"Little Man: Ethics and Advocacy"

Faculty Quick-Reference Guide

This activity will take two class periods. Steps 1 and 2 are completed during the first class period. Step 3 is homework to be completed and turned in during the second class period after the debate. Step 4 is completed during the second class period.

Faculty Background Material

- ANA Code of Ethics with Interpretive Statements
  - available from https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/nursing-excellence/ethics/code-of-ethics-for-nurses/
- "Guide to Code of Ethics for Nurses"
  - available from http://www.1440n.com/ANA/15-335/3/
- Purdue OWL APA Formatting and Style Guide
  - available from:
    https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html
- BBC article "Duty-Based Ethics"
  - available from http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/duty_1.shtml
- "Virtue Ethics"
  - available from http://www.iep.utm.edu/virtue/
- "Act and Rule Utilitarianism"
  - available from http://www.iep.utm.edu/util-a-r/ (Discussion and section 1 of article)
- "Egoism" Section 2
  - available from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/egoism/
- "Teleological Ethics"
  - available from https://www.britannica.com/topic/teleological-ethics

Presentation Guide

Step 1: Activate Prior Learning (from NUR 111 and 211): review ethical decision-making models

Normative Ethics and Applied Ethics: Normative ethics consists of several basic models. When applied to real-life situations, we call normative ethics applied ethics because they are, obviously, being applied.

A. Virtue ethics. Probably the oldest systematized model of ethics, virtue ethics seeks to make virtuous behavior a habit. If I want to be brave, I need to act brave so that it becomes habitual (like the Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*.) Virtues-based education has enjoyed a resurgence in public schools the last couple of decades.

B. Duty-based ethics. This ethical model states that we have a duty, or obligation, to behave a certain way. Under this falls the deontological approach, which stipulates that there are certain immutable laws which govern our actions. The Ten Commandments is an example of this type of law. We do not murder or steal because these acts are forbidden. Most people unknowingly use this model. Another example of duty-based ethics is Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative which states we should treat people as an end, never as a means. In other words, we must always treat people with respect. Sometimes duties conflict and we are left with controversy, such as the priest in a confessional who learns the confessor is planning a crime. If the priest tells, the sanctity of the confessional is broken (one duty), but if he does not, others will get hurt, conflicting with the duty to help and protect others. Conflicting duties is a common ethical problem we encounter.

C. Consequence-based ethics. These models examine ethical decision-making based on the outcomes of that decision.

    1. Teleological approach (the "good life" approach). Unlike the deontological approach, which mandates behavior based on a law from on high, the teleological argues that we act a certain way because it is beneficial to us. Thus we do not murder or steal because God tells us it is wrong; we do not do these things because society would fall apart if we did.

    2. Utilitarianism (the greatest good for the greatest number of people). Popularized by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, this approach argues that we need to look at how actions benefit people as a whole. When the US bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki during WW II, we justified this based on the estimated 1 million American lives that would be lost taking Japan in a traditional manner.

    3. Ethical Egoism. An act is morally justified if it benefits the person doing the act. So keeping someone alive indefinitely on life-support is morally justified if I derive benefit, never mind the suffering of the patient or the monetary and emotional cost to other involved. Often people who think they are using the deontological approach (All life is sacred) are actually employing ethical egoism: I cannot let go.

Classroom Discussion:

1. Have students discuss and give an example of which ethical decision-making models they have used in the past and why.
2. Discuss which ethical situations and the decision-making models students have seen used in the clinical environment. (It is appropriate to review the importance of patient confidentiality and what is discussed in class about these situations stays in class. *What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.*)

Step 2: Watch "Little Man"

A. Movie run time: 1hr 52 min; movie is about a newborn who was born 100 days early weighing just one pound. Students are to consider the ethical issues involved in the delivery and care of this newborn and the role of the nurse as advocate.
   a. If your institution requires prior approval of movies before they can be viewed by a class, follow your institution's policy for gaining approval.
   b. If viewing via Amazon (or other) streaming service, contact IT prior to date of viewing to ensure web filters will allow access to the movie.

   Classroom Discussion/Reflection:
   1. What ethical issues did you identify surrounding Nicholas's conception and birth? (possible answers include: surrogacy, surrogate supplied inaccurate health history information, health issues identified in-utero before baby was born, utilization of resources for a child born so early, aggressive vs. comfort care, when should we say "when" or when is enough "enough"?) This is not a debate; at this point in the lesson, students are just identifying ethical issues and how these issues were dealt with in the film.
   2. How does the Code of Ethics guide your decision making in these critical situations?
   3. What insight did you gain into the role of the nurse as patient advocate? How is this different in the NICU as opposed to an adult ICU? How did the NICU nurses act as advocates on Nicholas' behalf? Do you feel that the nurses/healthcare team failed to advocate for Nicholas in any instances?
   4. How does the nurse deal with conflicting opinions regarding course of treatment?
   5. To whom is the nurse *most* accountable: the patient, the family, or the physician? How does the nurse balance conflicting loyalties?

B. Grading
   a. Informal assessment based on participation, discussion, and support of arguments

Step 3: Mini-Paper Homework Assignment

A. Students will write a 2-3 page mini-paper (APA style) discussing questions posed below. The paper should include all of the following:
   a. Ethical dilemmas and decision-making models utilized are identified.
   b. Are any virtues at risk? What are they? Whose? Why?
   c. How does the Code guide the nurse's decision-making process?
   d. What lessons can be learned from the scenarios illustrated in the movie?

  e. Were the appropriate decision-making models utilized? Why or why not?

  f. Bibliography includes at least 5 current (within last 5 years) sources including *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements (2015).*

B. Grading: Grading Rubric (see attached)

  a. Use the attached grading rubric for scoring the mini-paper.

  b. Students also have a copy of the rubric for self-evaluation of their papers.

Step 4: Debate/Discussion

A. Discussion: Students will discuss the questions from the mini-paper assignment and use the research findings from the mini-paper as the basis for their arguments.

B. Debate: Divide the class into teams of 4-5 students. Assign each team a position for one of the ethical issues identified in step one.

  a. Example topic: Clear guidelines should be established as to when aggressive treatment of "super-preemies" should cease.

  b. One team argues in favor and the other team argues the opposing viewpoint.

  c. This activity will hopefully help students realize that these issues are not clear-cut. As we become more technologically advanced, patients that at one time would not have survived the first few hours of life are now surviving and thriving. It is also hard to gauge in infancy what types of long-term issues, if any, the child may experience later in life. Because we don't have a crystal ball, how do we help parents/families prepare and cope with an unknown future?

C. Grading

  a. Informal assessment based on participation, discussion, and support of arguments