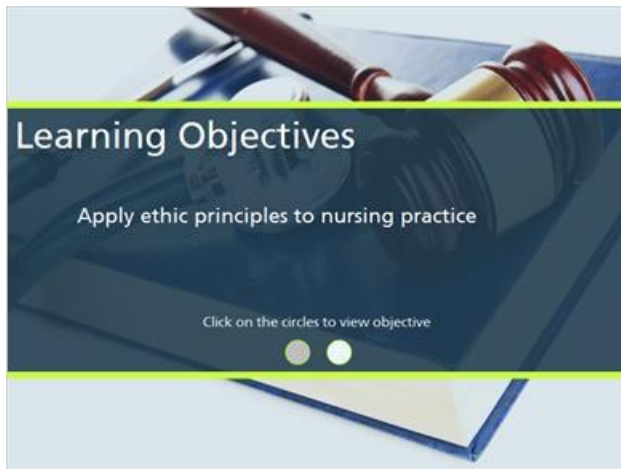


Overview of the Ethics in Health Care

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.2 Learning Objectives



Notes:

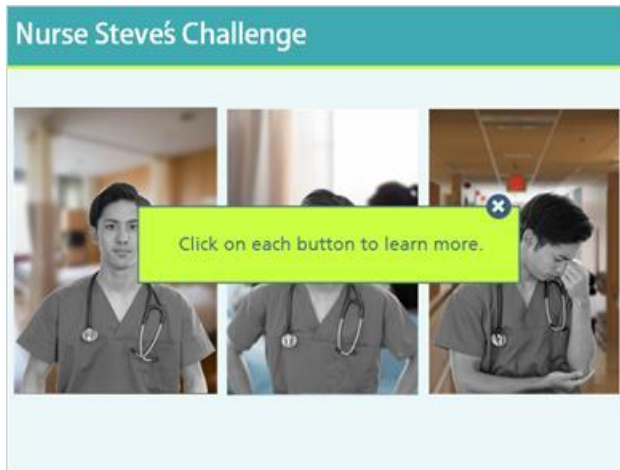
In the following scenario, we will meet a nurse who is facing an ethical challenge. Through this example, we will see how to apply some of the difficult ethical concepts that nurses may encounter in their practice. We will also be given insight on how to deal with moral distress.

2. Introduction to Ethics

2.1 Introduction to Ethics



2.2 Nurse Steve's Challenge



Notes:

Before we begin, let's review some background information about the scenario. Click on each picture to learn more.

Our scenario starts with Nurse Steve. He describes himself as a BSN who has worked for 5 years on a medical surgical floor. He feels as though he has encountered many ethical challenges in his short career.

The most recent challenge Steve encountered involves a patient who told him that he wanted to be Do Not Resuscitate (or DNR). However, this request was not put into writing when the patient went into cardiac arrest. The patient's family was present when this happened and insisted the patient be coded. The patient did survive the code but was unresponsive and placed on life support.

Steve's colleagues were very angry with Steve for not advocating better for the patient. Steve is now experiencing moral distress connected to his role as nurse and patient advocate.

2.3 Ethics and Values



Notes:

As we continue our discussion, it is important that we consider the similarities and differences between ethics and values. Click on each button to learn more.

Ethics

Ethics and Values

Ethics
Philosophy that evaluates human action

- Involves determining right conduct from wrong conduct
- Describes conduct or principles of individuals or groups
- Involves motives, attitudes, and relationship of these attitudes to the individual

Click on each book to learn more.

The graphic features a blue header with the text 'Ethics and Values'. Below the header, on the left, is a blue box containing the definition of ethics. To the right of this box is a closed brown book with a yellow callout box that says 'Click on each book to learn more.' At the bottom of the graphic is an open book. The background is a light blue with faint, overlapping text like 'Good v Bad' and 'Fairness'.

“Ethics is a branch of philosophy concerned with evaluating human action, and it encompasses a process of determining right conduct from wrong conduct. It involves the basis for principles and assumptions underpinning the way individuals or groups ought to conduct themselves. This complex concept of ethics involves motives, attitudes, and relationship of these attitudes to the individual.”

