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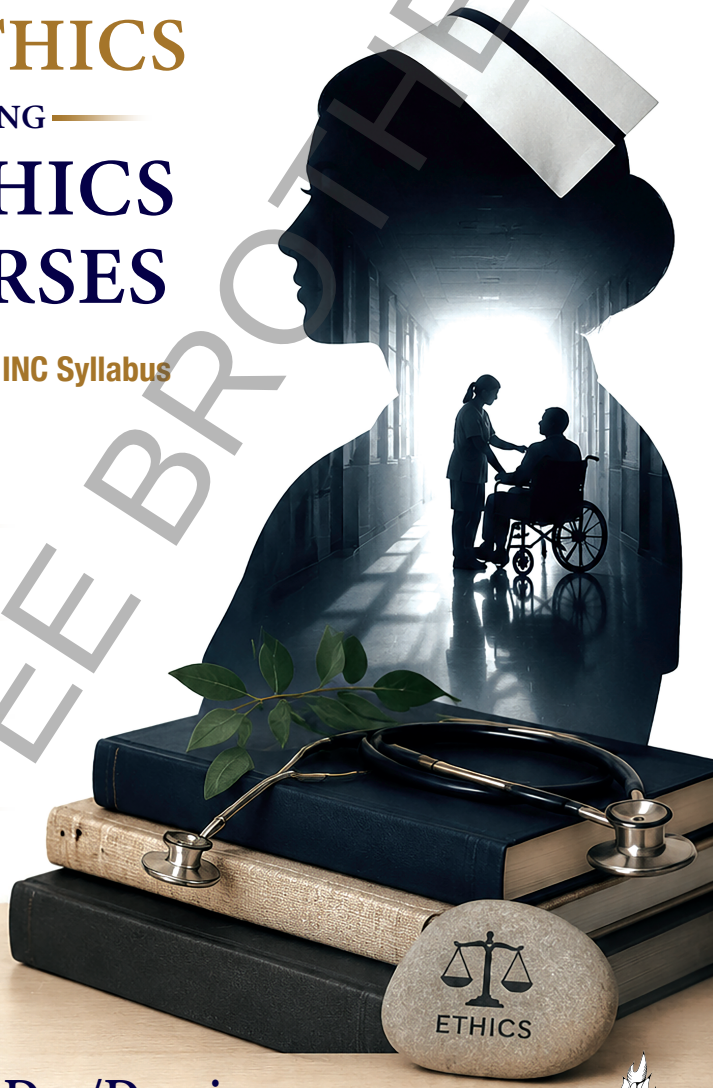
TEXTBOOK OF PROFESSIONALISM, PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND ETHICS

INCLUDING

BIOETHICS FOR NURSES

As per the Revised INC Syllabus

- COMPASSION
- INTEGRITY
- RESPECT
- ACCOUNTABILITY
- EXCELLENCE



Semester IV

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Contents

Unit 1: Professionalism 1

- Profession 2
- Professional 3
- Professionalism 4
- Nursing: A Blend of Art and Science 6
- Nurse 7
- Communication Skills 9
- Nursing Profession *13*
- Challenges of Professionalism *18*
- Personal Identity vs Professional Identity *21*
- Preservation of Self-integrity: Threat to Integrity, Deceiving Patient: Withholding Information and Falsifying Records *21*
- Communication and Relationship with Team Members *24*
- Professional Conduct *25*
- Regulatory Bodies and Professional Organizations: Roles and Responsibilities *31*

Nursing Regulatory Bodies 31

- Vital Role of Regulatory Bodies *32*
- Major Types of Regulatory Bodies *32*
- At International Level *32*
- At Central Level *36*
- State Level *40*

Unit 2: Professional Values 48

- Definition of Values *48*
- Value Clarification *50*

Professional Socialization: Integration of Professional Values with Personal Values 50

- Professional Socialization *50*
- Care *56*
- Caring *56*
- Compassion *58*
- Sympathy vs Empathy *58*

JAYPEE BROTHERS

- Altruism *58*
- Conscientiousness *60*
- Respect for the Person and the Value of Human Dignity in Nursing *62*
- Privacy and Confidentiality: Understanding Incidental Disclosure in Healthcare *64*
- Honesty and Integrity in Nursing: The Importance of Truth-Telling *65*
- Trust and Credibility *66*
- Advocacy in Nursing: A Commitment to Care, Education, and Professional Growth *67*

