

Bioethics 101:

An introduction to healthcare ethics

Presented by:

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Bioethics 101: An Introduction to Healthcare Ethics

Learning Objectives:

- To define bioethics and explain why issues in healthcare ethics impact social work practice.
- To describe common ethical issues in healthcare and explain how they affect patient care.
- To apply basic principles of bioethics as a framework to mitigate and confront these issues in an ethically sound practice approach.

Ethics

The branch of philosophy that examines human conduct.

Ethics aims to :

- Consider the rightness and wrongness of human actions.
- Consider the goodness and badness of the motives and outcomes of actions.
- Systematize, defend, analyze, and make recommendations about right and wrong/good and bad/moral and immoral human conduct.



Bioethics

Examines controversial and morally relevant issues brought about by advances in science and technology.

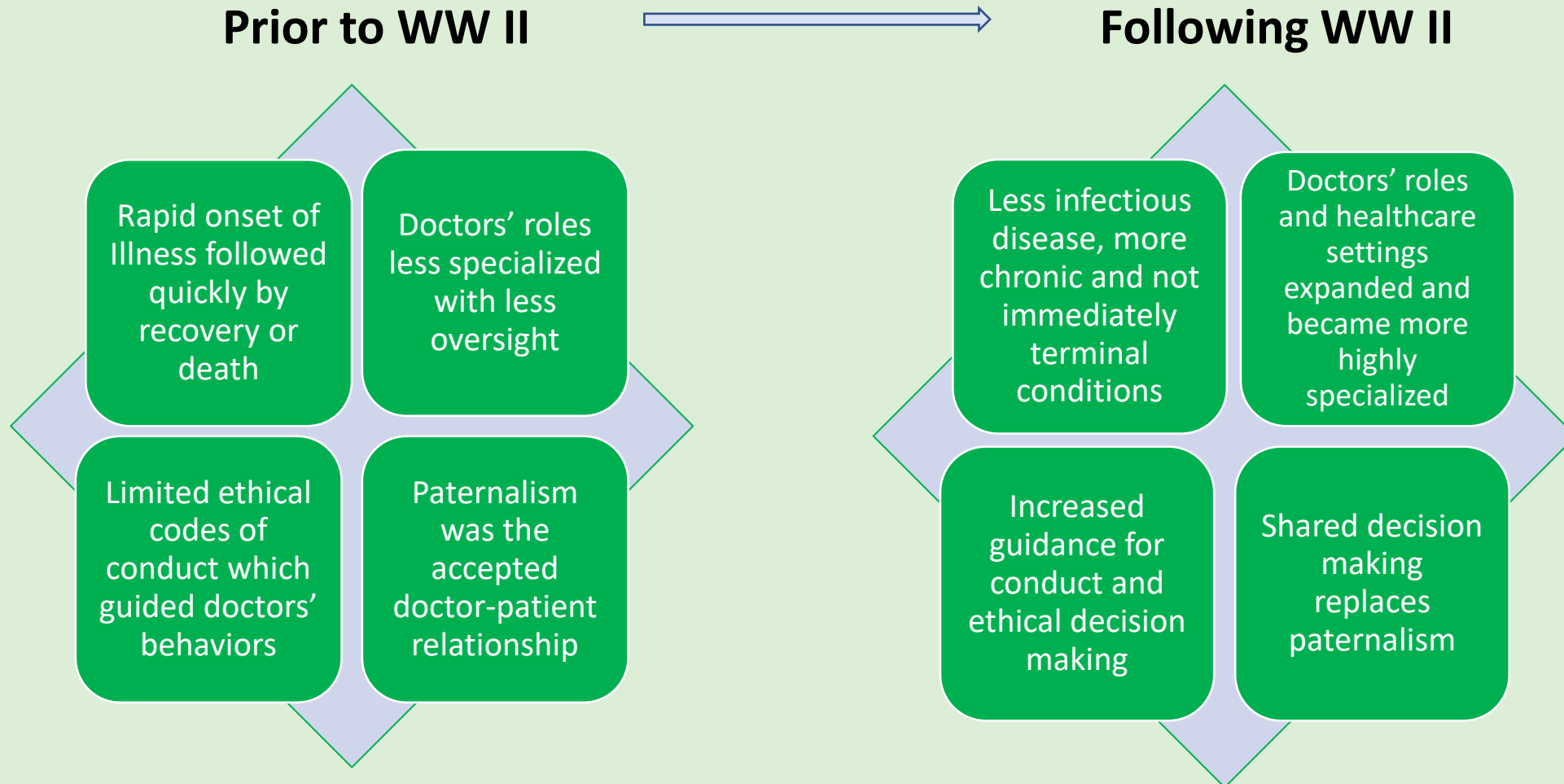
Healthcare Ethics

Focuses on such issues as they occur in clinical care, clinical research, and public health

Clinical Ethics

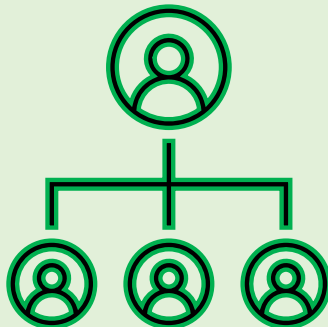
Considers
issues related to
patients and
providers

Shifting trends influence healthcare and ethics



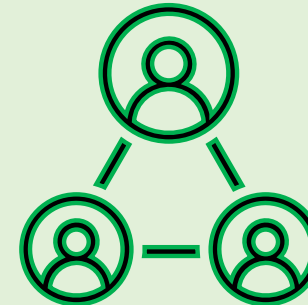
Paternalism

The relationship between healthcare providers and patients in which providers decide what is in a patient's best interest based only on the provider's opinion. It may not require disclosure of information, or discussion about risks, benefits, and alternatives with the patient.



Shared decision making

