

Unit Two - Law and Order

Medical Ethics Key Terms

Ethics is the discipline that provides a language, some methods, and guidelines for studying the components of personal, societal, and morality to create a better path for yourself and others.

Biomedical Ethics – applying general moral action-guides to biomedicine (biological sciences, medicine, and health care).

Autonomy is the capacity to have the say-so about your own well-being, “the capacity to think, decide, and act on the basis of such thought and decision freely and independently”. Some call this the principle of self-determination.

Nonmaleficence – first do no harm. Refraining from potentially harming myself or another.

Beneficence – prevent harm, remove harm when it is being inflicted, bring about positive good. Bringing about good.

Confidentiality is the practice of keeping harmful, shameful, or embarrassing patient information within proper bounds. It is the most longstanding dictum in the health care code of ethics.

Distributive Justice – when more than one group is competing for the same resources, each believing itself to be deserving of the resources. The principle of distributive justice requires an equitable distribution of benefits and burdens. Patients do not always get all the treatment and attention they deserve or need because of the lack of resources.

Deontological Theories (act according to duties and rights) and **Utilitarian Theories** (utility or usefulness).

Informed Consent is a legal doctrine that requires a physician to obtain consent for treatment rendered, an operation that is performed, and many diagnostic procedures. It is a process, not a form. Consent is the dialogue between the patient and the physician in which the information is shared about the proposed treatment/procedure, questions are asked and answered to the patient’s satisfaction, and the ultimate goal of an informed consent is achieved. It is the transfer of information to a patient before any invasive procedure or treatment so that an informed decision can be made.