Unit 3: Ethics and Bioethics **71**

- Ethics *71*
- Bioethics *71*
- Ethical Issues and Dilemmas in Health Care *75*
- Euthanasia *77*
- Do Not Resuscitate *80*
- Issues Related to Psychiatric Care *81*
- Ethical Decision-making *84*
- Ethical Guidelines for Nurses: ICN and INC Codes of Ethics *86*
- Code of Ethics *91*
- Rights of Patient *95*

Further Reading **99**

Index ***101***

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UNIT

3 Ethics and Bioethics

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Ethics, Bioethics, and Ethical Practice in Nursing

- Introduction to Ethics and Bioethics
- Ethical Principles
- Ethics and Bioethics in Nursing
- Ethical Concerns in Nursing
- Ethical Issues and Dilemmas in Health care
- Beginning of Life Issues
- End of Life Issues and Euthanasia
- Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) and CPR
- Ethical Decision-making and Guidelines for Nurses
- Ethics Committees and Patients' Rights
- Summary
- Review Questions

ETHICS

Ethics refers to a set of moral values and principles that guide human behavior. It helps distinguish between right and wrong and is shaped by cultural, religious, and societal influences. Ethics plays a key role in decision-making, both at an individual and collective level.

BIOETHICS

Bioethics is a specialized field within ethics that focuses on the moral aspects of medicine, health care, and biological sciences. It addresses critical issues such as genetic modifications, medical treatments, end-of-life care, and research involving human or animal subjects.

Ethics and Bioethics in Nursing

- **Ethics in nursing:** Nursing ethics refers to the moral guidelines that help nurses provide care with honesty, compassion, and professionalism. It ensures that patient rights and well-being

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are prioritized while maintaining ethical standards in practice. Nurses often encounter ethical dilemmas related to confidentiality, informed consent, patient autonomy, and professional responsibilities. Key ethical values in nursing include:

- **Bioethics in nursing:** Bioethics in nursing focuses on the ethical challenges arising from advancements in medicine, healthcare technology, and research. It plays a crucial role in guiding nurses in complex situations such as:
  - Decisions regarding end-of-life care and assisted dying
  - Ethical concerns in genetic testing and biotechnology
  - Organ transplantation and allocation
  - Protecting patient privacy in digital healthcare systems
  - Ethical considerations in medical research and clinical trials.

Ethical Principles

Ethical principles are fundamental guidelines that help individuals and professionals make moral decisions by distinguishing right from wrong. These principles are particularly important in fields like health care, law, business, and research. In nursing and medicine, they ensure that patients receive fair, safe, and compassionate care.

Here are the core ethical principles:

- **Autonomy:**
  - Autonomy emphasizes an individual's right to make independent decisions about their own health and well-being.
  - In health care, this means respecting a patient's choices, even if they differ from medical recommendations.
  - **Example:** A patient has the right to decline a medical procedure, even if it could improve their condition.
- **Beneficence:**
  - This principle focuses on doing good and taking actions that benefit others.
  - Healthcare professionals must prioritize patient well-being by offering treatments that promote recovery and improve health.
  - **Example:** A nurse administering pain relief to a patient in distress exemplifies beneficence.
- **Non-maleficence:**
  - Meaning "do no harm," this principle requires healthcare providers to avoid causing harm to patients, either through action or negligence.
  - Decisions should be made by weighing risks and benefits to minimize potential harm.

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  - **Example:** A doctor carefully evaluates the side effects of a medication before prescribing it to ensure the benefits outweigh the risks.
- **Justice:**
  - Justice promotes fairness and equality in the distribution of healthcare resources, treatment, and opportunities.
  - It ensures that individuals receive care without discrimination or bias.
  - **Example:** Two patients with the same medical condition should receive equal care, regardless of financial or social status.

Additional Ethical Considerations

Other ethical principles that play a role in decision-making include:

- **Veracity (Truthfulness):** Ensuring honesty in communication with patients regarding their diagnosis, treatment, and health status.
- **Fidelity (Loyalty):** Being trustworthy and upholding commitments to patients, colleagues, and ethical responsibilities. These ethical principles serve as a moral foundation for professionals, guiding them to act with integrity, fairness, and compassion in their work.

Ethical Concerns in Nursing (Table 3.1)

Nurses often face ethical challenges while providing patient care. These concerns arise due to complex medical situations, patient rights, and professional responsibilities. Below are some key ethical issues in nursing practice:

- To handle these ethical concerns effectively, nurses must apply critical thinking, empathy, and follow professional ethical guidelines, such as those set by the American Nurses Association (ANA) or the International Council of Nurses (ICN). By addressing these challenges with professionalism and compassion, nurses can provide ethical and patient-centered care.
- Healthcare professionals frequently encounter ethical challenges that requires them to balance medical responsibilities with moral and legal considerations. These dilemmas often arise in patient care, decision-making, and resource allocation. Below are some key ethical issues in health care.

