Recognizing Ethical Issues Experienced by Maternal Nurses and Their Need for Ethics Education

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OBJECTIVES

By the end of this presentation, the learner will be able to:

• identify several key issues concerning ethics in the workplace for nurses
• recognize the need for further education for nurses
• debate issues in a scholarly manner to resolve ethical conflicts
• agree that maternal nurses carry a great burden to maintain ethical principles
Workplace Resources

Inadequacy of resources to help resolve human rights issues

• Nurse managers as resources
• Social Services
• Cultural Beliefs
• Religious beliefs
Patient Rights

Each maternal patient should have the right to:

• be informed if there is any known or indicated aspect of her or her baby's care or condition which may cause her or her baby later difficulty or problems.

• know the name and qualifications of the individual administering a drug or procedure to her during labor or birth.

• be informed in writing of the name of the person who actually delivered her baby and the professional qualifications of that person. This information should also be on the birth certificate.

• determine for herself, without pressure from her attendant, whether she will or will not accept the risks inherent in the proposed treatment.

• be informed by the health professional who is prescribing or administering the drug to her that any drug which she receives during pregnancy, labor and birth, no matter how or when the drug is taken or administered, may adversely affect her unborn baby, directly or indirectly, and that there is no drug or chemical which has been proven safe for the unborn child.
Issues

Substance Abuse During Pregnancy

Should women who abuse drugs while pregnant be legally charged with abusing the fetus?

Should a court order be obtained to force pregnant women to comply with healthcare policies?
Impaired Neonates and Their Rights
Do parents have the right to supersede the rights of an impaired neonate?

• When do neonatal rights begin?
• Who is responsible for protecting those rights?
• What issues arise when those rights are endangered?
Issues
Cultural Beliefs

Should cultural belief practices be considered during neonatal resuscitation?

• How much control is given to the parents?
• Which cultural beliefs are considered to be against the law in the United States?
• Should an informed consent over-ride any harmful cultural practices?
Issues

Ethics Education for Nursing Staff

Do nurses have a need for greater educational opportunities concerning ethics in the workplace?

- Should holistic care be mandatory for ensuring ethical practice?
- Do nurse managers have an obligation to provide and protect ethical practice?
- Are new nurses taught to be aware of ethical practices in the maternal units?
- Can a mentoring program help new nurses adjust to making ethical decisions?
Issues

Religious Beliefs

Do nurses have the right to consider their own religious beliefs when deciding ethical issues?

- Deciding where to work
- Knowing the parameters of a nursing department
- Coming to a consensus about religious issues
Abortion

- Right to life for the fetus
- A woman’s right to control her body
- Choosing to carry a pregnancy to full term when a fetal problem exists
- Late-Term abortion
Issues
Critically Ill Mothers

When presented with a pregnant woman in a critical state of health, who has the primary right to life, the woman or the baby?

Make every mother and child count
Science and Ethics

“Science cannot resolve moral conflicts, but it can help to more accurately frame the debates around those conflicts.”

Heinz R. Pagels, 1988
References