A relationship between healthcare providers and patients in which healthcare providers and patients collaborate to make decisions together based on scientific evidence, patient values, and the patient's preferences for care.





Shared decision making

Interdisciplinary teams

- Including patients and their families

Considering goals of care

- Prevention
- Treatment
- Care

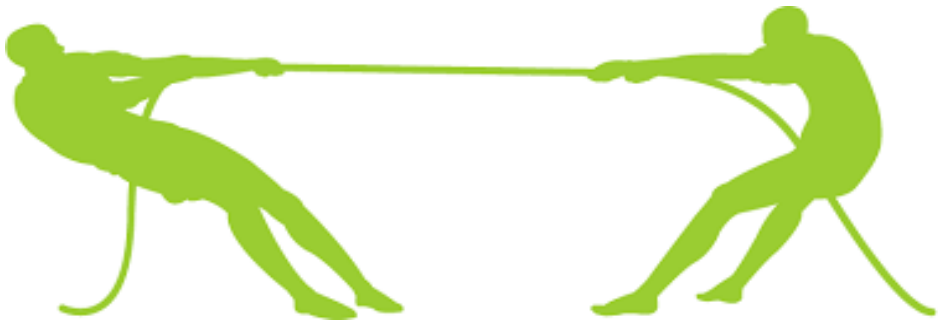
To make sound medical decisions together.

This process and the outcomes do not always go as intended.

Ethical issues are common and create dilemmas in practice!

Scenario 1:

A 25-year-old female was driving home from work when her car was struck by a drunk driver. Among other injuries she suffered major head trauma that physicians indicate she would likely never recover quality of life and remain in PVS indefinitely. Her next of kin needs to decide between forgoing care or placing a trach and PEG tube and moving her to a long-term care facility.

**Dilemma:**

Should the next of kin withdraw life-sustaining measures and allow for an untimely death to occur as a result of injuries sustained in the car accident? Should the decision be made for the patient to continue with long-term life-supportive measures, despite the likelihood of a poor quality of life for years to come?

Scenario 2:

A 65-year-old male undergoes a surgical procedure for prostate cancer. At his post-op visit, the physician says, “I got it all”. The patient was so happy with this information and thanked the doctor for “removing all the cancer”. The nurse who was present at the visit is concerned because she knows there is still the presence of positive margins, but the physician did not explain this clearly to the patient. The nurse wants you to talk to the patient and clarify.

