force the patients to purchase the medicines from the hospital pharmacies. If they are able to get medicines from outside at lower cost, that should be acceptable. Similarly, if the patients want to get their tests done from outside, hospitals should facilitate it.

12. **Right to proper referral and transfer:** Patients have the right to receive quality care in a seamless manner when referred to another or a different healthcare facility. They have a right to receive treatment at any subsequent healthcare facility after receiving treatment at the first healthcare facility and seek continuity of care. The right to proper referral and transfer mandates referrals must not involve any perverse commercial influence.
13. **Right to protection for patients involved in clinical trials:** Patients, when participating in clinical trials, have the right to due protection. It is the duty of healthcare researchers to ensure that clinical trials are conducted in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Central Drugs Standard Control following the prescribed protocols and good clinical practices.
14. **Right to protection in biomedical and health research:** Patients participating in biomedical research shall be deemed as research participants and entitled to “due protection” as available to research participants. The researchers will have an obligation to follow the National Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical and Health Research involving human participants in respect of such participants.
15. **Right to take discharge of patient, or body of deceased from the hospital:** A patient has the liberty to get discharged or leave the hospital anytime during treatment. Further, patients cannot be detained in a hospital on procedural grounds or disputes relating to payment of hospital charges. Similarly, caretakers have the right to receive the body of a deceased patient from the healthcare facility where the person was treated. The dead body cannot be withheld by the hospital citing procedural grounds or nonpayment of charges or disputes regarding payment of charges. Patients seeking discharge from a hospital or transfer to another hospital have the responsibility to settle the agreed upon payment.



- Right to patient education:** Patients have the right to receive education about facts relevant to their health condition, rights and responsibilities, officially supported health insurance schemes, entitlements in case of charitable hospitals and the procedure to seek redress of grievances. The education has to be imparted in a language and in a manner the patient understands.
- Right to be heard and seek redressal:** Patients and their caregivers have the right to give feedback or file complaints regarding the quality of healthcare they receive at a hospital. If patients have some grievances against hospital administration, the quality of treatment or a doctor or a nurse or any other caregivers, they are entitled to seek redressal. The hospitals are obliged to provide information and advice to the patients and their caregivers on how to give feedback, make comments, or lodge a complaint.

PATIENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Patients have also been assigned certain responsibilities to facilitate delivery of quality care by healthcare providers.

- Provide all health-related information
- Cooperate with doctors during examination and treatment
- Follow all instructions
- Pay hospital's agreed fees on time
- Respect dignity of doctors and other hospital staff
- Never resort to violence

PATIENTS' RIGHTS IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

There is not much awareness about patients' rights in India. The healthcare professionals and patients both are indifferent about the rights. The healthcare facilities lack effective mechanisms for providing feedback or lodging complaints regarding deficiencies in care.

In western countries, people are aware of patients' rights and the healthcare facilities have a proactive approach in educating the people and treating patients as partners in the healthcare delivery. The Patient Care Partnership (PCP) charter of the American Hospital Association (AHA) outlines the expectations and rights of patients when receiving healthcare services.

The PCP charter, displayed prominently in the hospital premises, reiterates the commitment of doctors, nurses and other professionals to work with patients and family members to meet the healthcare needs. The goal is to serve without bias and provide the same care and attention to patients as they would like their own family members to receive.

It encourages patients to ask questions, if they have any, and provides an overview of what they can expect during their hospital stay. Some of the salient features of PCP charter are as follows:

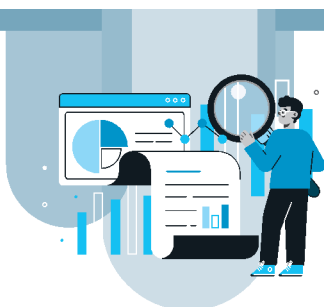
- **High quality hospital care:** Commitment to provide care patients need with skill, compassion, and respect. Patients have the right to know the identity of doctors, nurses, and others involved in your care and tell caregivers if they have any concerns about care or if they have pain. They can also know about students, residents and other trainees.
- **A clean and safe environment:** It reassures patients that the hospital deploys special policies and procedures to avoid mistakes in delivery of care and prevent abuse. If anything unexpected happens, they will be informed and any resulting changes in care plan will be discussed with them.
- **Involvement in patient care:** Medical condition and information about medically appropriate treatment choices will be discussed with patients to help them to make informed decisions. The information will



include benefits and risks of each treatment, whether treatment is experimental or part of a research study, reasonable expectation from treatment and any long-term effects it might have on patients' quality of life and financial consequences of using uncovered services.

Patients will provide information to caregivers about their health, past illnesses, surgeries or hospital stays, allergic reactions, any medicines or dietary supplements they are taking and coverage so that they can make good decisions about their healthcare.

