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Bioethical Issues

Chapter Eight

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Topics for today:

- Common 'medical' ethical issues
- Advanced directives
- Euthanasia
- Right to self-determination
- Ethical issues for children

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Bioethical Issues


*Earliest code of ethics had nurses' prime responsibility to be *obedient* to physicians

*Present codes of ethics have nurses' prime responsibility to *client well-being*

*Change is due to ↑ self-awareness, independence and a growing accountability




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Common Ethical Situations

- 1. Abortion**
 - religious, ethical, social and legal implications. Still a political issue.
 - *matter of convenience
 - *conflict of rights
 - *nurse's values- as client advocate, *can the nurse be for or against abortion*
- 2. Use of Fetal Tissue**
 - stem cell research- hot topic, especially here in California (data recently on the use of stem cells from mice)


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Common Ethical Situations

- 3. Genetics and Genetic Research**
 - mandatory screening? (detecting genetic health patterns in newborns can be a positive thing, but what about insurance companies)
 - informed consent (parents vs insurance co.)
 - confidentiality
 - emotional impact
 - self-determination
- 4. Organ Transplant**
 - when the donor is a child-when can *they* have a say in the decision (can they be forced to donate?)
 - when does death occur- brain death
 - selection of recipient- who gets what?


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Common Ethical Situations


- 5. Use of Scarce Resources in Prolonging Life**
 - preserve life at any cost?
 - ethics of tube-feeding (Sciavo, 19 years coma)
 - should care be restricted? (equal access!)
- 6. Right to Die**
 - 'euthanasia' and 'assisted suicide'
 - no extraordinary measures- CPR? Ventilation?

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Advanced Directives

- are the client's wishes about future health care, in a *documented* format
- should include a designated decision-maker (moral surrogate), if client becomes unable to make own decisions
- in form of a *living will* or *durable power of attorney*
- specifies what procedures, surgeries, meds or treatments can be used



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Advanced Directives

Problems with Living Wills


- what exactly did the person know about the disease state and treatments that might later affect care?
- beneficence and nonmaleficence- is difficult to determine whether the primary duty of health-care provider is to produce benefit or prevent harm
- lack of clarity- language is broad and vague (not specific enough to include all forms of treatment)
- legality of living will if travelling to another state

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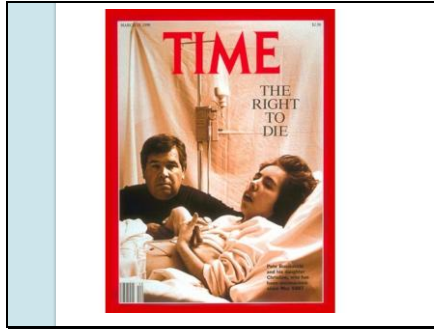


Euthanasia


- a 'good or peaceful death'
- passive- allowing to die without any extraordinary interventions
- active- practice of hastening a death thru some act or procedure ('mercy killing') such as pain meds, poison, gun, knife, etc



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Right to Self-Determination

- can a client who is mentally competent **MAKE** these decisions? What about the right to self-determination?
- opposed- legally, ethically and morally wrong. Can a patient really think clearly about these issues if they are in pain, on medications or are depressed? What about nonmaleficence?

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Common Ethical Situations

7. HIV and AIDS Issues

- right to privacy- confidential diagnosis (what is the big deal?)
- right to care- can a nurse refuse to care for an AIDS patient?

**I SAY
NO**


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Ethical Issues for Children

Child Abuse

- must be reported by anyone who *suspects* abuse
- neglect* harder to pinpoint because of lack of/ 'fuzzy' evidence
- conflicting ethical principle is right to family privacy and self-determination




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Ethical Issues for Children

Informed consent and children

- as dependents, not usually attributed the right to self-determination
- a three-way relationship is the best option (healthcare professional, parent and child)



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See you next class.....

Please do your readings & bring thoughtful questions!