**Dilemma:**

Should you tell her patient about the presence of positive margins? Should you respect the physician’s position and not mention the positive margins to the patient? Or is there something else you should do in this situation?

NA
SW

CODE OF ETHICS

OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
SOCIAL WORKERS

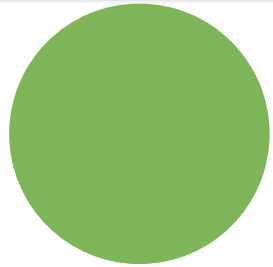
 NASW
National Association of Social Workers

Guides the professional conduct of social work practice

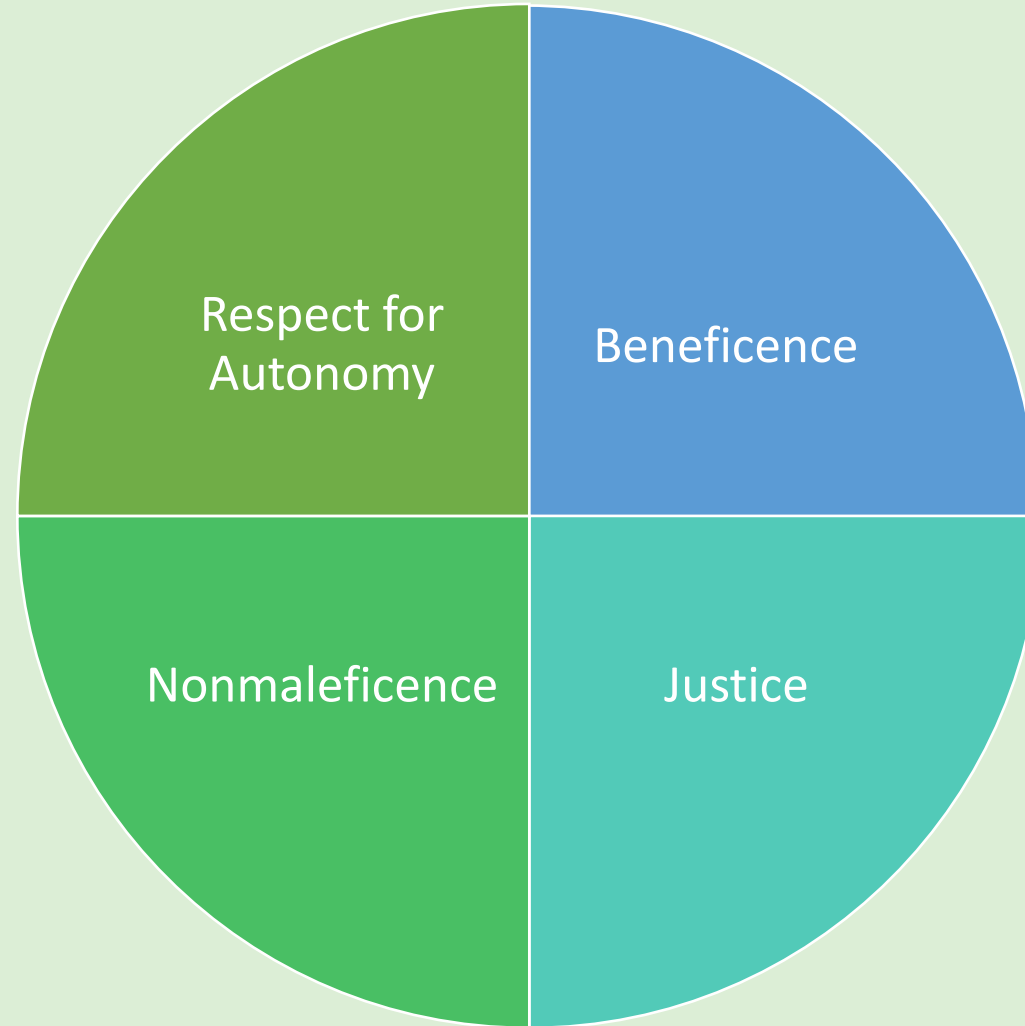
- ✓ Establishes norms of the profession r/t mission, values, and methodologies.
- ✓ Provides guidance r/t ethical issues and dilemmas.
- ✓ Protects the profession from outside regulations.
- ✓ Sets standards to help settle allegations of misconduct against social workers.
- ✓ Is used to guide and socialize new social workers.