- **Protection of patients' privacy:** Complete confidentiality of relationship with the doctor and other caregivers will be maintained and the sensitive information about patients' health and healthcare will not be disclosed. The privacy of medical information is protected by state and federal laws and hospital operating policies. Patients are provided with a Notice of Privacy Practices that describes the ways to disclose and safeguard patient information.
- **Help when leaving the hospital:** Hospitals will extend help to patients to identify sources of followup care and they will be informed if the hospital has a financial interest in any referrals. Hospitals will coordinate with caregivers so long as the patients agree and allow it to share information about care with them. If required, information and training about self-care will be provided.
- **Help with your billing claims:** Hospital bills and insurance coverage are often confusing, the staff will help patients to understand insurance coverage, file claims with healthcare insurers and complete the required documentation. If patients do not have health coverage, hospitals will try to help them to find financial help or make other arrangements.



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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is the significance of patients' rights in ensuring quality of healthcare?
2. What were the drawbacks of ancient healthcare system that gave rise to the concept of patients' rights?
3. What is the contribution of the American Hospital Association in promoting patients' rights?
4. What are the salient features of the Charter of Patients' Rights?
5. How does Charter of Patient Care Partnership help to secure the patients' rights?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Which of the following violates the rights of patient?
 - a. Receive considerate and respectful care
 - b. Know the costs of treatment choices
 - c. Seeking second opinion from another doctor
 - d. Discussing medical information with friends of patient
2. Which of the following is not true?
 - a. Patients' medical information can be disclosed when mandated by law
 - b. Patients' medical information can be disclosed with consent
 - c. Patients' medical information can be disclosed without consent
 - d. Patients' medical information can be disclosed to protect others
3. Patients participating in biomedical research are entitled to same protection as:
 - a. Researchers
 - b. Caretakers
 - c. Research participants
 - d. None of these
4. The right to choose a source for obtaining medicines and tests is violated when patients:
 - a. Buy medicines from a fair price shop outside the hospital
 - b. Are compelled to purchase medicines from hospital pharmacy
 - c. Get tests done from a government lab outside hospital
 - d. None of the above

Answer Key

1. d 2. c 3. c 4. b



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CHAPTER 21

Importance of Institutional Ethics Committees

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- ➔ The significance of institutional ethics committees.
- ➔ The concept of institutional action committees.
- ➔ The composition of ethics committees.
- ➔ The importance of mission statement of ethics committees.
- ➔ The mandate of institutional ethics committees.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- ➔ Introduction
- ➔ Concept of Ethics Committees
- ➔ Institutional Ethics Committees

KEY TERMS

Collaboration: To work together to achieve a defined and common purpose.

Mandate: An official or authoritative instruction or command.

Mission statement: An action-based statement that declares the purpose of an organization.

Organizational integrity: It is the integral ability of an organization to practice self-fidelity to function ethically.

INTRODUCTION

Ethics are essential for building a sustainable and peaceful society and promoting the overall well-being of people. Ethical principles provide a framework for responsible and acceptable behavior to guide individuals, groups and organizations to act in ways that promote the common good of the society. Ethics promote responsible behavior in every sphere of life, help to build trust and confidence and contribute to the well-being of individuals and society as a whole. Various professions and organizations have specific codes of ethics to promote morally acceptable conduct in their respective fields.

Without ethics, individuals and organizations would not have a set of standards to guide their behavior and society could experience a lack of trust, exploitation, injustice, and harm to individuals and the environment.



The trust deficit could lead to breakdown of social relationships and people could be more likely to engage in exploitative behavior, taking advantage of others for their own gain without regard for the consequences for others and the society as a whole.

However, merely having ethics does not help as people are mostly driven by self-interest and they are prone to unethical behavior. Ethics have to be enforced through an effective mechanism to ensure that they are followed consistently and fix accountability for unethical conduct. Enforcement of code of ethics is most important in healthcare settings as unethical actions of care providers can put human lives at risk.

CONCEPT OF ETHICS COMMITTEES

The concept of ethics committees has been designed to provide an effective mechanism to enforce the codes of ethics, It is an in-house arrangement for addressing ethical issues and promoting ethical behavior within organizations.

The concept of ethics committees in healthcare evolved in the middle of the 20th century as a response to the growing recognition of ethical dilemmas in patient care. Certain events that took place during World War II contributed to the evolution of the ethics committee was the publication of the nuremberg code in 1947, which was developed in response to the atrocities committed by Nazi doctors. It provided an ethical framework for research involving human subjects. It led to the development of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), which were created to review research studies for ethical considerations.

