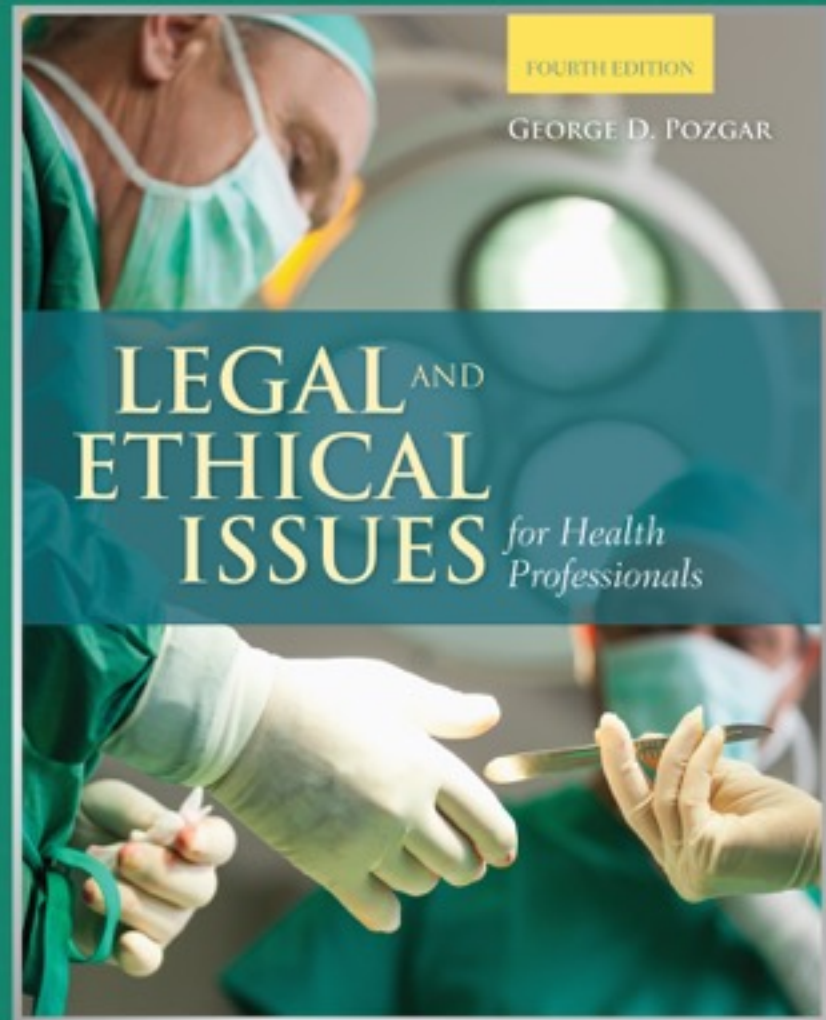


Chapter 1

Introduction to Ethics



I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness I can show to any creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer it, for I shall not pass this way again.

-Stephen Grellet

Learning Objectives

- Explain what ethics is, its importance, and its application to ethical dilemmas.
- Describe the concepts of morality, codes of conduct, and moral judgments.
- Understand relevant ethical theories and principles.
- Describe virtue ethics and values and how they more clearly describe one's moral character.

Learning Objectives, cont'd

- Understand how religious ethics can affect one's moral character.
- Explain the concept of situational ethics and how changes in circumstances can alter one's behavior.
- Understand the importance of reasoning in the decision-making process.

Good can triumph over evil.

- Author Unknown

Words Are “Tools of Thought”

- As with the study any new subject:
 - Ethics vocabulary and an understanding of abstract theories and principles of ethics will be necessary.
 - Arms the decision-maker with information necessary to make difficult care decisions.

What Is Ethics?

- *Ethics* is the branch of philosophy that seeks to understand the nature, purposes, justification, and founding principles of moral rules and the systems they comprise.
 - Deals with values relating to human conduct.
 - Focuses on the rightness and wrongness of actions, as well as the goodness and badness of motives and ends.