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Table 3.1: Description and examples of ethical concerns in nursing.

Ethical concern	*Description*	*Example*
Respecting patient autonomy and informed consent	Patients have the right to make decisions about their health. Nurses must ensure they receive clear and complete information to make informed choices	A patient declines a recommended treatment, and the nurse supports their decision while ensuring they understand the risks
Maintaining confidentiality and privacy	Nurses must safeguard patient information and respect privacy in medical records and discussions	A nurse ensures patient details are not shared with unauthorized individuals or discussed in public areas
End-of-life care and assisted dying	Ethical challenges arise when patients or families choose to discontinue treatment or consider medically assisted dying. Nurses must balance compassion with ethical and legal guidelines	A terminally ill patient refuses life support, and the nurse provides comfort and respects their decision
Fair distribution of resources	Nurses must advocate for the fair allocation of medical resources, especially in cases of limited supplies	In an emergency room, a nurse prioritizes critically ill patients while ensuring others receive appropriate care
Professional boundaries and dual relationships	Nurses must maintain professional relationships with patients and avoid personal involvement that could impact care	A nurse refrains from forming close personal relationships with patients outside of work to maintain professionalism
Cultural and religious considerations	Patients have diverse cultural and religious beliefs that may affect their medical choices. Nurses should respect these values while delivering care	A patient declines a blood transfusion due to religious reasons, and the nurse helps explore alternative treatment options
Moral distress and personal beliefs	Nurses may experience emotional distress when their personal values conflict with professional duties. They must prioritize patient care while maintaining professional integrity	A nurse with personal objections to abortion still provides non-judgmental and compassionate care to a patient undergoing the procedure

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ETHICAL ISSUES AND DILEMMAS IN HEALTH CARE

Navigating Ethical Dilemmas

To address these ethical challenges, healthcare professionals rely on ethical frameworks, institutional policies, and professional codes of conduct, such as those set by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Medical Association (AMA). By prioritizing patient welfare, fairness, and integrity, they strive to make ethical decisions that uphold both medical and moral standards.

Common Ethical Problems

Ethical problems are situations in which individuals or groups face decisions that involve questions of right and wrong. Some common ethical issues include:

- **Conflict of interest:** This arises when individuals in positions of power have personal interests that might influence their decision-making.
- **Discrimination:** Whether based on race, gender, age, or other factors, discrimination remains a significant ethical issue in many settings.
- **Privacy violations:** Handling personal information without proper consent or security can breach ethical standards related to privacy.
- **Honesty and transparency:** Misleading or hiding crucial information is an ongoing ethical concern, especially in business, health care, and politics.
- **Exploitation:** Taking advantage of vulnerable populations, such as employees or consumers, is a common ethical dilemma in corporate and social contexts.
- **Environmental impact:** Companies or individuals often face ethical questions about how their actions affect the environment, leading to debates on sustainability and responsibility.
- **Conflict of interest:** A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal interests, relationships, or financial stakes influence their professional actions, leading to biased or unfair decisions. This is particularly problematic in fields like business, health care, and law, where impartiality is essential.
- **Paternalism:** Paternalism refers to the practice of limiting an individual's freedom or autonomy for their own benefit, often justified by the belief that the individual may not make the best decision for themselves. While well-intentioned, paternalism can

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raise ethical concerns about respect for personal autonomy and individual rights.

- **Deception:** Deception involves misleading or withholding critical information from others, often to gain an advantage or prevent an undesirable outcome. This unethical practice undermines trust and transparency, which are vital in personal relationships, professional environments, and public interactions.
- **Valid consent and refusal:** Valid consent is when individuals voluntarily agree to a decision or action, fully understanding its implications. It is crucial in health care, research, and other fields where personal decisions affect one's well-being. Equally important is the right to refuse consent, which empowers individuals to make decisions about their own bodies and participation in activities, such as medical treatments or experiments, without coercion or manipulation.
- **Allocation of scarce nursing resources:** This ethical issue arises when healthcare resources, such as medical staff, equipment, or treatment options, are limited. Nurses and healthcare providers must make difficult decisions about who receives care, often based on factors like severity of illness, likelihood of recovery, and available resources. These decisions raise concerns about fairness, equity, and prioritization of patient needs.
- **Conflicts concerning new technologies:** As technology rapidly advances, ethical concerns often emerge around its application in various fields, such as health care, AI, or biotechnology. These conflicts can involve issues like privacy, consent, safety, and the unintended consequences of using new technologies. The challenge lies in balancing innovation with responsibility, ensuring that new technologies are used ethically and benefit society without causing harm.
- **Whistle-blowing:** Whistleblowing refers to the act of reporting unethical or illegal activities within an organization, often by employees or insiders. While whistle-blowers may face retaliation or career consequences, their actions can help expose wrongdoing and promote accountability. The ethical dilemma lies in weighing the duty to report unethical conduct against the potential harm to the whistle-blower, colleagues, or the organization.