The growing need for a systematic approach to addressing ethical problems in healthcare drew attention to ethical issues in patient care in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. Ethical issues related to abortions, end-of-life decision-making and patients' priority in access to dialysis. The concept of the ethics committee emerged as a solution with the setting up of review committees for approval of decisions. The first hospital ethics committee was instituted by the New Jersey Supreme Court in 1976 in the case of Karen Ann Quinlan. Thereafter, the development of Healthcare Ethics Committees (HECs) took off and by the year 2000 almost 90% of hospitals in the US had such committees.

INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS COMMITTEES

The concept of the ethics committee has been widely adopted in healthcare institutions throughout the world. Today Institutional Ethics Committees (IECs) are an integral part of many healthcare organizations and play a crucial role in providing guidance and support for ethical decision-making.

Institutional ethics committees are important because they help to promote and ensure ethical decision-making in healthcare. The committees serve as resources for healthcare professionals, patients, and families who may be facing difficult ethical issues related to patient care, research or organizational decision-making. The committee can provide guidance, education, and support in navigating complex ethical issues and can help ensure that patients receive ethical and compassionate care.

An Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) comprises individuals from various disciplines, backgrounds, and professions who are responsible for reviewing and making decisions regarding ethical issues that arise in a healthcare institution. The committee serves as a resource for healthcare professionals, patients, and families to ensure that ethical principles are upheld in patient care, research, and organizational decision-making.

In India, the concept of Ethics Committees in healthcare institutions was first introduced by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in 2000 when the first set of guidelines on the establishment of Institutional Ethics Committees (IECs) for biomedical research were issued. The guidelines were revised in 2006 and 2017 to keep pace with changing ethical standards and practices.

The IECs are mandatory for all institutions engaged in biomedical research in India and many hospitals and healthcare institutions have set up their own ethics committees to oversee the ethical conduct of clinical practice, patient care, and related research activities.

Composition of Institutional Ethics Committees

The composition of committees must reflect the diverse disciplines providing care at the healthcare facility. The members of an Institutional Ethics Committee may include healthcare professionals, such as physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains, and administrators, as well as community representatives and ethicists. The committee should be diverse in its membership to ensure that it can provide guidance on a range of ethical issues and perspectives.

Ethics committees of institutions engaged in biomedical research are constituted in accordance with the guidelines of ICMR and their main mandate is to review, approve and monitor clinical research projects. The hospital ethics committees have to deal with complex ethical problems that affect the care and treatment of patients.

Institutional Ethics Committees (IECs) in healthcare are multidisciplinary and comprise a range of professionals and specialists drawn from various backgrounds. As per the ICMR guidelines, senior members of the institution with requisite experience in the field of research must head the ethics committees. They must have prior experience in conducting ethical reviews. The committee should include at least two medical experts, with experience in relevant specialties, two nonmedical experts, such as lawyers, social scientists and ethicists and independent person not related to institution. It should have at least one member of each gender.

The exact composition of an IEC can vary depending on the healthcare institution. Registered Nurses (RNs) are often included in IECs as they can provide a patient-centered perspective and insights into the delivery of care. Spiritual leaders, who can provide guidance on religious or cultural issues, and individuals representing the interests of patients and their families, are also included to have patient-centered perspectives in decision-making.

The term of members of the committee should be three years with the option to renew for one more term. The members should be imparted training in research ethics and the ethical review process. They declare any potential conflicts of interest and recuse themselves from the review process, if necessary.

The multidisciplinary nature of IECs facilitates a comprehensive and collaborative approach to ethical decision-making in healthcare, taking into consideration a wide range of perspectives.

The primary purpose of a mission statement for an institutional ethics committee in healthcare is to provide a clear and concise statement of the committee's purpose, values, and goals. This statement serves as a guiding principle for the committee's activities and helps to ensure that its actions are aligned with the institution's overall mission and values.

Mission Statement

The mission statement of an institutional ethics committee has much significance as it underscores its aims and objectives and the commitment to provide education and support to healthcare professionals, patients, and families. It also includes goals to promote research and scholarship in the field of healthcare ethics.

An eloquent mission statement helps to establish the credibility of the ethics committee in the healthcare community and provide a framework for its ongoing activities and initiatives. It is necessary to review and revise the mission statement periodically to keep abreast of the changing healthcare environment.

Purpose

A mission statement should clearly define the purpose, aims and objectives of the committee, which is to promote ethical decision-making in healthcare and to protect the rights and dignity of patients, families, and healthcare providers.

Scope

The mission statement should unambiguously spell out the scope of the committee's work such as types of ethical issues and dilemmas that it addresses.

Values

The mission statement must clearly state the key values that guide the work of the committee, such as, respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, veracity and compassion.

Responsibilities

The mission statement should outline the responsibilities of the committee, such as, reviewing and advising on clinical cases, developing policies and guidelines related to ethical issues, providing education and training to healthcare providers and staff, and conducting research on ethical issues in healthcare.