Scope of Ethics

- *Microethics*
 - Individual's view of right and wrong.
- *Macroethics*
 - Global view of right and wrong.

Ethics from Various Perspectives

- Ethics used in different but related ways
 - *Philosophical ethics*
 - Inquiry about ways of life and rules of conduct
 - *General pattern or way of life*
 - Religious ethics
 - *Set of rules or “moral conduct”*
 - Professional codes for ethical behavior

Why Study Ethics?

- To make sound judgments, good decisions, and right/better choices.
- Understand the goodness and badness of motives and ends.

Morality

Aim above Morality.

*Be not simply good;
be good for something.*

–Henry David Thoreau

What Is Morality?

- *Morality* describes a class of rules held by society to govern the conduct of its individual members.
- Implies quality of being in accord with standards of right and good conduct.

Morals

- Ideas about what is right and wrong
- Guides to behavior that rational persons put forward for governing their behavior

Code of Conduct

- Generally prescribes standards of conduct, states principles expressing responsibilities, and defines the rules expressing duties of professionals to whom they apply.

Codes of Ethics Provide for

- *Standards* – guides to human conduct.
- *Principles* – describe responsibilities.
- *Rules of expected conduct* – no allowance for individual judgment.

Moral Judgments

- Judgments concerned with what an individual or group believes to be right or proper behavior in a given situation.
- Involves assessment of another person's moral character.
 - Based on how he or she conforms to moral convictions established by the individual and/or group.

Morality Legislated

- Law is distinguished from morality in that
 - Law has explicit rules, penalties.
 - Laws are created to set boundaries for societal behavior.
 - Laws are enforced to ensure that expected behavior happens.

Moral Dilemmas

- *Moral dilemmas* arise when values, rights, duties, and loyalties conflict
- Caregiver must not only examine what he or she considers the right thing to do, but
 - What are the alternatives
 - What are the patient's known wishes

Ethics, too, are nothing but reverence for life. This is what gives me the fundamental principle of morality, namely, that good consists in maintaining, promoting, and enhancing life, and that destroying, injuring, and limiting life are evil.

-Albert Schweitzer

Theories of Ethics

- Ethical theories attempt to introduce order into the way people think about life and action.
 - They are the foundations of ethical analysis and provide guidance in the decision-making process.

Metaethics

- *Metaethics* is the study of the origin and meaning of ethical concepts.
- Metaethics seeks to understand ethical terms and theories and their application.
- It involves exploring the connection between values, reasons for action, and human motivation.

Normative Ethics

- *Normative ethics* is prescriptive in that it attempts to determine what moral standards should be followed so that human behavior and conduct may be morally right.
 - Primarily concerned with establishing standards or norms for conduct and is commonly associated with investigating how one ought to act.
 - Involves the critical study of major moral precepts, such as what things are right, what things are good, and what things are genuine.

Descriptive Ethics

- *Descriptive ethics*, also known as comparative ethics, is the study of what people believe to be right and wrong, and why they believe it.
 - Describes how people act.
 - Whereas normative ethics prescribes how people ought to act.

Applied Ethics

- *Applied ethics* is the philosophical search (within western philosophy) for right and wrong within controversial scenarios.”
 - The application of normative theories to practical moral problems, such as abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide.

Consequential Ethics

- *Consequential theory* of ethics emphasizes that the morally right action is whatever action leads to the maximum balance of good over evil.
- Rightness or wrongness of an action is based on the consequences or effects of the action.

Utilitarian Ethics

- Moral worth of an action is determined solely by its contribution to overall usefulness.
 - Philosophy that advocates greatest good for greatest number
 - Obligation to do whatever will achieve the greatest good for the greatest number

Deontological Ethics

- *Deontology ethics* is often referred to as duty-based ethics. It involves ethical analysis according to a moral code or rules, religious or secular. *Deon* is derived from the Greek word meaning “duty.”
- Theory differs from consequentialism in that consequences are not the determinant of what is right; therefore, doing the right thing may not always lead to an increase in what is good.