Each of these issues highlights the tension between personal rights, professional responsibility, and broader societal or organizational needs, requiring careful ethical consideration and, often, difficult decisions.

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Beginning of Life Issues

These ethical challenges arise in the context of conception, pregnancy, and early childhood. They often involve complex questions about moral, legal, and personal rights. Some common issues include **(Table 3.2)**:

- These issues challenge our understanding of life, rights, and ethical responsibility, and often depend on cultural, religious, and personal beliefs about the beginning of life. Balancing the interests of individuals, families, and society requires careful ethical consideration and sensitivity to diverse perspectives.

End of Life Issues (Table 3.3)

When discussing end-of-life (EOL) issues, it's important to approach them with respect, dignity, and compassion, as they involve the final stages of life for individuals and the decisions surrounding it. These issues often encompass medical, emotional, legal, and ethical considerations. Some of the major topics related to EOL include:

EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia comes from the Greek words *"eu"* (good) and *"thanatos"* (death), meaning "a good death." It refers to the deliberate act of ending a person's life, usually to relieve unbearable pain and suffering from a terminal illness.

Table 3.2: Ethical issues related to the beginning of life.

Sl. No.	*Issue*	*Definition/ Description*	*Ethical concerns*	*Example*
1.	**Abortion**	Termination of pregnancy before the fetus can survive outside the womb	Debate over when life begins, right to life vs. bodily autonomy, justification in special cases (rape, health risk)	Abortion in case of severe fetal abnormality
2.	**Assisted repro-duction**	Use of technology such as IVF, artificial insemination, or genetic screening to aid conception	Manipulation of human life, embryo disposal, genetic selection, moral status of embryos	In vitro fertilization (IVF)

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Sl. No.	*Issue*	*Definition/ Description*	*Ethical concerns*	*Example*
3.	**Surrogate mother-hood**	A woman carries and gives birth to a child for another person or couple	Exploitation, commercialization of childbirth, emotional and legal conflicts	Paid surrogacy agreements
4.	**Fetal research and stem cell therapy**	Use of fetal tissue or embryonic stem cells for research and medical treatment	Moral status of embryos, respect for life vs. potential health benefits, consent issues	Using embryonic stem cells for Parkinson's research
5.	**Selective reduction (multi-fetal reduction)**	Reducing the number of fetuses in a multiple pregnancy to improve survival chances or manage risks	Choosing which fetus survives, moral justification of fetal termination	Reducing triplets to twins for maternal safety
6.	**Intrauterine treatment of fetal conditions**	Medical or surgical intervention on the fetus inside the uterus to correct or prevent abnormalities	Fetal pain, maternal risk, consent, and long-term outcomes	In-utero surgery for spina bifida
7.	**Fetal injury**	Physical harm or tissue damage to the fetus during pregnancy or delivery	Questions of liability, fetal rights, and maternal autonomy	Fetal distress caused by obstetric trauma
8.	**Mandated contracep-tion**	Legal or institutional requirement for certain individuals to use contraceptives	Violation of reproductive rights, autonomy, and consent	Court-ordered contraception for individuals with mental illness
9.	**Eugenics**	Practice of improving human genetics through selective breeding or modification	Discrimination, loss of diversity, "designer baby" ethics	Genetic selection for desired physical traits
10.	**Infertility treatment**	Medical interventions used to help individuals or couples conceive when facing infertility	Ethical questions about use of donor gametes, surrogacy, embryo ownership, and accessibility based on cost or age	Use of donor sperm or eggs for conception

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Table 3.3: End-of-Life (EOL) Issues and ethical considerations.