Collaboration

The mission statement should underscore the importance of collaboration and interdisciplinary teamwork in addressing ethical issues and the role of the committee in fostering effective communication and collaboration among healthcare providers, patients, families and other stakeholders.

Mission statement should be clear, concise, and comprehensive and reflect the commitment of the ethical committee to improve and upgrade knowledge through continuing learning to stay updated with latest developments in the field of healthcare ethics.

Role of Institutional Ethics Committees

The role and focus varies for different institutions, depending on their specific areas of operations in the health sector such as patient care, academics or research. In healthcare settings the IECs have three major roles, recommendation or formulation of policies on ethical issues in patient care, education of hospital staff, patients, family members, and the community on ethical issues and policies of the institution and address ethical issues in patient care, particularly questions about the treatment of specific patients.

IECs help to identify and resolve ethical issues in patient care related to informed consent, confidentiality, conflicts of interest and end-of-life decisions. They provide guidance on organizational policies and procedures related to ethical issues.

In academic institutions, the main concern of IECs is to ensure that research involving human subjects or animals is conducted in an ethical manner. They also deal with ethical issues related to academic integrity, including plagiarism, research misconduct and conflicts of interest.

Institutional ethics committees in research organizations focus on maintenance of ethical standards and protect the rights and welfare of research participants. They review research protocol, besides providing guidance on ethical issues related to data management, confidentiality, and intellectual property.

The main purpose of IECs in government organizations is to ensure that policies and programs are implemented in an ethical manner. They also provide guidance on ethical issues related to government decision-making, including conflicts of interest, transparency, and accountability.



Institutional Ethics Committees play a crucial role in ensuring that healthcare institutions in India uphold the highest ethical standards in all aspects of their operations. They are responsible for reviewing and approving research proposals to make certain that the rights and welfare of study participants are safeguarded and research is conducted in an ethical and responsible manner.

Functions of Institutional Ethics Committees

Ethics committees perform the primary roles of education, policy review and case consultation. Functions of ethics committees vary, depending on specific needs of the organization but there are some common functions. The main functions of IECs include reviewing and providing guidance on ethical issues related to patient care, research, and organizational decision-making.

Institutional ethics committees can help in resolving ethical dilemmas by providing guidance, education, and support to healthcare professionals, patients, and families. The committees can review cases and provide recommendations on how to approach ethical issues related to patient care, research, or organizational decision-making. The committee can also facilitate discussions and mediations to help resolve conflicts that may arise. Ultimately, the committee's goal is to ensure that ethical principles are upheld in patient care and organizational decision-making.

Review of Cases

The committees review cases involving ethical dilemmas referred by healthcare providers or patients and their families. They can also give recommendations on how to approach ethical issues related to patient care, research, or organizational decision-making.

Development of Policies and Guidelines

The IECs for healthcare providers to deal with ethical issues, such as, end-of-life decision-making, organ donation, or the use of experimental treatments. For instance, the purpose of the review can be to ensure patient autonomy and access to end-of-life care options such as hospice.

Ethical Decision-Making

Ethics committees help healthcare professionals to navigate through complex ethical dilemmas by providing guidance on ethical principles and values that should lead to informed decision-making.

The IECs may provide education and training to healthcare professionals on ethical principles and decision-making. They may also serve as resources for patients and families who may have questions or concerns about ethical issues related to their care.

Research

Ethics committees may engage in research to deal with emerging ethical dilemmas, promote ethical behavior among healthcare providers, and develop relevant interventions to protect patient rights and amend and revamp patient care protocols to improve quality of nursing care.

IECs can discontinue undesirable or inefficient treatments and develop strategies to prevent future ethical issues. They may review and approve research studies to ensure that they meet ethical standards, and may serve as a resource in the development and review of hospital policies and procedures.

Education and Training

They may provide education and training for healthcare providers on informed consent, patient autonomy, confidentiality and other relevant ethical issues. Proposing solutions to real or imagined conflicts. They may



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impart ethical education and training to the health professional. Ethics committees can extend moral support to healthcare professionals and help minimize the risk of legal liabilities.

Protection of Patients' Rights and Interests

The primary responsibility of ethics committees is to ensure that rights and interests of patients are safeguarded in healthcare decision-making. This is crucial as patients are quite often not in position to advocate or convey with clarity what kind of treatment they want due to illness or disability or various other reasons.

Organizational Integrity

Ethics committees can help healthcare organizations to maintain their integrity and ethical behavior by providing guidance on ethical policies and procedures and monitoring compliance with ethical standards.

Support to Stakeholders

Ethics committees provide support to all the stakeholders, patients, physicians, family members and facility staff in facing the ethical challenges presented by patients on trajectories of active decline They also provide consultation to healthcare providers and patients to enable them to make informed decisions after understanding all the options.

