AN ETHICAL POSITIONING SYSTEM

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• 1. Understand the interdependence of all participants in the bioethical context.
• 2. Apply a prescribed decision-making framework to a specific situation.
• 3. Recognize how practice decisions might be justified using bioethical standards with a decision-making framework.

• No sponsorship or commercial support was given to Joan Dorman, author of this presentation.
OVERVIEW OF THE ETHICAL POSITIONING SYSTEM

• This is a six step system:

  Step 1. **Assessment**: All pertinent information about the situation.

  Step 2. **Nursing Dilemma**: A statement about the conflict of choices that the nurse faces.

  Step 3. **Planning**: Includes the choices, which must be at least 3 in number, the pros and cons of each choice, and the ethical principles and provisions of the ANA Code of Ethics that apply to this case.
Step 4. **Diagram**: This is a depiction of the choices, the pros and cons of each, with the ethical principles and the Code of Ethics provisions listed on the bottom.

Step 5. **Implementation**: This is a discussion of the solution you chose and how you went about carrying this out.

Step 6. **Evaluation**: This is a discussion of how your chosen solution worked as well as how the Ethical Positioning System tool worked for you.
Ethical Positioning System Model

- Assessment
- Nursing Dilemma
- Planning/Diagram
- Implementation
- Evaluation

- Choices
  - Pros & Cons
- Ethical Principles
- ANA Code of Ethics
ETHICAL POSITIONING SYSTEM DIAGRAM

Nursing Diagnosis/Problem Statement

Choice 1
- Pro
- Con

Choice 2
- Pro
- Con

Choice 3
- Pro
- Con

Ethical Principles & ANA Code of Ethics
CASE STUDY: KEEPING SECRETS

Assessment

Mr. Ryan is a 28 year old patient with end stage cystic fibrosis. You have developed a caring relationship with Mr. Ryan and his wife. They both know he has only a short time to live.

Dr. Jones made rounds and told them Mr. Ryan could be discharged later if his condition remained stable.

They were very excited because they had been urging the doctor to let him go home to enjoy his remaining time surrounded by the things and people he loves.
Assessment cont’d:

When you take Mr. Ryan his discharge papers to review medications and treatments, you see Mrs. Ryan assisting Mr. Ryan as he coughs up bright red blood.

They beg you not to tell the doctor or chart this incident. They believe it is their right to go home and let Mr. Ryan die surrounded by his family.

They say they know they can leave the hospital AMA, but, if they do, their insurance will not pay for home care.
The nurse must decide if she should report and document Mr. Ryan’s coughing up blood.

She recognizes this as an ethical dilemma.
What are the pros and cons of each alternative?

What are the alternatives for the nurse?

What are the ethical principles to consider?

Which provisions of the Code of Ethics apply?
**CHOICE 1**

Report this new symptom to the physician, and document this event.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PROS</strong></th>
<th><strong>CONS</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The physician will then have to make the decision</td>
<td>• You will be compromising the trusting relationship you have with the Ryans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You will not be responsible for any undesirable consequences after discharge</td>
<td>• Mr. Ryan may have to remain in the hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The physician may discharge Mr. Ryan anyway</td>
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**CHOICE 2**

Keep this information to yourself, and go ahead with discharge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Mr. Ryan will be able to die at home</td>
<td>• You feel uncomfortable doing this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Ryans will still trust you</td>
<td>• Something bad could happen, like Mr. Ryan choking on his own blood,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and you could be held responsible</td>
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**CHOICE 3**

Explain to the Ryans that you are ethically and legally bound to share information of this sort.

<table>
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<th>CONS</th>
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| • They will know you are being honest with them, even if you cannot comply with their wishes.  
• You can collaborate with the physician, and they may still be able to go home. | • They may feel you have breached their trust.  
• The physician may want Mr. Ryan to remain in the hospital. |
4. DIAGRAM

Nursing Dilemma: Report or Keep the Secret.

Choice 1
Report this

- Pro
  Physician decision
  May discharge anyway
  You will not be responsible for outcome

- Con
  Compromise their trust
  They may have to stay
  They may leave AMA

Choice 2
Keep secret

- Pro
  He will die at home
  They will still trust you

- Con
  You are not comfortable
  Something bad could happen

Choice 3
Explain why you have to report this

- Pro
  They know you are being honest
  You can collaborate

- Con
  Could lose trust
  He may have to stay
  He may leave AMA

Ethical Principles
- Autonomy
- Veracity
- Accountability
- Fidelity
- Beneficence

ANA Code of Ethics
1.1 Respect for patients
1.2 Relationships for patients
1.4 Right to self-determination
2.3 Collaboration
2.4 Professional boundaries
**ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

**Autonomy:**
- Mr. Ryan has the right to make his own decisions.

**Veracity:**
- If you do not report this incident, you are not being truthful.

**Accountability:**
- As a nurse, you are accountable for your actions. If you do not report this, you could be complicit in a poor outcome.

**Fidelity:**
- You have a duty to and a relationship with your patient.

**Beneficence:**
- You want to do good and prevent harm.
THE ANA CODE OF ETHICS

1.1 Respect for human dignity

1.2 Relationships to patients

1.4 Right to self-determination

2.3 Collaboration

2.4 Professional boundaries

4.2 Accountability for action

5.4 Preservation of integrity
The nurse sat down with Mr. and Mrs. Ryan and shared her concerns for Mr. Ryan’s well-being. She explained that she was ethically and legally obligated to report this incident.

She explained that she would confer with the physician, express their desires, and try to reach a compromise.

The Ryans recognized that the nurse had no choice.

The physician shared that this was not an uncommon symptom at this stage of the illness. Mr. Ryan was discharged home that same day.
**EVALUATION**

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<th>Mr. and Mrs. Ryan continue to trust the nurse.</th>
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<td>Discharge teaching included what to do in cases of profound bleeding or other events.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Ryans were able to get home care to help with Mr. Ryan’s needs, and the insurance will pay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ryan will be able to die at home as he wishes.</td>
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