Sl. No.	*Concept*	*Description*	*Ethical consideration*
1.	**Advanced directives**	Legal documents specifying an individual's medical treatment preferences when they are unable to communicate	Respecting patient autonomy and ensuring that their choices are followed even when they cannot express them
2.	**Palliative and hospice care**	Care focused on comfort, pain relief, and emotional support for terminally ill patients and their families	Balancing comfort care with life-sustaining treatments; ensuring dignity and informed consent
3.	**Dying with dignity**	Promotes maintaining autonomy, self-respect, and choice in end-of-life decisions	Debates around assisted dying, euthanasia, and moral responsibility of healthcare providers
4.	**Ethical and moral considerations**	Involves complex issues like the right to die, patient autonomy, and family involvement in decisions	Applying ethical principles such as autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice in decision-making
5.	**Emotional and psychological impact**	Emotional distress, grief, and anxiety experienced by patients and families during the dying process	Ensuring compassionate care, emotional support, and respect for emotional needs and values
6.	**Legal aspects**	Includes power of attorney, guardianship, and validation of advance directives and wills	Upholding legal obligations while maintaining ethical integrity and protecting patient rights

Types of Euthanasia (Table 3.4)

- **Legal view:** Country Matters!
- **India:** Only passive euthanasia is permitted under strict conditions (as per Supreme Court's verdict in 2018).
- Key Judgments in India
- Aruna Shanbaug Case (2011)
- First major case on euthanasia in India

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Table 3.4: Types pf euthanasia.		
Type	*Meaning*	*Example*
Voluntary	Done with the patient's clear and informed consent	A cancer patient requesting assisted death
Involuntary	Done without the patient's consent or against their will	Considered unethical and illegal in most countries
Active	Directly causing death by administering lethal substances	Lethal injection
Passive	Allowing death by stopping life-support or medication	Turning off a ventilator or stopping feeding in a vegetative patient

- Supreme Court allowed passive euthanasia under specific circumstances introduced the idea of a "living will" or Advance Medical directive

Common Cause Case (2018)

Landmark judgment that gave constitutional backing to passive euthanasia recognized the right to die with dignity as part of Article 21 (Right to Life) allowed patients to make a "living will" in advance.

What is a Living Will?

A legal document where a person states their wishes in advance. It specifies that no life-prolonging treatment should be given if the person becomes terminally ill or permanently unconscious.

Role of Nurses in Euthanasia (India)

Nurses must:

- Understand legal and ethical boundaries
- Provide palliative care with compassion
- Support patients and families emotionally
- Follow doctors' and legal guidelines strictly
- Never engage in active euthanasia

Netherlands, Belgium, Canada: Allow both active and passive euthanasia in specific situations. Many other countries completely prohibit active euthanasia.

DO NOT RESUSCITATE (DNR)

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation **(Fig. 3.1)**.

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Fig. 3.1: Cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

What is DNR?

- DNR stands for **"Do Not Resuscitate"**.
- It is a medical order written by a doctor that tells healthcare providers not to perform CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) if a patient's heart stops beating or they stop breathing.

Why is DNR Used?

- To respect the patient's wishes in terminal or critical illness
- To avoid prolonging suffering in patients with no chance of recovery
- To ensure a peaceful, dignified death

Nursing Role in DNR Cases

- Respect the DNR order—do not perform CPR if ordered not to
- Communicate clearly and compassionately with family
- Provide comfort care (pain relief, emotional support
- Always maintain dignity and empathy

DNR VS. Euthanasia

See **Table 3.5**.

ISSUES RELATED TO PSYCHIATRIC CARE

Mental health care in India is confronted with several significant challenges that hinder the accessibility and quality of services. Some of the key issues include **(Table 3.6)**:

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Table 3.5: Different aspects of DNR and euthanasia.

Aspect	*DNR*	*Euthanasia*
Action	Withholding CPR	Actively ending life or withdrawing treatment
Legal in India?	Allowed under passive euthanasia	Only passive euthanasia
Purpose	Allow natural death	Relieve suffering, may involve intervention

Table 3.6: Issues in mental health care in India.

Concept	*Description*	*Ethical consideration*
1. Social stigma and discrimination	Mental health issues are stigmatized, leading people to hide their conditions and avoid treatment due to fear of judgment	Violates the ethical principle of justice, as individuals are denied equal respect and access to care. Promotes nonmaleficence to reduce harm from stigma
2. Shortage of qualified professionals	Lack of psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychiatric nurses results in inadequate or delayed treatment	Raises concerns about beneficence and justice, as patients may not receive timely or quality care
3. Limited availability of services	Mental health services are concentrated in cities, leaving rural areas underserved	Violates equity and fairness; ethically requires ensuring accessibility and equal healthcare distribution
4. Lack of awareness and knowledge	Widespread misinformation leads to poor recognition of symptoms and delayed help-seeking	Ethical duty of education and advocacy to promote autonomy through informed choices
5. Overcrowded public health facilities	Government hospitals face high patient loads and inadequate mental health infrastructure	Raises issues of justice and beneficence, as quality and continuity of care are compromised
6. Insufficient funding and slow policy implementation	Despite the Mental Healthcare Act (2017), progress is slow due to underfunding and poor execution	Reflects failure in accountability and justice; ethical responsibility to uphold policy promises
7. Cultural barriers	Traditional beliefs lead many to seek help from non-medical sources rather than professionals	Conflicts with autonomy and beneficence, as culturally rooted misconceptions delay evidence-based care