They may act as advocates to champion the rights of patients and work to ensure that the values and preferences of patients are respected during medical treatment.



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ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. What is an Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC)?
2. Why are institutional ethics committees important in healthcare settings?
3. What are the functions of an Institutional Ethics Committee?
4. Who are the members of an Institutional Ethics Committee?
5. How does an Institutional Ethics Committee help in resolving ethical dilemmas?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **The first hospital ethics committee was established in America in _____.**
 - a. 1870
 - b. 1942
 - c. 1976
 - d. 2000
2. **The concept of ethics committees was first introduced in India by the Indian Council of Medical Research in _____.**
 - a. 1970
 - b. 2000
 - c. 1950
 - d. 1947
3. **The Mission Statement of institutional ethics committees includes:**
 - a. Purpose
 - b. Responsibilities
 - c. Scope
 - d. All of these
4. **Institutional ethics committees in biomedical research organizations focus on _____.**
 - a. Protection and safety of research participants
 - b. Ethical issues related to academic integrity
 - c. Ensuring that research involving human subjects or animals is conducted in an ethical manner.
 - d. All of the above
5. **Function of Institutional Ethics Committees does not include:**
 - a. Review of ethical cases involving ethical dilemmas
 - b. Development of policies and guidelines for dealing with ethical issues
 - c. Management of human resources
 - d. Guide healthcare professionals to navigate through ethical situations.

Answer Key

1. c 2. b 3. d 4. d 5. c

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CHAPTER 22

Ethical Decision-Making

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying the chapter, the students will know:

- ➔ Necessity of ethical decision-making in nursing.
 - ➔ Importance of ethical decision-making.
 - ➔ Impediments to ethical decision-making.
 - ➔ Stepwise process of ethical decision-making.
 - ➔ Factors that prevent nurses from taking ethical actions.
-

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- ➔ Introduction
 - ➔ Importance of Ethical Decision-Making
-

KEY TERMS

Foster: To encourage, nurture or facilitate.

Hamper: To make more difficult, to hinder or impede.

Overwhelming: Something affecting so strongly that one finds it difficult to manage.

Professional integrity: The practice of maintaining appropriate ethical behavior, the quality of being honest and firm on moral principles.

Work-life balance: Prioritization between personal and professional activities in an individual's life.

INTRODUCTION

Moral conflicts and ethical challenges are integral to the healthcare environment. Healthcare providers cannot fulfill their responsibility to provide safe and effective care to patients without developing the ability to resolve ethical dilemmas. The quality of healthcare largely depends on the ethical competence of caregivers, particularly doctors and nurses, who frequently encounter ethical problems that are difficult to resolve.

Ethical decision-making is the key to building trust and ensuring responsible, safe and accountable care to patients. It goes a long way in fostering a positive work culture at workplaces, maintaining high levels of professional standards and ensuring legal compliance.



Nurses are responsible for providing care that is both safe and effective, it is imperative for them to analyze and examine the ethical implications of every decision they make.

IMPORTANCE OF ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

Ethical decision-making is of paramount importance as it helps to ensure delivery of high-quality patient-centered care. It is essential for building trust, ensuring legal compliance and creating an ethically safe and positive work environment.

Safe and Quality Care

Patients' safety is the prime concern of caregivers and nurses have the main responsibility to provide safe care to patients. Ethical decision-making promotes patient-centered care as it helps to uphold the patients' autonomy and facilitates care tailored to meet their needs, preferences and values of the patient.

Professional Integrity

Ethical decision-making is essential to maintain the trust of patients and the society of nurses and the nursing profession. It is all about maintaining professional integrity in nursing. Adherence to ethical standards reassures the nurses that they are providing care that conforms to their professional obligations.

Protects Interests of Stakeholders

Ethical decision-making ensures that the interests of all the stakeholders, patients, employees, healthcare organizations, suppliers and the community at large, are taken care of.

Promotes an Ethical Work Environment

Ethical decision-making encourages transparency, honesty and ensures accountability, when healthcare givers act ethically a positive work environment is created. An ethical work environment in turn facilitates ethical decision-making.

Legal Compliance

Nurses have the responsibility to provide care in accordance with laws and legal regulations. Ethical decision-making ensures that the care is provided in line with the legal requirements. Legal compliance is an important professional responsibility of nurses and they have to comply with a range of laws, regulations, and professional standards.

In short, ethical decision-making is the key to providing high-quality patient-centered care, maintaining professional integrity, complying with legal requirements and safeguarding interests of all the stakeholders.

On the other hand, failure to make ethical decisions in nursing can have far reaching effect on all the stakeholders, patients, healthcare organizations, nurses and the nursing profession as a whole. It is essential for nurses to prioritize ethical decision-making to achieve best possible outcomes for patients and maintain the highest standards of nursing care.