Values

Ethics and Values

Values
Personal beliefs about truths and worth of thoughts, objects, or behavior

- Abstract standards that give a person a sense of what is right and wrong
- Establish a code of conduct for living

Examples of values: honesty, hard work, truthfulness, and sincerity

Click on each book to learn more.

The graphic features a blue header with the text 'Ethics and Values'. Below the header, on the right, is a blue box containing the definition of values. To the left of this box is a closed brown book with a yellow callout box that says 'Click on each book to learn more.' At the bottom of the graphic is an open book. The background is a light blue with faint, overlapping text like 'Good v Bad' and 'Fairness'.

"Values are personal beliefs about the truths and worth of thoughts, objects, or behavior. Values are considered the abstract standards that give a person a sense of what is right and wrong and establish a code of conduct for living. Some examples of specific values include honesty, hard work, truthfulness, and sincerity."

2.4 Applying Ethics and Values

Applying Ethics and Values



The Code of Ethics states that nurses must protect the rights of patients

Expectation:
Need documentation for DNR patients

Notes:

In order to help apply the concepts of ethics and values to nursing practice, let's look at how each of the principles relate to Steve's situation.

Steve's personal value is that patients have the right to make their own decisions. This value caused Steve to honor his patient's request. However, since the DNR documentation was not signed by the patient and not put into the patient's chart, he was forced to follow the legal expectation that states documentation is needed in the chart for DNR decisions.

2.5 Ethics and Law

Ethics and Law		
Concepts	Ethics	Law
Source	Internal to oneself	External to oneself
Concerns	Motives, attitudes, and culture	Conduct and actions
Interests	Good of the individual within society	Society as a whole
Enforcement	Ethics committees and professional organizations	Courts, statutes, and boards of nursing

(Guido, 2014)

Notes:

As with Steve's case - the legal system is a general foundation that gives continuing guidance to health care providers, even if their personal views and value systems conflict with what the law states. So in Steve's case he had to do a full code on the patient even though the patient said he didn't want to be coded.

The ethical question for Steve is whether or not he did everything possible to make sure the patient's wishes were documented and the family was aware of the documentation. Issues of time availability, work load, and support on the unit where Steve works is a key issue for this situation.

2.6 Knowledge Check

How does morals play a part in the decision that Steve made with the patient who was put on life support?

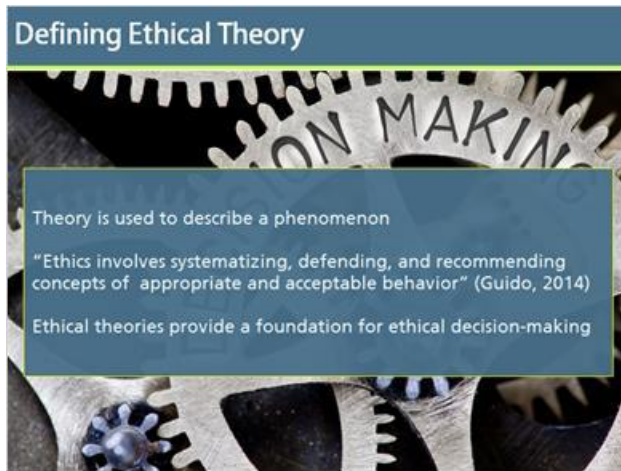
- A. Morals are especially helpful when dealing with complex issues arising in clinical practice settings.
- B. Ethics cannot be distinguished from morals.
- C. Morals describes conduct or principles.
- D. Morals propose restrictions on what may be considered appropriate actions

3. Ethical Theory

3.1 Ethical Theory



3.2 Defining Ethical Theory



Notes:

Now that you understand how ethics, values, and law play a part in decision making, let's focus our attention on ethical theory and decision making. The use of theory is helpful for nurses when dealing with complex concepts like ethics. Theories are helpful because they provide evidence based on guidance related to ethical situations. There are many different types of ethical theories to help give you some idea on different ways to make sense of a difficult challenge.