<https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>

How can social workers embrace shared decision-making & address ethical issues in practice when not all involved parties care about the NASW Code of Ethics and the Social Work Core Values?



The Four Guiding Principles of Healthcare Ethics



*Beauchamp, Tom L. and James F. Childress. Principles of Biomedical Ethics. 7th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

A Framework to Manage Ethical Dilemmas in Healthcare

Medical indications

The facts and interpretations about a patient's physical and/or psychological condition.

A reasonable diagnosis.

Option for interventions to evaluate, treat or care for the medical situation.

Benevolence
and
Nonmaleficence

Patient Preferences

Choices the patient will make when faced with medical decisions.

Based on their unique experiences, beliefs, and values.

Informed by clinician recommendations.

Respect for
Autonomy

Quality of Life

The degree of satisfaction with life experienced by the patient.

Considers if this degree acceptable to the patient

Benevolence,
Nonmaleficence &
Respect for
Autonomy

Contextual Features

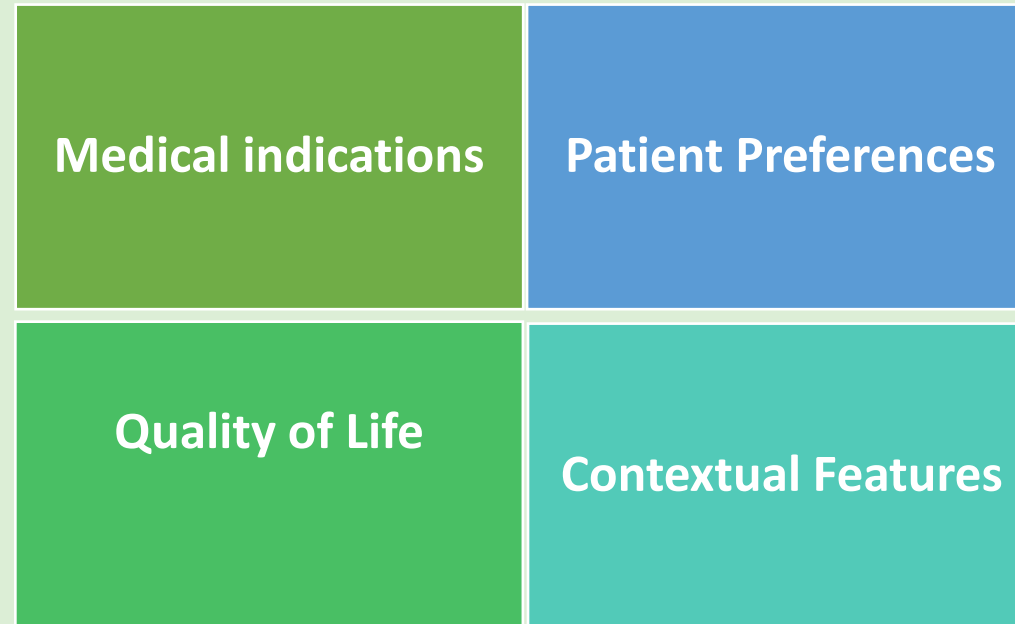
Other factors that can influence or impact the decision.

Professional, familial, religious, financial, legal, political, institutional, etc.

Justice

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In conclusion

- Bioethics is the study of ethical issues that arise from advances in biology and medicine
- The vast array of issues related to bioethics has created a multitude of concerns that make healthcare complicated.
- This creates tensions for individuals, families, and society at large. As a result, ethical dilemmas are common occurrences in healthcare settings.
- As part of interdisciplinary healthcare teams, social workers play a key role in navigating these issues.
- Principles and frameworks of bioethics are aligned with the NASW Code of Ethics and can be easily applied in practice to effectively engage all professional disciplines as well as patients, and their family members.

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