Barriers to Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making is easier said than done. It can be very challenging for nurses for several reasons, like lack of proper training, limitations of time, conflict of values, lack of support from peers and organization,

complex nature of ethical problems and emotional stress. In an unsupportive work environment, nurses may fear retaliation from seniors or colleagues for advocating and furthering ethical issues.

There can be other factors, like cultural and linguistic barriers hampering effective communication with patients because of which nurses may find it difficult to understand the viewpoint, values and preferences of patients.

Often organizational ethics, policies and protocols come in the way of ethical decision-making. Nurses also find it tough to act ethically in situations where the laws and regulations do not align with their ethical obligations toward the patients.

Nurses need to be compassionate and empathetic in dealing with the patients but they are also vulnerable to emotional distress. Nursing is an emotionally demanding and taxing profession and nurses do experience emotional stress when they encounter difficult ethical situations, which is a normal response to a stressful situation.

However, if they experience more intense stress or prolonged periods of stress, the body's response can lead to physical and emotional changes. A stressful work environment may make nurses vulnerable to the risk of emotional distress, if they are not cautious. They need to develop emotional resilience to cope with stress.

Nurses must take steps to effectively manage workplace stress and maintain their physical, mental and emotional well-being ensuring work-life balance, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, engaging in relaxation activities and eating a healthy diet. They can reach out to their colleagues and seniors to discuss and seek support to deal with stressful ethical situations. Taking breaks from work to spend time with friends daily and friends can also help them to avoid job burnout and emotional distress.

Managing workplace stress is essential for nurses to avoid emotional distress, which can lead to problems, like anxiety, depression, and other mental health-related issues. Nurses should not hesitate to seek timely professional help from specialists if they are unable to cope with overwhelming emotional distress.

Systematic Process of Ethical Decision-Making

Ethical decision-making is a systematic process to arrive at best possible choices based on moral principles, values and ethics. It is an approach that requires healthcare professionals to reflect on their own values, professional ethics and principles, evaluate situations, identify ethical issues, seek information and advice to deal with the situations and own responsibility for the outcomes of their actions (Flowchart 22.1).

Evaluate the Situation

The process begins with the evaluation of a situation that seems to be difficult to deal with and presenting a challenge. If a nurse has a gut feeling that something may be wrong, it is an indication that a challenge is at hand.

Determine the Nature of the Problem

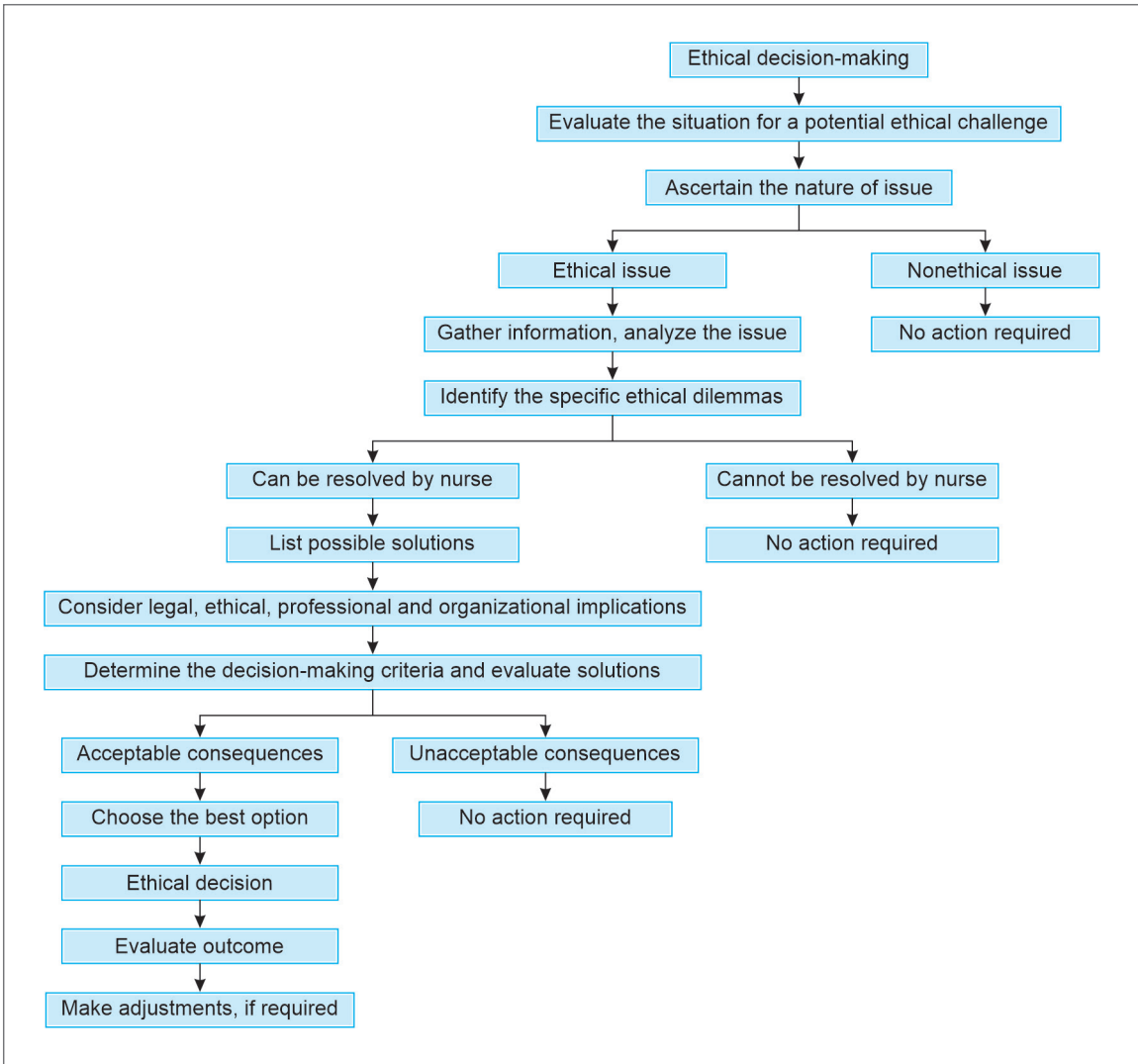
The next step is to identify the nature of the issue and try to ascertain whether it is an ethical problem or a nonethical clinical issue.

