Nursing Professional Ethics

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Course overview

This course is designed to provide the students with an understanding of moral issues, which form the basis for professional ethics in nursing and ethical challenges and enhance nursing practice.

Learning Objectives:

1. Define the concept of ethics in nursing and its importance in professional practice.

2. Understand the origins and meaning of ethics, particularly within the context of nursing.

3. Explore the role of ethics in addressing moral issues and dilemmas encountered in nursing practice.

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Introduction

Ethics is derived from the Greek word ethos, meaning custom or character.

Ethics refer to a method of inquiry that assists people to understand the morality of human behavior. (i.e. it is the study of morality).

When used in this sense, ethics is an activity; it is a way of looking at or investigating certain issues about human behavior.

DEFINITION OF ETHICS:

"It is branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles."

Ethics refers to the practices or beliefs of a certain group (i.e. Nursing ethics, Physicians' ethics).

Bio-ethics:

Bioethics is a branch of applied ethics that studies the philosophical, social, and legal issues arising in medicine and the life sciences.

It is chiefly concerned with human life and well-being.

- Ethical dilemmas are commonly seen in nursing practice, where a decision to treat a patient may be associated with potential benefits and risks.

- Weighing up these should be guided by an ethical framework or set of principles. Nurses should understand how ethical principles apply to practice, to ensure that they comply with the professional values and expectations of their role.

Case Scenario: Informed Consent

Mr. Jones, a 60-year-old patient with limited English proficiency, is scheduled for a complex surgical procedure.

The surgeon explains the risks, benefits, and alternatives of the surgery, but Mr. Jones appears confused and hesitant to provide consent.

His daughter, who speaks English fluently, insists that he undergo the surgery without fully understanding the details.

Case Scenario: Informed Consent

As the nurse, you ensure Mr. Jones comprehends the procedure by using an interpreter, explaining in simple terms, and emphasizing his autonomy.

This approach balances Mr. Jones's right to informed consent with his daughter's concerns, upholding ethical principles in the process.

Difference between personal and professional ethics?

Personal ethics are used in decision-making in private life and the professional realm.

The main difference between personal and professional ethics is that while personal ethics speaks to beliefs applicable in all aspects of life, professional ethics denotes values that must be adhered to within the work setting.

Healthcare Professionals' Responsibilities

Healthcare professionals are in a trusted position but are also human.

That is why healthcare professionals must be able to **promptly and fully self-disclose** facts, **circumstances**, **events**, **errors**, and **omissions** when such disclosure could enhance the health status of patients or the public or protect patients or the public from unnecessary risk of harm.

CODE OF NURSING ETHICS

THE ICN CODE OF ETHICS FOR NURSES

An international code of ethics for nurses was first adopted by the International Council of Nurses (ICN) in 1953.

Individuals who become nurses are expected to adhere to the ideals and moral norms of the profession.

A code of ethics makes explicit the primary goals, values, and obligations of the profession.

Important principles of ethics in nursing:

1.Justice:	A nurse must be fair when distributing healthcare among patients.
2.Do good:	A nurse must always act in the patient's best interest , do the good and right things.
3. not harm the patient:	A nurse must do no intentional or non-intentional harm to patients.
4. Accountability:	A nurse must accept responsibility for their own actions and must accept all personal and professional consequences that occur as a result of their actions.

Important principles of ethics in nursing:

5.Quality care:	A nurse must be faithful to their professional and provide safe and high-quality care in a competency manner.
6.Autonomy:	A nurse must accept the individualism of each patient and understand that each patient has the right to accept or reject all treatments and the nurse doesn't have the right to force treatments against the patients.
7.Truth:	A nurse must be completely truthful to patients and not hide the whole truth even if this may lead to patient distress.