

Ethical Challenges in EMS

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NAEMSP® Annual Meeting | January 8-13, 2018 | Manchester Grand Hyatt | San Diego, CA

No Disclosures



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Purpose

Long Arm of the Law

- Medics respond to MVC.
- A truck crossed the double line and hit a mini-van with a family of five. All five are dead.
- Only patient is the driver of a semi. He is minimally injured and admits to drinking and smoking pot.
- While preparing to package him for transport a police officer leans down and asks the medic "Has he been drinking tonight?"
- How should the medic answer the question?

Dying Cancer Patient

- Crew called to a home for 47 y/o patient in respiratory distress and minimally responsive. He is emaciated and near death.
- Family tells crew he has metastatic lung cancer and was just discharged from the hospital and is to be placed on Hospice. Hospice nurse is to see him tomorrow.
- His sister has been caring for him for the past several months and his father just arrived from out of town and had not seen him during the time in the hospital

Dying Cancer Patient

- Crew asks if he as a DNR and are told "No, he was going to have that signed by the Hospice nurse tomorrow." But they say he does not want to be resuscitated.
- It is clear that if you don't begin to ventilate him now he will die.
- He has a large emesis and begins to loose his airway and needs to be intubated.
- What should the crew do?

DNR Hospice Patient Transport

- You are transporting a DNR Hospice patient from the hospital to the Hospice Center. He is not expected to live long and is unresponsive.
- You told the family at the hospital you would meet them there.
- They want to spend their last moments with him in the comfort of the Hospice Center.
- En route the patient quits breathing and has no pulse.
- The Hospice Center will not accept diseased patients.
- What should the crew do?

Suicide Attempt

- Unresponsive 42 y/o woman with a pulse. First Responders are performing BVM ventilation.
- There are opens bottles of OxyContin on the floor
- She loses her pulse and CPR is started.
- While preparing to administer Narcan First Responders hand crew a suicide note attached to a valid DNR form that is signed and authorized by her physician with the diagnosis of multiple sclerosis.
- What should they do?

Medical Ethics - defined

- Principles of proper professional conduct concerning the rights and duties of the provider to their patient.
- Its Not;
 - Feelings
 - Religion (morals)
 - Law
 - Cultural norms
 - Science

Medical Ethics IS:

Respecting the four primary and equal principles of

- Autonomy
- Non-maleficence
- Beneficence
- Justice/Fairness



Autonomy

- Respect for autonomy acknowledges the right of competent persons to make decisions free from interference and to direct their own healthcare
- Patients have the right to say what may and may not be done to them

Non-maleficence

- Do not harm or injure the patient, either by intentionally exposing them to unnecessary risk or through inaction.

Primum non nocere (above all do no harm)

Beneficence

- The act of doing good on behalf of another person or to “promote the good of others”
- More than just non-maleficence. Active actions that promote the good.
- Good should be defined by the patient.

“The Doctor Know Best” does not apply

Justice/Fairness

- A patient’s right to be treated fairly.
- Often revolve around the fair distribution of health care resources or the fairness of providing health care without prejudice to all members of society.

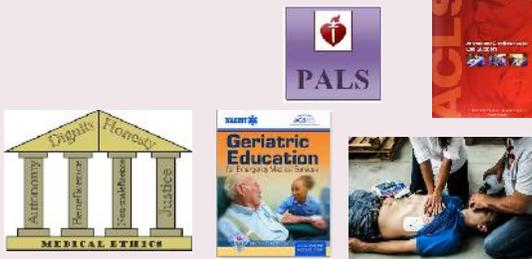
Ethical Dilemma/Challenge

- Value conflicts exist and there is no clear consensus as to the “right” thing to do.
- Must choose “the lease bad” option.
- Difference may exist between
 - Behavior: What should I do?
 - Motivation: Why should I do it?

Navigating the Ethical Dilemma/Challenge

- Appreciate and identify the role each pillar plays - educated
- Have a framework from which to start – trained
- Have resources to rely on – policy

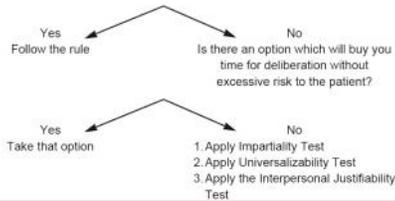
Education & Training



Education & Training

Rapid Approach to Emergency Ethical Problems

Is this a type of ethical problem for which you have already worked out a rule or is it at least similar enough so that the rule could reasonably be extended to cover it?



Modified from Iserson, K. V. (1995). An approach to ethical problems in emergency medicine. In K. V. Iserson, A. B. Sanders, & D. Mathieu (Eds.), Ethics in emergency medicine, 2nd ed. Tucson, AZ: Galen Press.

Policy

- NAEMSP Position Statement
 - Ethical Challenges in Emergency Medical Services
 - Published in Prehospital and Disaster Medicine, April-June, 1993

Policy

- Informed Consent/Refusals
 - Non-transports
 - AMAs
 - Minors
- Patient Confidentiality
- Do Not Resuscitate
 - Advanced Directives
 - Living Wills
- Termination of resuscitation
- Mental Health
 - Chemical and physical restraints
- Medical Capacity (Decision-making)
- Vulnerable Adults
- Death Notification (GREVING_ING)
- Palliative Care

DNR Cancer Patient

- 75 year old gentleman being discharged to hospice center an hour away.
- Terminally ill, and is very close to dying. He has a history of pancreatic cancer and multiple metastatic lesions. He is jaundiced, cachectic, and appears to be in pain. His breathing is labored with O2 sats in the 80s despite 100% oxygen. BP 60 palp.
- His daughter confirms a valid DNR and wants crew to make him as comfortable as possible during the transport.
- What treatment should they provide?

The Trolley Problem

- A trolley is speeding down a track and cannot be stopped.
- In its path are five people who have been tied to the track.
- You have the option to flip a switch and lead the trolley down a different track, avoiding the five people.
- However, the second track has one person tied to it.
- Should you flip the switch?

The Trolley Problem #2

- A trolley is running down a track and cannot be stopped.
- In its path are five people who have been tied to the track.
- You are on a bridge where the trolley will pass and the only way to stop it is to throw something heavy in front of the trolley.
- The only heavy object around you is a very large man standing on the edge of the bridge where there is no railing.
- Do you push the man off the bridge?

Principle of Double Effect

- You **may act** to help others even if the unintended result of the act results in harm of an innocent.
- You **may not act** if the intent is to harm someone to help another.

Palliative Care

- Integrating Palliative Care in the Out-of-Hospital Setting: Four Things to Jump-Start an EMS- Palliative Care Initiative**
 Sangeeta Lamba, Terri A. Schmidt, Garrett K. Cha H. Todd, Corita R. Grudzen, David E. Weissman & Tammie E. Quest
 PREHOSPITAL EMERGENCY CARE 2013;17:511–520
- Center for Advance Palliative Care**
www.capc.org
 Improving Palliative Care in Emergency Medicine (IPAL-EM) project

What can happen when we fail to incorporate the principles into professional life and struggle with ethical dilemmas? **button poetry**

R. J. Walker "Deceit & I" IWPS 2015

Questions?

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