Nonconsequential Ethics

- The *nonconsequential ethical theory* denies that the consequences of an action are the only criteria for determining the morality of an action.
 - Rightness or wrongness of an action is based on properties intrinsic to the action, not on its consequences.

Ethical Relativism

- Morality is relative to the norms of one's culture.
- Actions can be considered right or wrong depending on the accepted norms of the society in which they are practiced.
 - For example, slavery may be considered an acceptable practice in one society and unacceptable in another.

Principles of Ethics

Ethical principles are universal rules of conduct, derived from ethical theories that provide a practical basis for identifying what kinds of actions, intentions, and motives are valued.

Principles of Ethics – I

- **Autonomy**
 - Right to make one's own decisions
- **Beneficence**
 - Principle of doing good
 - Demonstrating kindness
 - Showing compassion
 - Helping others
 - Paternalism
 - Making decisions for others

A Case of Paternalism

The family physician does not fully inform Mr. Smith as to the seriousness of his illness and how the consequences of the various alternative treatments might affect his life style.

Discuss the legal and ethical issues.

Ethical and Legal Issues

- Legal issues
 - Informed consent
- Ethical issues
 - Autonomy
 - Paternalism

Principles of Ethics – II

- **Nonmaleficence**
 - Avoid causing harm.
 - Not concerned with improving others' well-being but with avoiding the infliction of harm.

Principles Ethics – III

- Justice
 - Obligation to be fair in distribution of benefits and risks
 - Distributive Justice
 - Requires all individuals be treated equally
 - Justice and government spending

Age and Justice

Should an 89-year-old patient get a heart transplant because he or she is higher on the waiting list to receive a heart transplant than a 10-year-old girl?

Age and Justice, cont'd

Should a pregnant 39-year-old single parent get a heart transplant because he or she is higher on the waiting list to receive a heart transplant than a 10-year-old boy?

Which Disaster Patients Get Treated First?

- Room #1: Severely injured patients not expected to live.
- Room #2: Severely injured patients most likely to live if treated.
- Room #3: Injured patients will live but will suffer varying degrees of disability if not treated promptly.

Emergency Care

Two patients in critical condition, who gets treated first?

- First patient who walks through door
- Younger patient
- Patient most likely to survive
- Patient who can pay for services
- Patient with most serious condition

Scarce Resources

- What happens when resources are scarce and only one of two patients can be treated?
- What should be the determining factors
 - Age
 - Position in life
 - Patient wishes

Virtue Ethics and Values

- *Virtue ethics*
 - Focuses on the inherent character of a person rather than on the specific actions he or she performs.
- *A virtue describes moral excellence and that which has beneficial quality.*
 - *Virtues are habits.* Once acquired, they become characteristic of a person.

Moral Value

- Is the relative worth placed on some *virtuous behavior*.
- Values change as needs change.
- What has value to one person may not have value to another.

Values

- Values represent a standard of conduct.
 - *Used for judging goodness or badness of an action.*

Intrinsic and Instrumental Values

- *Intrinsic Value*
 - Something that has value in and of itself
- *Instrumental Value*
 - Something that helps to give value to something else
 - For example, money is valuable for what it can buy

Pillars of Moral Strength – I

Virtues and Values

- **Courage**
 - The mental or moral strength to persevere and withstand danger

Courage is the greatest of all virtues, because if you haven't courage, you may not have an opportunity to use any of the others.

-Samuel Johnson

What Is Courage?

- *Courage* is the mental or moral strength to persevere and withstand danger. “Courage is the ladder on which all the other virtues mount.”
- Courage involves balancing fear, self-confidence, and values. Without courage, we are unable to take the risks necessary to achieve the things most valued.

The Courageous Person

A courageous person has good judgment and a clear sense of his or her strengths, correctly evaluates danger, and perseveres until a decision is made and the right goal that is being sought has been achieved.

