Ethical Pain Management: Have the Tides Changed?

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure

• Educational Webinar
  – Gannett Education
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  – Purdue Pharma
• Advisory Panel
  – AcelRx

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Objectives

Attendees will be able to:
1. Outline three ethical conflicts in pain management that may or may not have changed over time.
2. Recognize at least four signs of moral distress
3. Formulate three strategies useful for decreasing moral distress
Ethics Defined

- Systematic way to form value judgments on human actions
  - Is organized and reflective
  - Is NOT intuitive or based on “gut feeling”

- Critical concept:
  - We make judgments all the time
  - What results from these judgments?

Healthcare Ethics

- Bioethics
  - Clinical ethics
    - In clinical care settings
    - Ethics of the encounter between clinician and patient
  - Research ethics
  - Organizational ethics

Ethics and Pain Management

Pain management is a basic human right.
Declaration of Montreal, 2010
Medical Ethics & Pain Management

• Both are relatively young fields (< 50 years)

“Effective pain management is a moral imperative, a professional responsibility, and the duty of people in the healing professions.”

Relieving Pain in America, 2011, IOM

Guiding Constructs of Ethics

• Beneficence
• Nonmaleficence
• Autonomy
• Justice
• Fidelity
• Veracity

Beneficence

• Act for the patient’s benefit
  – Relieve pain and suffering
  – Keep society safe
Nonmaleficence

- Do no harm
  - Stopping a medication shown to be harmful
  - Refusing to provide a treatment that has not been shown to be effective
  - Increased opioid prescriptions = increased opioids on the street
- An decision is required
  - To act or not
  - Doing nothing may cause harm

Autonomy

- Individual right to decide
  - Pain may impair autonomy
  - Assumption of incompetence maybe a violation
  - Accepting or rejecting care or components of care
    - Opioids only
- We do not always agree with patients decision
  - Ritualistic mutilation

Justice

- Equitable
  - Access to care
  - Resource utilization
  - Discrimination
  - Societal impact (abuse, misuse, death related)
Fidelity

- Faithfulness to obligations, duties, observances
  - Loyalty to patient’s interests

Veracity

- Truth telling
- Trusting

Conflict

- Opposition
- Inherent incompatibility
- Internal or external
**Patient-centric Conflict**

- Poorly controlled pain
- Conflict with patient/family
- Concerns about addiction/misuse
- Questioning patient’s experience/knowledge
- Determining competence

**Clinician-centric Conflict**

- Balancing beneficence and nonmaleficence
  - Benefits of action Vs risks of action (or inaction!)
- Interprofessional conflict
- To prescribe or not
- Systems barriers

**Areas of Potential Conflict**

- Pain management agreements
- Do patient rights supersede societal rights
- Multidisciplinary treatment Vs Interventional
- Managing pain Vs measuring disability
- Conflicting guidelines
- Direct to patient marketing
Ethical Conflict Leads to Moral Distress

HOWEVER,

Moral Distress ≠ Unethical

Moral Distress

• “Feelings of frustration, anger, and anxiety when facing institutional obstacles and interpersonal conflicts about ones values”
  Unruh, 2010
Impact on Patient Care

- Safety
- Quality

Living with moral distress does harm!!

Recognizing Moral Distress

- Responses to moral distress
  - Physical
  - Emotional
  - Behavioral
  - Spiritual
Physical Cues

Fatigue
Headaches
Impaired sleep
Lethargy
Nausea
Indigestion
Heartburn

Emotional Cues

Anger
Fear
Guilt
Sorrow
Anxiety
Grief

Behavioral Cues

Apathy
Indifference
Avoidance
Agitation
Hostility
**Spiritual Cues**

Loss of meaning  
Loss of control  
Crisis of faith

**Moral distress leads to professional burnout**

**Recognize Moral Distress**

American Association of Critical Care Nurses: The 4A's to Rise Above Moral Distress.
ASK
• Am I feeling distressed or showing signs of suffering?

• GOAL: Become aware of moral distress

AFFIRM
• Your distress, your commitment to take care of yourself, and your professional responsibility to act

• GOAL: Make commitment to deal with your distress

ASSESS
• Identify source of your distress, determine the severity of the situation, and contemplate your readiness to act

• GOAL: Ready to make an action plan
ACT

• Prepare to act or not, take action, and maintain desired change or accept the outcome

• GOAL: Preservation of integrity and authenticity

From Distress to Courage
Taming the Tide

Moral Courage

• “The willingness to stand up for and act according to one’s ethical beliefs”

  Lachman et al, 2012

• Is a virtue

• Morally courageous professionals persevere to stand up for what is right even if it means they may do so alone.
Developing Moral Courage

- Personal
- Professional
- Organizational

Personal Attributes

- Awareness of own beliefs and values
- Take time for reflection—Choice Vs Judgment
- Support
- Strong skills in effective communication and advocacy
- Advance your moral reasoning
- Nurture your personal ethic of care

Professional Attributes

- Debriefing—peer support
- Developing supportive environment
- Building consensus
- Promoting interprofessional collaboration
- Enhancing professional and cultural competence
Professional Attributes

- Follow a professional model of nursing care that exemplifies nursing’s goal of enhancing lives of patients & colleagues
- Positively influence outcomes that support rather than oppose moral decision making
  - Safety
  - Quality

Organizational Attributes

- Administrative support of moral courage
- Open communication at all levels
- Policies and procedures supporting ethical practice
- Staff empowerment and protection
- Healthy work environment
- Interdisciplinary engagement—“Just Culture”
  - Review
  - Education
  - Monitoring

Intervene

- Reflect
- Support
- Communicate
- Self care
Have the Tides Changed?

- I believe some have not
  - Conflicts remain
- I believe some have
  - Time and experience lead to new knowledge and new conflicts
- Ethical practice has not
  - Doing the right thing

How Do We Stay Afloat?

- Evolving knowledge and experience
- Recognize moral distress
- Develop moral courage
- Understand consequences of judgment

Stay the ethical course!

Do the right thing!!

Thank You!!!