3.3 Descriptive Ethics Theory



Notes:

One of the more common ethical theories used in health care, and one that could help make more sense of how

Steve is feeling, would be descriptive ethics. Click on each box to learn more about this theory and how it helps to make sense of ethical challenges.

Non-normative



Descriptive ethics theory is a form of non-normative ethics, which means it does not use standards of behavior and values to explain ethical decisions.

Scientific techniques



Instead of standards of behavior and values, descriptive ethics uses scientific techniques to understand how individuals reason and act when faced with an ethical dilemma.

Public policy



The use of the scientific techniques in descriptive ethics leads to better understanding of the attitudes behind professional codes, institutional mission statements, and public policy.

Examples



Examples of public policy that can be better explained by descriptive ethics are patients' informed consent and surrogate decision making.

3.4 Highlighted Ethical Principles



Notes:

If we go back to Nurse Steve, we see that there are many ethical principles in action in this scenario. Let's look at four principles that provide the best insights into the reasons Steve acted the way he did with the patient's request for DNR status. Click on each box to learn more.

Veracity



Steve said he did not have time to get the patient's wishes for DNR into the chart. However, after a little investigation, we learned that Steve took three extra breaks during his shift that day. These extra breaks resulted in a violation of veracity because Steve said he did not have time; however, he mostly likely would have had enough time, if not for the extra breaks.

Fidelity



Sometimes there is a conflict between keeping promises to self and to patients. Steve's religious commitment is to do everything he can to support life. Therefore, Steve did not actively pursue the patient's request for DNR because it violated Steve's belief in protecting life.

Beneficence



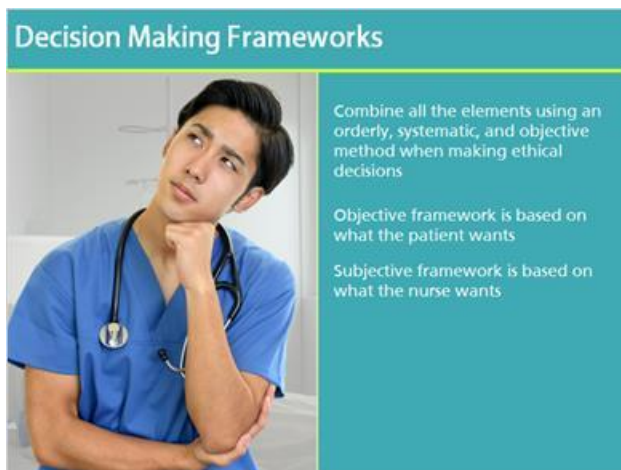
It is believed that Steve acted on what is good for the patient based on the fact that no documentation for DNR was in the patient's chart. However, we would need to clarify what it means to "promote good" in order to have a clearer understanding of Steve's decision. Is good based on what is best for the patient or best for Steve's conscience?

Justice



Steve believes that all patients should be treated fairly and each patient should have the right to make decisions based on the patient's desires. Yet, Steve's decision to not ensure that the patient's DNR status was in the patient's chart shows that Steve does not follow all patients requests, especially when those requests violates Steve's own principles.

3.5 Decision Making Frameworks

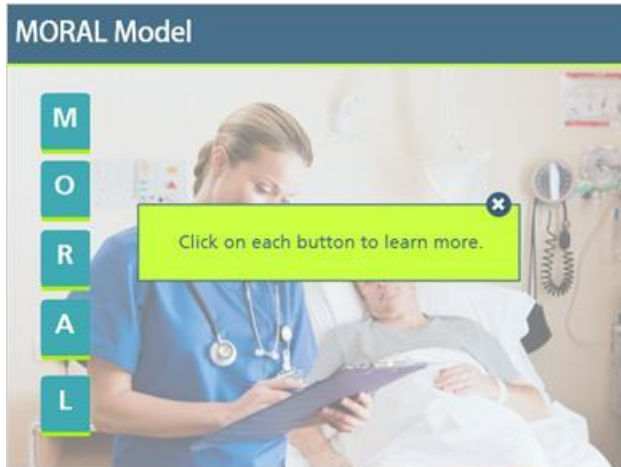


Notes:

