

Rights and Duties as related to Ethics

Ethics are judgments of right and wrong or actions on issues that have complications of a moral right and wrong. Students must not confuse ethics with etiquette. Etiquette deals with courtesy, customs, and manners. A duty is an obligation that a person has or perceives himself/herself to have. Rights are claims that are made by a person or group on society, a group, or an individual. Although these terms have different definitions, the concepts are interrelated, and often all are involved in ethical decisions.

Types of Ethical Problems

1. Ethical distress is caused when a problem has an obvious solution but some type of barrier hinders the action that needs to be taken.
 2. Ethical dilemma is a situation that has two or more solutions, but if one is chosen, something of value is lost in not choosing the other.
 3. A dilemma of justice involves allocation of benefits and how they are to be fairly distributed.
 4. At the center of a locus of authority ethical problem, are two or more authority figures, each with his or her idea of how to handle a certain situation. Only one of the authority figures can prevail.
- Often an ethical problem has several aspects and more than one type of problem is presented.

Process for Making an Ethical Decision

Students need to be aware of the process to make an ethical decision. Making an ethical decision is easier when the situation is approached logically and considered using the five-step process.

1. Gather relevant information
2. Identify the problem
3. Determine the ethical approach to use
4. Explore alternatives
5. Complete the action – make the decision.

Confidentiality is an Ethical Issue

Confidentiality is of major concern and importance in the medical field. The patient's privacy should be of prime concern to a medical professional. It is a serious enough issue that a breach of patient confidentiality is sufficient reason for immediate termination of an employee. Because it is such a critical aspect of patient care, it is considered highly unethical to reveal any information about a patient to anyone else. All medical professionals are required and expected to uphold the confidentiality of the information with which they come into contact. Most medical professionals are asked and expected to sign confidentiality agreements with their employers.

Ethical Concerns

There are many ethical concerns surrounding a variety of topics. These include but are not limited to: abortion, HIV testing, medically-assisted suicide, genetic testing, stem cell research, and human cloning. Countless issues must be examined before some of these issues are approved.

CEJA Opinions

CEJA stands for the Current Opinions of the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs. Opinions are issued on a variety of subjects at the AMA annual and interim meetings, and often older opinions are updated or changed based on current social trends. A separate publication, *Reports of the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs*, discusses the rationale of the Council's opinions.

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. Annotations – notes added by way of comment or explanation.
2. duty – obligatory tasks, conduct, service, or functions that arise from one's position.
3. opinions – formal expressions of judgment or advice by an expert.
4. veracity – a devotion to or conformity with the truth.

TEXTS

1. Kinn's The Administrative Medical Assistant.
2. Potter's Medical Office Administration

3. Reports of the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs (publication from AMA)

WEBSITES

1. www.healthcare-ethics.org
2. www.ethics.va.gov
3. www.aama-ntl.org

PHONE NUMBER

If a student has a criminal record (misdemeanor or felony), before they pursue a certificate or degree in Medical Assisting, they need to call this number 1-800-ACT-AAMA (ask for Legal dept). The association will consider applicants on an individual basis.