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Concept	*Description*	*Ethical consideration*
8. Specialized care gaps	Vulnerable groups like children, women, elderly, and addicts lack tailored interventions	Ethical concern of justice—ensuring inclusive, equitable care for all populations
9. Fragmented healthcare system	Poor integration between general and mental health services causes delays and incomplete care	Violates continuity of care and beneficence; integration is ethically necessary for holistic treatment
10. Emphasis on medication	Overreliance on drugs neglects therapy, counselling, and rehabilitation approaches	Raises ethical issues of autonomy (informed choice) and holistic beneficence (comprehensive care)
11. Non-compliance	Patients fail to follow prescribed treatment due to side effects, poor communication, or cost	Requires empathy, respect for autonomy, and shared decision-making to promote adherence ethically
12. Restraint and seclusion	Used to control aggressive or self-harming behavior, sometimes misused or overused	Raises serious ethical concerns of human rights, dignity, and nonmaleficence; must be last-resort and documented
13. Refusal of food	Some psychiatric patients refuse food due to delusions, depression, or protest	Balances autonomy and beneficence—ethical duty to preserve life while respecting patient rights

- Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive strategy, including increasing awareness, enhancing mental health infrastructure, training more professionals, and ensuring better policy implementation. Breaking down cultural barriers and improving access to affordable care are also essential to creating a more inclusive mental health care system.
- The process of ethical decision-making involves several steps that guide individuals or groups in making choices that align with moral principles, values, and norms. This process can be applied in various fields, including bioethics, which focuses on the ethical implications of biological and medical practices. Here's a breakdown of the general steps involved in ethical decision-making, along with how bioethics applies to these steps.

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ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

It is the process of choosing the most morally appropriate course of action when faced with a situation involving ethical dilemmas, that is, situations where values, duties, rights, or principles may conflict. It involves applying ethical principles, professional standards, and personal values to determine what is right, fair, and just, rather than what is merely legal or convenient.

Steps in Ethical Decision-making

Ethical decision-making, especially in the context of bioethics, involves a systematic process that integrates moral principles, knowledge of ethical theory, and an understanding of human rights and dignity. Here's a unique perspective on how this process could unfold, combining philosophical frameworks with practical insights:

Identify the Ethical Dilemma

- **Clarification of the issue:** The first step in any ethical decision-making process is to clearly identify the ethical dilemma at hand. What is the core issue? In bioethics, this might involve conflicts between patient autonomy, beneficence, and justice in healthcare decisions.
- **Contextual understanding:** Recognizing the larger context is crucial—this includes understanding cultural, societal, and professional norms and how they intersect with the ethical issues in question.

Gather Relevant Information

- **Scientific and medical knowledge:** In bioethics, relevant medical facts, research data, and clinical evidence must be gathered. This could involve understanding a patient's condition, treatment options, and potential outcomes.
- **Cultural and personal values:** Consider the patient's and community's values and beliefs. For instance, religious considerations, cultural norms, or family dynamics can profoundly influence ethical decisions in health care.

Consider Ethical Principles

- **Autonomy:** Respect the individual's right to make decisions about their own body and life. This can be particularly important

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when a patient has the right to refuse or request certain medical treatments.
- **Beneficence:** Ensure that the decision maximizes the well-being of the individual and others involved, such as family members.
- **Non-maleficence:** Aim to do no harm. In bioethics, this principle often requires a delicate balance of risks and benefits.
- **Justice:** Consider fairness in the allocation of resources, the impact on vulnerable populations, and equality in treatment.

Examine Potential Outcomes

- **Short-term and long-term effects:** Evaluate the consequences of each possible decision. For example, an intervention might provide immediate relief but lead to long-term consequences that need to be weighed carefully.
- **Account for uncertainty:** In bioethics, uncertainty is a given, especially in medical scenarios where outcomes cannot always be predicted. Decisions should be made with an awareness of this uncertainty and a commitment to minimizing harm.

Incorporate Diverse Perspectives

- **Consultation and dialogue:** In ethical decision-making, particularly within bioethics, consulting with a range of perspectives is vital. This could involve involving colleagues, bioethicists, the patient's family, or even the patient (if possible) in the decision-making process.
- **Interdisciplinary approach:** Collaborating with professionals from various disciplines—medical practitioners, legal advisors, ethicists, and psychologists—ensures that all angles are considered, and the decision is not overly one-sided.