The best way to do it is to analyze the situation and see if the available options involve an ethical component. It will not be surprising if the situation involves more than one ethical concern. In fact, nurses frequently find themselves in situations involving a number of conflicting ethical obligations.

For example, consider a situation where a patient is experiencing excruciating pain. The reason could be failure of the nurse to administer the right dose of medicine. If this is so, it is a straightforward case of clinical negligence, there is no ethical issue involved. On the other hand, if the situation has arisen because the patient refuses to take pain killers for some reason. The nurse has to grapple with two competing ethical obligations, respect the right of the patient to make independent healthcare decisions or act in the best interest of patient in line with the ethical principle of beneficence.



Flowchart 22.1: Courses of action—ethical decision-making criteria



If the nurse goes by the wishes of the patient and does not administer pain-relieving medicines, it will violate the ethical principle of beneficence and not serve the best interests of the patient who will suffer in pain. If the nurse chooses the second option and administers medicine, the patient will be relieved of pain and feel comfortable. However, this option will violate the patient’s right to autonomy in making healthcare decisions.

Gather Information Keeping in View Different Perspectives on the Situation

Once it is clear that it is an ethical issue, the healthcare providers have to gather all required information, like the stakeholders, their concerns, values, cultural background and interests and, more importantly, who

are the healthcare decision-makers. The nurses should analyze the issue and take a call if it was within their competence and means to resolve it. They should take into consideration the time available within which the issue has to be resolved.

Identify Ethical Principles and Standards Applicable to the Situation

Analyze the situation and identify the relevant ethical principles and standards that are applicable. Each situation is different and attracts a different set of ethical principles depending on the nature of dilemma. Some of the common ethical principles and standards that may apply are as follows:

- **Autonomy:** Respecting the right of patients to make their own healthcare decisions. It may entail providing information in a language and manner that is easily understood by the patient.
- **Beneficence:** Acting in a way that promotes the well-being of individuals or groups.
- **Nonmaleficence:** Doing no harm or minimizing harm to individuals, groups.
- **Informed consent:** Providing all the information required by patients to make their own independent healthcare decisions.
- **Confidentiality:** Respecting the patients' right to privacy, no sharing of medical information without consent.
- **Justice:** Fair and equitable treatment to patients by ensuring just distribution of benefits and burdens.
- **Professionalism:** Adhering to ethical principles, laws and professional standards set by regulatory bodies.
- **Veracity:** Be honest and truthful in communication with patients and their families.

Determine the Decision-Making Criteria to Evaluate Potential Solutions

Identify the various ethical principles and standards that are applicable to the situation and take into consideration the most relevant. Consider the goals and values of the patient, family members, healthcare providers, and stakeholders and understand their priorities.

Evaluate the likely outcomes of each potential solution and their implications for various stakeholders and ascertain whether they are consistent with the relevant ethical principles and standards to arrive at the decision-making criteria.

Apply the criteria to each potential solution to ascertain if any trade-offs or compromises are required to balance out competing ethical principles or priorities.

