

PRINCIPLES OF MEDICAL ETHICS

Principles

of

medical

ethics

① Autonomy

② Beneficence

③ non-maleficence

④ social justice

* BENEFICENCE

an action that is done for the benefit of others

↳ We take beneficent actions to
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{prevent or remove harm} \\ \text{improve the situation of others} \end{array} \right.$

↳ goal of medicine $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{promote welfare of patients} \\ \text{physicians possessing skills and knowledge to enable them to assist others.} \end{array} \right.$

"If you cannot help, do not harm"

↳ Physicians are expected to
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{refrain from causing harm} \\ \text{help their patients} \end{array} \right.$

<< Constraints on beneficence >> patient driven / practitioner driven / External.

① Patient-driven constraints
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{motivated by health interests} \\ \text{conflicts happen when patient's opinion is different than doctor's} \\ \text{rejecting treatment} \rightarrow \text{patient's must understand consequences.} \end{array} \right.$

↳ Treatment Refusal \rightarrow what doctors must consider?
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{patient's competence (consciousness?)} \\ \text{enough information is provided} \\ \text{voluntary choice} \end{array} \right.$

↳ Physician's act
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{listening} \\ \text{correct misunderstanding} \\ \text{patient is fully informed.} \end{array} \right.$

② Practitioner-driven constraints

↳ Patient's requesting unnecessary medical services

↳ Using EBM guidelines not in the best interest for patients
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Evidence based medicine} \end{array} \right.$

③ External constraints

① Lack of resources \rightarrow waitlist / referrals / Treatment

② Being on a specialist's waiting list for too long which leads to ethical problems \rightarrow Ex. death of patient while waiting for treatment

③ Consider rights of others

<< Obligations of a doctor >>

① prevent and remove harm

② risks VS. benefits \rightarrow weigh and balance them
 of an action

③ protect and defend rights of others

④ rescue the ones in danger

⑤ help ones with disabilities

<< Examples of beneficent actions >>

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Resuscitating a drowning victim} \\ \text{providing vaccinations} \\ \text{encouraging patients to quit harmful actions (smoking) and start exercising} \\ \text{talk about disease prevention} \end{array} \right.$

* NON-MALEFICENCE

not inflicting harm intentionally \rightarrow

"If you can't help, do not harm"

↳ Physicians must not give ineffective treatment or act with hate toward the patient

↳ negligence when you impose a careless or unreasonable risk

▷ This principle offers little use because many beneficial treatments have high risks

▷ Risk-benefit of treatment must be calculated so that the benefit outweighs the burden (risk)

↳ and the risks must be understood.

▷ The primary consideration is \rightarrow not harming your patient is more important than doing them good

↳ why? practitioners tend to give treatment that they believe will do good without evaluating the harm

↳ so practitioners should
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{not prescribe medicine that is harmful or could be harmful} \\ \text{inform the patient of the risks and benefits} \end{array} \right.$

<< Examples of non-maleficent actions >>
 - stopping a harmful medication
 - not providing ineffective medications

▷ In some situations the risk of not getting the treatment > the risk of getting it

↳ Saving a life is more important than not harming the patient (risk of treatment)

• Double Effect two types of consequences for the same action or (combined effect of beneficence and non-maleficence) ↗ In medicine

↳ Ex: the use of morphine and other analgesics (مسكنات)

Effect of morphine → • Beneficial effect → minimize pain and suffering
 • maleficent effect → suppressing the respiratory system
 ↳ hastens the fate of the patient.

* AUTONOMY

The capacity to think, decide, act based on thoughts, decisions freely and independently

↳ Includes: ① Truth-telling ② Confidentiality ③ Informed consent

↳ patients have the right to:

have full knowledge and active participation in treatment / free will and choice / have respect

① Truth-telling:

↳ Increase knowledge = increase sorrow
 ↳ IP not done, doctor-patient relationship is endangered
 ↳ obligation to disclose patients' secrets and information

* up until 1970s → the american culture didn't use truth-telling

↳ Informed consent is a priority over other ethical values (ask patient whether they want to know diagnosis)

* lying to the patient was a common practice (especially if it was in their best interest)

* Reasons for overriding truth-telling
 ↳ patients not in a position to know the truth
 ↳ patients don't want to know if it is bad news

↳ It was overridden a lot when it came to cancer diagnosis

* It's importance:

- ① Integral to all communication because it is used to make decisions
- ② commitment to truth shows respect
- ③ builds trust.

patients wouldn't have enough information to make a good decision or their decision would be based on false information

② Confidentiality: is commonly applied to conversations between doctors and patients

↳ known as patient-physician privilege
 ↳ prevents physicians from revealing their discussions with patients
 ↳ maintain confidentiality of all personal medical treatment information
 ↳ Based on loyalty and trust

* When is information revealed? consent / benefit of patient / ethically and legally required

* Exceptions → when you should break confidentiality:

- ① Legal reasons: report gunshot wounds → to police / report impaired drivers → to department of motor vehicles
- ② Harm is being inflicted upon others: Diagnosis of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) / child abuse
- ③ patient gives consent to disclosure of information or the patient's consent is undesirable (family consent)
 ↳ patient is not conscious
- ④ Court order / Public interest / Research

* **Obstacles** :

- ① Information must be shared with health professionals who are related to the course of treatment

- ② patient's information is stored on large electronic database that isn't 100% guaranteed

* **Should patients have access to their information?**

Against → being unable to cope with data / Opinions could cause anxiety /

Third party information

With → Data belongs to patient / improved accuracy

3 **Informed Consent**: a patient's willing acceptance of a medical intervention after adequate

disclosure from their doctor of

- nature of intervention
- risks and benefits
- alternative treatment options

or

the patient must be fully informed about and understand the potential benefits and risks of their choice of treatment.

* **what constitutes it?**

↳ disclosure

↳ understanding

↳ voluntary

↳ Agreement

▷ being uninformed could lead to wrong decisions that aren't reflective of values and wishes

▷ Patients can choose

- choose to make their own decision
- choose someone else to make that decision

↳ If they are unable

- someone chosen by the patient
- their family members

 make the decision

▷ value of consent is closely related to the value of autonomy and truth-telling

* **Consent is important for:**

① Examination of

- patient
- person for medicolegal reasons

② Involvement in

- students' examination
- research

③ postmortem examination and removal of organs and tissues for transplant

* JUSTICE

fair treatment and no discrimination for any reason / Equity in distribution of burden and benefits

↳ actions are

- consistent
- accountable
- transparent

↳ respect Law

▷ **How to allocate scarce health care resources?**

↳ resources should be distributed based on needs, because people have equal rights to receive treatment

distributing resources based on } * Disadvantaged groups = Cinderella group → Children, women at child bearing age and elderly

} * Cost-benefit analysis

* **What are the resolutions of ethical dilemmas?**

principles / Ethical codes / Clinical Judgement / Reasonal analysis / Ethical committees /

Ethical tests / declarations / Oaths and pledges / common sense / debate / Ethical consults /

The law

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