Make a Decision

- **Decide based on ethical justification:** Once all factors are considered, the decision should align with ethical reasoning grounded in principles. In bioethics, this might mean prioritizing patient autonomy over other considerations if the patient is fully informed and capable of making decisions.
- **Transparency and justification:** Be prepared to justify the decision to the affected parties, offering a clear rationale that reflects the ethical analysis.

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Implement the Decision

- **Execution and communication:** Execute the decision with respect, transparency, and care. In health care, this could involve delivering a treatment plan or informing a patient of their options with empathy.
- **Consideration of social and emotional impacts:** Ethical decisions should also take into account the emotional and social ramifications, ensuring that the dignity and well-being of individuals are respected throughout the process.

Evaluate and Reflect

- **Post-decision evaluation:** After the decision is made and implemented, evaluate its outcomes. Did it achieve the desired results? Were there unintended consequences? In bioethics, continuous reflection is essential as new information or ethical concerns might emerge over time.
- **Learn from the process:** Every ethical decision-making scenario is an opportunity to learn and refine one's approach. This could involve formal debriefing sessions or integrating lessons learned into future decision-making processes.

Unique Consideration: Ethical Adaptability in Bioethics

- A key aspect of making ethical decisions, especially in bioethics, is ethical adaptability. As medical technology, treatments, and societal norms evolve, what is considered ethical can change. This means the ethical decision-making process is not static but should be responsive to new challenges, such as emerging technologies (e.g., CRISPR, AI in health care) or shifting societal values (e.g., rights to privacy, consent).
- Through this iterative, reflective, and adaptive approach, bioethicists can continue to make decisions that respect both the evolving knowledge of science and the deeply personal nature of ethical values.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR NURSES: ICN AND INC CODES OF ETHICS

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the Indian Nursing Council (INC) have each developed comprehensive Codes of Ethics to guide nursing professionals in providing ethical and competent

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care. These codes serve as essential tools in maintaining high standards of conduct, protecting patients' rights, and promoting the well-being of both individuals and communities. Below is an overview of the primary principles set forth by both organizations.

ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses

The ICN Code of Ethics offers a global framework designed to ensure that nurses uphold the dignity and rights of individuals while providing quality healthcare. The core elements of this code include:

- **Nurses and patients:**
  - The nurse's foremost duty is to the patient, ensuring that care is delivered with dignity, respect, and compassion.
  - Nurses are expected to uphold the patient's rights to privacy, confidentiality, and informed choice in care decisions.
- **Nurses and professional practice:**
  - Nurses should apply their knowledge and clinical judgment to provide evidence-based care, ensuring the safety and well-being of patients.
  - Their professional commitment also involves promoting health, preventing disease, and reducing suffering in both individuals and communities.
- **Nurses and the nursing profession:**
  - Nurses must take responsibility for their continuous professional growth, ensuring their practice remains up to date.
  - They play an active role in advancing nursing as a profession and contribute to improving healthcare policies and practices.
- **Nurses and professional relationships:**
  - Collaboration with colleagues and other healthcare professionals is essential for effective care delivery.
  - Nurses are expected to create and maintain a work environment that fosters mutual respect, support, and teamwork.
- **Nurses and society:**
  - Nurses hold a social responsibility to advocate for public health, ensure access to health care, and address social determinants of health.
  - They are expected to participate in public health initiatives and contribute to the betterment of healthcare systems.

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INC Code of Ethics for Nurses in India

The Indian Nursing Council (INC) has established its own set of ethical principles, adapted to the cultural and healthcare environment in India. While these principles align closely with the ICN Code, they emphasize specific duties and practices for Indian nurses:

- **Nurses' duties and responsibilities:**
  - Nurses in India are tasked with providing compassionate, patient-centered care while respecting the dignity and autonomy of everyone.
  - The safety and privacy of the patient are paramount, and nurses must always advocate for their best interests.
- **Professional conduct and ethical behavior:**
  - Nurses are expected to demonstrate professionalism, integrity, and empathy in all aspects of their practice.
  - The respect for patients' dignity and the promotion of ethical conduct is foundational to nursing practice in India.
- **Confidentiality and trust:**
  - Maintaining patient confidentiality is a core principle, and nurses are entrusted with sensitive information that must not be disclosed without the patient's consent.
  - Discretion is essential in handling all patient-related matters.
- **Collaboration with healthcare teams:**
  - Nurses are required to work effectively within interdisciplinary healthcare teams, ensuring optimal patient care through communication and cooperation.
  - A harmonious working environment with mutual respect and shared goals is encouraged.
- **Personal and professional development:**
  - Nurses are expected to prioritize their own health and well-being to provide the best care possible.
  - The importance of lifelong learning and continuing education is emphasized to ensure nurses remain skilled and knowledgeable in their practice.
- **Nurses' role in public health:**
  - Nurses in India are encouraged to take an active role in promoting health education and preventive measures within communities.
  - Their advocacy efforts should contribute to improving healthcare systems and addressing public health challenges.