List the Possible Courses of Action

Consider the pros and cons of every option. The options that are unacceptable should be dropped and out of the acceptable course of actions, implement the one, the benefits of which outweigh the harms. Select the course of action that is most consistent with the decision-making criteria and ethical principles.

Next, take into consideration ethical, legal, professional and organizational standards relevant to the situation. Critically examine each option and examine the consequences. Leave aside the options with unacceptable consequences.

Use ethical reasoning to decide the best option undertaking a critical analysis to ascertain what makes one option ethically more correct and preferable over another.

Various contextual factors like role of nurse-patient relationship in making an option preferable should also be taken into consideration.

Weigh the benefits and harms of the acceptable options to choose the one that serves the best interests of the patient. The core concern in ethical decision-making has to choose the course of action that is most likely to promote the best interests of the patient.

Implement the Solution

After having arrived at an ethical decision, care should be taken to implement the solution in a transparent manner and with respect to the stakeholders involved.

Monitor the Outcome

Nurses should keep a close watch on the outcome of the solution and adopt a proactive approach to make necessary adjustments, if required, to ensure that the goals of stakeholders are met. Decision-making is a complex process and it has to be improved and refined through iterative process. Nurses must reflect on the entire decision-making process with a view to improving the outcomes and to identify any areas for improvement. It involves critical thinking to balance out conflicting values and interests.

Reflect on the Process

After completing the decision-making process and implementing the chosen solution, reflect on the entire process to ascertain, if the course of action conforms to ethical principles and aligns with the desired outcome. Make necessary improvements in the process to ensure that the patient's needs are met and the ethical standards are upheld.

Factors that Hold back Nurses from Taking Ethical Actions

Ethical decision-making is not easy and healthcare providers mostly tend to ignore ethical issues. If the nurse is not able to find an ethically correct course of action, the reasons for it must be ascertained so that remedial measures can be taken for promoting an ethical work environment.

Some of the factors that may hold back nurses from taking ethical actions are as follows:

Lack of adequate knowledge and understanding: Nurses may lack adequate knowledge or understanding of ethical principles and guidelines and as a result, they do not have confidence to make ethical decisions. They are not clear about what to do which can lead to uncertainty in ethical decision-making.

Time constraints: Mostly overworked, nurses provide care in a hectic and stressful environment. They have limited time to make ethical decisions as a result they often neglect ethical issues and give priority to other tasks.

Conflicting values: Nurses find it difficult to make ethical decisions when their personal values and beliefs clash with the ethical principles of the profession. The lack of cultural competence also holds back nurses from taking ethical actions.

Unsupportive work environment: Nurses often have to work in environments that are not supportive of ethical conduct. They find it difficult to take ethical actions, as they do not get necessary support from their colleagues or management. At times, they are reluctant to take ethical actions fearing adverse repercussions like a rebuke from the management or even loss of job in the worst-case scenario.

Institutional policies: Nurses face big impediments in taking ethical actions when the institutional policies are not in conformity with ethical principles. In the event of a clash of ethics with institutional policies, nurses have no option but to go by the regulations of the organization or may create barriers for nurses to take ethical actions.

It is imperative for healthcare organizations to promote an ethical work environment and provide support to nurses and other caregivers in taking ethical actions.

ASSESS YOURSELF

Review Questions

1. Why is ethical decision-making essential in healthcare settings?
2. What are the benefits of ethical decision-making?
3. What are the main barriers to ethical decision-making?
4. Explain the process of ethical decision-making with the help of a flowchart.
5. What are the main factors that hold back nurses from ethical decision-making?

Multiple Choice Questions

1. **Identifying the _____ issue is the first step toward ethical decision-making.**
 - a. Unethical
 - b. Legal
 - c. Ethical
 - d. Professional
2. _____ **is/are part of the ethical decision-making process.**
 - a. Determining the nature of problem
 - b. Identifying the relevant ethical principles applicable to the situation
 - c. Listing the potential solutions
 - d. All of the above
3. **Ethical decision-making is a complex affair that is improved and refined through _____ process.**
 - a. Legal
 - b. Iterative
 - c. Nonmoral
 - d. Clinical
4. **Nurses often fail to address ethical issues due to _____.**
 - a. Lack of adequate knowledge or understanding of ethical principles
 - b. Time constraint
 - c. Conflict of personal values and ethical principles
 - d. All of the above
5. **Failure of nurses to address ethical issues may lead to _____.**
 - a. Cultural erosion
 - b. Legal wrangles
 - c. Moral distress
 - d. Social isolation
6. **Ethical decision-making helps to _____.**
 - a. Create an ethical environment at workplaces
 - b. Protect professional integrity
 - c. Protect interests of all the stakeholders
 - d. All of the above

Answer Key

1. c 2. d 3. b 4. d 5. c 6. d

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Refer 'fc' for flowchart and 't' for table respectively.

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