Pillars of Moral Strength – II

Virtues and Values

- **Wisdom**
 - The judicious application of knowledge
- **Temperance**
 - Orderliness and moderation
- **Commitment**
 - Agreement or pledge to do something

Pillars of Moral Strength – III

Virtues and Values

- **Compassion**
 - Sympathy for another's suffering
 - Detachment
- **Conscientiousness**
 - One who has moral integrity and a strict regard for doing what is considered the right thing to do
- **Discernment**
 - Ability to make a good decision without personal biases

Pillars of Moral Strength – IV

Virtues and Values

- **Fairness**
 - Ability to make judgments free from discrimination
- **Fidelity**
 - Being true to our commitments and obligations to others

Pillars of Moral Strength – V

Virtues and Values

- **Freedom**
 - Free to make choices for oneself within the boundaries of law
- **Honesty/Trustworthiness/Truth Telling**
 - Confidence a person will act with right motives
- **Integrity**
 - Steadfast adherence to strict moral or ethical code and a commitment not to compromise this code

Pillars of Moral Strength – VI

Virtues and Values

- **Kindness**
 - Considerate and sympathetic to another's needs
- **Respect**
 - Show special regard to someone or something
- **Hopefulness**
 - Looking forward to something with the confidence of success

Pillars of Moral Strength – VII

Virtues and Values

Tolerance

- *Positive tolerance*
 - Implies that a person accepts differences in others
 - Tolerant people are generally free of prejudice and discrimination
- *Negative tolerance*
 - Implies that one will reluctantly put up with another's beliefs
 - In other words, simply tolerating the views of others

Cooperation and Teamwork

Cooperation is the process of working with others. In the health care setting, caregivers must work together to improve patient outcomes.

Forgiveness

- The willingness to pardon someone who has wronged you in some way.
- A form of mercy.
- Forgiveness is to forgive and let loose the bonds of blame.

Religious Ethics

- Religion provides a moral code for appropriate behavior.
 - Prospect of divine justice helps us tolerate the injustices in life.
 - Need to better understand cultural diversity and the importance of religion in the healing process.

Spirituality

In the religious sense implies that there is purpose and meaning to life; spirituality generally refers to faith in a higher being.

Varying Religious Beliefs – I

- Judaism
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
 - Falun Gong

Varying Religious Beliefs – II

- Zen
- Taoism
- Christianity
- Islam

Religious Beliefs and Duty Conflict

- Religious beliefs and codes of conduct sometimes conflict with the ethical duty of caregivers to save lives.
 - For example, Jehovah's Witnesses, believe that it is a sin to accept a blood transfusion.
 - Important for hospitals to work out such issues in advance with legislative bodies and the judicial system.

Secular Ethics

- *Secular ethics* is based on codes developed by societies that have relied on customs to formulate their codes.
 - Example, Code of Hammurabi

Atheism

- Rejection of belief in God.
- Claims the existence of God cannot be scientifically proven.
- Belief that ethics is the product of culture and politics.

Evidence that God Exists

- Various religious faiths believe there is overwhelming evidence that there is reason to believe that God does exist and that the evidence.
 - Historical documents
 - Archeological finds
 - The vastness of space and time
 - Clearly supports and confirms the existence of God

Situational Ethics

- Refers to a particular view of ethics, in which absolute standards are considered less important than the requirements of a particular situation.
- Importance of a particular value may vary as one's situation changes.

Situational Ethics — II

- Moral character can be compromised when faced with difficult choices.
- Good people behave differently in different situations.

Situational Ethics — III

- Good people sometimes do bad things.
- One's moral character can sometimes change as circumstances change.
 - Thus the term *situational ethics*.

Situational Ethics — IV

Values Can Change

- People make value judgments and choices among alternatives.
- Values one so dearly proclaims may change as needs change.
- Motivating power of a person's actions are necessity for survival.
- Values give purpose to each life. They describe one's moral character.

Situational Ethics — V

- If one's basic needs for food, water, clothing, and housing have not been met, one's values may change in such a way that a friendship, for example, might be sacrificed if one's basic needs can be better met as a result of the sacrifice.