Now that we have discussed some of the ethical principles, let's see how they are involved in decision making. There are many options available for developing a framework that can help nurses make good decisions when ethical challenges arise. Steve mentioned he has experienced many ethical challenges in his short career. As we can see from this example, Steve is prone to using a subjective framework in his ethical decision making. That is, his

choices are based more on what Steve wants rather than the patient. On the contrary, an objective framework is better than a subjective framework because the objective framework is based on what the patient wants. There are several different objective framework models that can be used in ethical decision making.

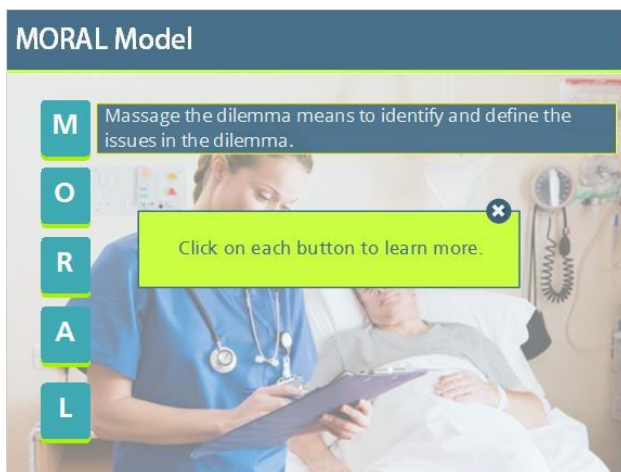
3.6 MORAL Model



Notes:

A popular objective framework that is often used by nurses is the MORAL model. As you click on each of the buttons, evaluate your own values and morals that are helping or hindering your ability to make objective decisions for the best outcomes for your patients.

M



O

MORAL Model



M

O Outline the options means to examine all options fully, including the less realistic and conflicting ones.

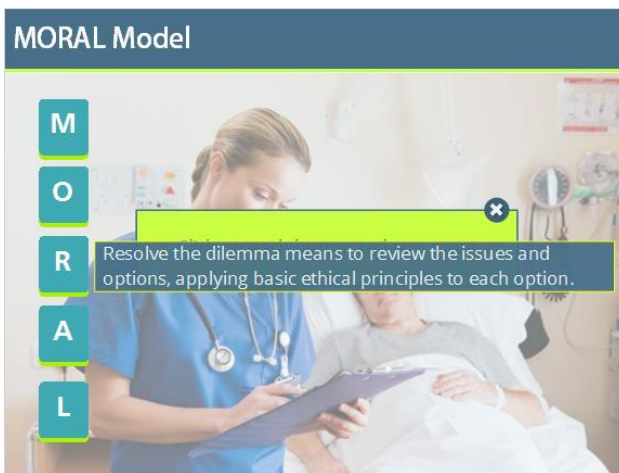
R Click on each button to learn more.

A

L

R

MORAL Model



M

O

R Resolve the dilemma means to review the issues and options, applying basic ethical principles to each option.

A

L

A

The screenshot shows a slide titled "MORAL Model" with a background image of a nurse in blue scrubs attending to a patient in a hospital bed. On the left side, there is a vertical stack of five teal buttons labeled M, O, R, A, and L. The 'A' button is highlighted with a yellow border. A yellow callout box with a close button (x) is positioned over the 'A' button, containing the text: "Click on each button to learn more." Below the 'A' button, a white text box with a yellow border contains the text: "Act by applying the chosen option means to make the best decision to implement the best action for the situation."

L

The screenshot shows a slide titled "MORAL Model" with the same background image of a nurse and patient. The vertical stack of buttons M, O, R, A, and L is on the left. The 'L' button is highlighted with a yellow border. A yellow callout box with a close button (x) is positioned over the 'L' button, containing the text: "Click on each button to learn more." Below the 'L' button, a white text box with a yellow border contains the text: "Look back and evaluate means to evaluate the implementation to see that the final outcome will be appropriate."

