

Ethical Issues in Health Care

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Group 9

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Conflict of Interest



Conflict of Interest

Any situation in which health care providers or other individuals conduct their personal affairs while carrying out their professional activities

Factors leading to conflicts of interest

- Interpersonal relationships
- Difference of opinion
- Business or economical conflicts

Conflicts of Interests and Physician Assistants

The AAPA's Guidelines for Ethical Conduct states:

"Physician Assistants should place service to patients before personal material gain and should avoid undue influence on their clinical judgment"

A brief history of managed care

- A method used to resolve the problem of increasing cost of healthcare delivery
- The first official health care organization created by Henry Kaiser in 1938 to provide health care for workers building the dams on the Colorado and Columbia Rivers

Managed Care

- By 2001, only 7% of employees covered under the traditional fee-for-service plan
- Different types of managed care:
 - Health Maintenance Organization (HMO)
 - Preferred Provider Organization (PPO)
- Benefits such as encouraging subscribers to participate in preventive health care

Ethical issues concerning managed care

- A pre-determined amount of money paid by the managed care organization to the healthcare providers for a particular service providing to the patients = CAPITATION
- Healthcare providers less inclined to provide complete care to patients enrolling in managed care than in patients paying out-of-pocket

"Bullying" in managed care



Ethical issues concerning managed care

- Loss of trust by the patients once they are aware of the effects of managed care
 - Getting less time with the healthcare provider
 - May not be informed of the best available option due to the "gag" policy

Risk Management

- Precautions taken in order to prevent or eliminate the risk of mistakes or problems
- Steps include activities to:
 - Identify, evaluate, and reduce the risk
- Simplest example of RM in health care system:
 - A Physician Assistant showing friendly attitude and genuine concern toward the patient

Ethical Concerns regarding Risk Management

- Scenario:
 - A patient arrives into the ED with chest pains.
 - By mistake the Physician Assistant gives an incorrect dosage of medication.
 - Patient develops additional complications and has to stay in the hospital longer than expected.

Ethical Concerns regarding Risk Management

- Should the PA tell the patient about the mistake?
- Admitting the error – possibility of facing a lawsuit but risk management steps can help minimize the problem/negative effects
- Denying the error – puts the hospital, supervisor, and self at risk. Also, neglect of principle obligation to be the patient's advocate

Four Bioethical Principles

- Autonomy
- Beneficence
- Nonmaleficence
- Justice



Autonomy

- Giving patient the right to make his/her own decisions, regardless of what is being suggested by the provider
- Expands to include patients' right to privacy

Example of Autonomy

- A Physician Assistant lectures a patient on the importance of using condoms and contraception but the patient still continues to have unprotected intercourse.
- The PA must respect the patient's decision on their way of life.

Beneficence

- Doing what is in the best interest of the patient
- Goal: Increasing the patient's quality of life in both health-related and general lifestyle ways



Examples of Beneficence

- A patient has managed care insurance coverage that hinders referrals to certain specialists.
- The patient needs to see a specialist not covered by this plan.
- The Physician Assistant should help the patient get the recommended and effective treatment.

Examples of Beneficence cont'd

- A patient not willing to undergo a mastectomy because of fear of losing her feminine identity
- Healthcare providers should:
 - honor the patient's autonomy
 - be able to recognize that this decision would serve to better the patient's *general quality of life*
- Goal is to do what is in the PATIENT'S best interest

Nonmaleficence

- The avoidance of causing harm to the patients
- Taken with beneficence, the goal is to maximize "good" while minimizing "harm"

Examples of maximizing "good" and minimizing "harm"

- Inherent risk in many medical procedures versus an opportunity for better diagnosing, care, and treatment.
- Examples:
 - The risk of invasive diagnostic testing (i.e., amniocentesis or chorionic villi sampling during pregnancy) vs the clinical utility of the results of the test.
 - The use of chemotherapy in treating cancer patient despite its known toxicity

Justice

- Fair distribution of limited resources
 - medical equipment
 - services
 - the healthcare providers' time.



Examples of Justice

- A Physician Assistant deciding which patients should get a limited supply of a vaccination
- Deciding the order of treating patients in the ED
 - treating more or less severe patients first
 - treating patients based on what insurance – if any – they have.

Code of Ethics for Physician Assistant Revisited

"Physician Assistants shall place service to patients before personal material gain and should avoid undue influence on their clinical judgement."

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THANK YOU!