The Creation of Ignorance: Situational Ethics

How Common Is the Creation of Ignorance?

It's pretty common. I mean in terms of sowing doubt, certainly global warming denialists who for years have managed to say, "well the case is not proven. We need more research." And what's interesting is that a lot of the people working on that were also the people working on Big Tobacco.

- Interview with Robert Proctor, Professor, Stanford University Discover 2008

The Creation of Ignorance: Discussion

1. Why do people who do bad things in one job repeat their pattern of doing bad in another? What is their motive?
2. Why do people watch bad things happen and then deny they are happening? Explain.
3. What is often referred to as being the “root of all evil”? How does it apply in this case.

Sustaining Life: Situational Ethics

- A decision not to use extraordinary means to sustain the life of an unknown 84-year-old “may” result in a different decision if the 84-year-old is one’s mother.

Differing Values

- If Mom's estate is being squandered at the end of life – a family member financially well-off may want to hold on to Mom despite the financial drain on her estate. Another family member financially struggling to survive may more readily see the futility of expensive medical care and find it easier to let go.

Case: High in the Andes

- Those who survived the plane crash high in the Andes Mountains were faced with some difficult survival decisions. Their need to survive illustrates to what lengths one may go in certain situations in order to survive.

High in the Andes, cont'd

- How might you change as circumstances change?
- Describe how your consultative advice might change based on the patient's needs, beliefs, and family influences.

Reasoning and Decision Making

- Reason includes the capacity for logical inference and the ability to conduct inquiry, solve problems, evaluate, criticize, and deliberate about how we should act and to reach an understanding of other people, the world, and ourselves.

Reasoning and Decision Making — II

- *Partial reasoning* involves bias for or against a person based on one's relationship with that person.
- *Circular reasoning* describes a person who has already made up his or her mind on a particular issue and sees no need for deliberation.

Health Care Dilemmas

- Ethical decision making is the process of determining the right thing to do in the event of a moral dilemma.
 - Alternative choices
 - Limited resources
 - Differing values among patients, family members, and caregivers.
 - Coming to an agreement often requires sacrificing one's personal wishes and following the road where there is consensus.

Health Care Dilemmas — II

- Consensus building requires:
 - Parties to a dilemma must reason together.
 - Identification of alternative choices.
 - Willingness to listen, learn, and make an informed decision.

The Moral Compass

- Hartford Police Chief questions the city's "moral compass".
 - A week after bystanders and drivers maneuvered around the motionless body of 78-year-old victim of a hit-and-run crash.

Lack of a Moral Compass: Discussion

1. What moral principles might the sheriff have been referring to when he questioned the city's lack of a moral compass? Explain.
2. Discuss your thoughts as to why society in general is losing its moral compass.

Summary Thoughts – I

- *Be careful of your thoughts, for your thoughts inspire your words.*
- *Be careful of your words, for your words precede your actions.*
- *Be careful of your actions, for your actions become your habits.*

Summary Thoughts – II

- *Be careful of your habits, for your habits build your character.*
- *Be careful of your character, for your character decides your destiny.*

Although you cannot control the amount of time you have in this lifetime, you can control your behavior by adopting the virtues and values that will define who you are and what you will become and how you will be remembered or forgotten.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is ethics?
- Why should one study ethics?
- What is morality?
- Describe the ethical theories presented in this chapter.

REVIEW QUESTIONS cont'd

- What is ethical relativism? What is the relevance of this concept to individuals of various cultures living in the same society?
- Describe the various ethical principles reviewed and how they might be helpful in resolving health care ethical dilemmas.
- Describe virtue ethics and values. How do virtues and values differ?
- Discuss why “courage” could be considered as the greatest of all virtues.

REVIEW QUESTIONS cont'd

- Discuss how religion can affect one's character.
- Describe the principle of justice and how it can affect the decision-making process.
- Explain how you would allocate scarce resources in the provision of health care?
- What is “situational ethics”? Why do people behave differently in different situations?