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Key Differences and Similarities

- ICN provides a universal ethical framework that is intended to be applicable across various cultures, emphasizing global health promotion and patient-centered care.
- INC reflects the unique cultural, social, and healthcare context of India, placing special focus on teamwork, professional development, and the importance of nurses' roles in society.
- Both codes prioritize ethical patient care, professionalism, and the continuous growth of the nursing profession, ensuring that nurses maintain the highest standards of care, trust, and compassion in their practice.

Ethics Committee: Roles and Responsibilities (Fig. 3.2)

An Ethics Committee serves a vital function in overseeing and promoting ethical conduct within organizations, especially in sectors like health care, research, and business. Their primary goal is to ensure that decisions are made based on ethical principles, safeguarding the interests and well-being of all parties involved.

- **Addressing ethical concerns:**
  - The committee's main role is to evaluate and address ethical dilemmas that arise within the organization. This involves carefully reviewing situations where ethical principles—such as fairness, integrity, and respect—might be compromised.



Fig. 3.2: Roles and responsibilities of ethics committee.

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  - The committee considers the potential effects of these issues on individuals, ensuring that all decisions are made with regard for the dignity and rights of all stakeholders.
- **Guidance on ethical practices:**
  - It offers recommendations on how the organization can maintain ethical standards across its activities. This may involve reviewing existing policies or suggesting new ones to ensure they align with core ethical principles.
  - Additionally, the committee helps in developing or revising ethical guidelines that reflect the evolving challenges and demands in the field.
- **Ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines**
  - The committee is tasked with ensuring that organizational activities—whether clinical care, research, or day-to-day operations—adhere to established ethical standards and legal regulations.
  - In health care and research, this includes ensuring that patients' rights, confidentiality, and informed consent are respected at all stages.
- **Protecting the welfare of individuals:**
  - A critical responsibility of the ethics committee is to protect individuals' rights and welfare, especially when they participate in research or clinical practices.
  - For instance, in clinical trials, the committee reviews protocols to ensure that participants' safety, privacy, and rights are not compromised.
- **Approval of research projects:**
  - In research settings, the ethics committee plays an important role in evaluating research proposals for ethical soundness.
  - The committee assesses whether the research is designed to minimize risks and whether informed consent will be obtained from participants.
- **Managing conflicts of interest:**
  - The committee is responsible for identifying conflicts of interest that could affect decision-making or compromise ethical standards.
  - It ensures that all actions and decisions are made fairly, without external pressures or biases influencing the process.
- **Investigating ethical breaches:**
  - If ethical violations or concerns are raised, the ethics committee is charged with investigating these claims to determine their validity.

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  - When necessary, the committee implements corrective measures, such as disciplinary actions or procedural adjustments, to restore ethical compliance.
- **Education and training on ethics:**
  - The committee often plays a key role in educating the organization about ethical standards. This includes providing training and resources to employees, researchers, and healthcare providers.
  - The goal is to ensure that everyone within the organization is well-informed about ethical principles and how to apply them in practice.
- **Promoting transparency and accountability:**
  - Transparency is central to the ethics committee's role. It ensures that decisions and ethical guidelines are clearly communicated across the organization.
  - The committee holds individuals and departments accountable for maintaining high ethical standards, creating a culture of responsibility and trust.
- **Encouraging ethical leadership:**
  - The ethics committee advocates for ethical leadership at all levels of the organization. This involves ensuring that leaders demonstrate ethical decision-making and set an example for others to follow.
  - By encouraging ethical leadership, the committee helps to establish an environment where ethical behavior is a priority in every decision.

Composition of an Ethics Committee

- An ethics committee typically includes members with diverse backgrounds and expertise, such as:
  - Healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses, etc.)
  - Legal advisors
  - Researchers
  - Community representatives
  - Ethics specialists
- This diversity allows the committee to approach ethical issues from multiple angles, ensuring comprehensive and well-considered decisions.

CODE OF ETHICS

The code of ethics in the nursing profession provides guidelines for nurses to deliver compassionate, ethical, and professional

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She has been actively involved as a resource person and organizer in numerous faculty development programs, national and international conferences, seminars, and workshops. She also serves on editorial boards of professional nursing journals, contributing to the academic community at large.

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