

## Professionalism/Customer Service in the Health Environment

Unit 8  
Ethical and Cultural Issues Related to  
Communication and Customer Service  
Lecture 8a  
Ethical Issues

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## Learning Objectives

- Define ethics and ethical dilemmas
- Describe the difference between ethics and codified law
- Discuss the utilitarian, individualism, moral-rights, and justice approaches to ethical decision making
- Describe the role of the medical ethics committees

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## What are Ethics?

- Code of moral principles and values
- Provide standards for good and bad behavior
- Influence decision making with respect to what is "right" and what is "wrong"
- Biomedical ethics
  - Ethics applied to health care and medicine

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## Ethics versus Codified Law

- Codified law represents standards that have been written into the legal system
  - Appropriate behavior prescribed by law
- Ethics based on shared principles and values
  - Behavior prescribed by social standards

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## Ethical Dilemma

- An ethical dilemma is when each alternative choice has some undesirable consequence
- Conflict between health professional's beneficence and patient's autonomy
- Conflict between the needs of the individual and the organization, or between the organization and society

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## Approaches in Ethical Decision Making

- Utilitarian approach
- Individualism approach
- Moral-rights approach
- Justice approach

Source: Daft, 2008

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**Approaches in Ethical Decision Making**

- **Utilitarian approach**
  - What results in the greatest good for the largest number of people?

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**Approaches in Ethical Decision Making**

- **Individualism approach**
  - What is in the best long-term interest of the decision maker?

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**Approaches in Ethical Decision Making**

- **Moral-rights approach**
  - What will protect the rights of the individuals affected by the decision?

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**Approaches in Ethical Decision Making**

- Justice approach
  - What is the best decision based on standards of equity, fairness and impartiality?
  - Distributive justice
  - Procedural justice

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**Medical Ethics Committees**

- An interdisciplinary group charged with addressing some of the most difficult ethical problems faced by health care professionals
- Major roles
  - Education
  - Policy
  - Case consultation

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**Summary**

- Ethics are based on shared principles and values that guide our behaviors and decision making
- Ethics can aid us in addressing ethical issues for which there is no codified law
- Ethical decision making should consider all the potential consequences for all the parties involved

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## Summary

- There are 4 different approaches to ethical decision making: utilitarian, individualism, moral-rights, and justice
- The medical ethics committee has an important role in addressing complex ethical decisions

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## References

Daft, R.L. 2008. Management. Mason, OH:  
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