3.7 Knowledge check

How does morals play a part in the decision that Steve made with the patient who was put on life support?

- A. Morals are especially helpful when dealing with complex issues arising in clinical practice settings.
- B. Ethics cannot be distinguished from morals.
- C. Morals describes conduct or principles.
- D. Morals propose restrictions on what may be considered appropriate actions.

3.8 Moral Distress



Notes:

Moral distress is a significant concern in the nursing profession because it leads to many adverse consequences for nurses and for patient outcomes. Click on each box to learn more about what moral distress is and how to deal with it in a way that it will not lead to unwanted consequences.

When it occurs



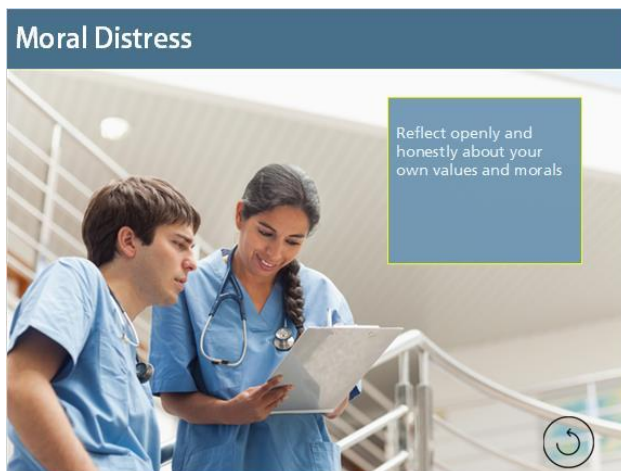
Moral distress usually occurs when a nurse is faced with situations in which two ethical principles compete. In Steve's case, he wants the patient to have autonomy, but he is also committed to the fidelity of his religious beliefs.

What it is



Moral distress is the psychological imbalance experienced due to conflict in the nurse's workplace expectations and actual policies and practices. Steve's case is one example of this. Another example would be when a nurse is overworked and cannot meet all the needs of the patients. The negative emotions that come with these situations can lead to burnout, poor morale on the unit, difficulty coping, and many other unwanted consequences.

How to deal with it



One of the most important ways to prevent moral distress is to reflect openly and honestly about your own values and morals. Take time to evaluate how they help or hinder your performance. In Steve's example, there is nothing in the Code of Ethics that says a nurse can't believe certain religious principles, but it does say that those beliefs cannot interfere with the needs of patients. Another way to deal with moral distress is to have open communication with your peers and supervisors, develop healthy ways to express frustrations, and have an avenue for resolution of problems like heavy workload.

4. Summary

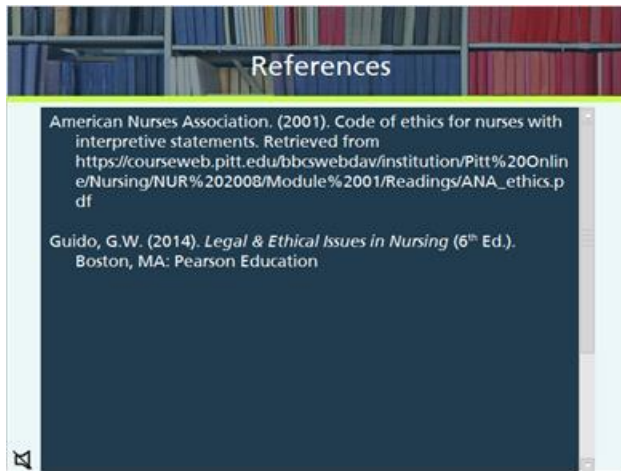
4.1 Summary



Notes:

Using Steve's scenario, we analyzed complex ethical principles to begin the self-reflection process. This increased understanding of the concepts of ethics will help guide you on a rewarding nursing career that is filled with the remarkable opportunities to help others who are in need of your professional excellence. I thank you for your commitment to excellence, it is one of the reasons I love the profession of nursing so much!

4.2 References



4.3 End of Presentation

