



The Practice of Ethics in Medical Field: A Philosophical Outlook

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<p>Received: 12/05/2024</p> <p>Accepted: 24/06/2024</p> <p>Published: 09/07/2024</p>	<p>Abstract: <i>The term 'ethos' implies custom or character. Ethics is the study of conflicts arising from moral imperatives, moral norms and the way to deal with them. The actions or the choices that we make are very important in ethics. On the basis of which both the term ethical and unethical are stand upon. Medical ethics enjoyed a remarkable degree of continuity from the days of Hippocrates till the middle of the twentieth century. At that ancient time, the Hippocrates was known as the Father of medicine. In Hippocrates school, they took two oaths; one is benefiting the patient and secondly, not harming the patient. This article is all about the concern, identifying the root cause, how these activities are related to modern society, what can be the solutions regarding the unethical performance occurring in the medical field.</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>Ethics, confidentiality, consent, medical field, transparency, wellbeing.</i></p>
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Introduction

Today's active life demands an ethical approach to every aspect of human life. Righteousness and wrongness are two basic sense that every human being should be aware of. In the vast area of Philosophy, ethics includes some major areas such as; Meta ethics, normative ethics, applied ethics. Meta ethics deals with the origin of ethical principles that govern the specification of right and wrong behaviour. It is a theoretical study of moral thought and moral language rather than applying things in practical situations. Normative ethics is concerned with values including what 'ought to be'. Applied ethics deals with social problems and responsibilities in different sectors. Applied ethics is also known as practical ethics. It includes field like bio ethics, medical ethics, business ethics, media ethics, environmental ethics, and many more. These domains of ethics are very much related to our daily life problems. Though there are some active norms and regulations in the field of medicines, still there are some unethical activities going against to the patients' welfare.

Issues

1. The oath was about not harming the patient and it should be only concerned about the justice what the patient deserves. Instances like euthanasia, abortion, organ transplantation, and surrogacy are filled with corruption and injustice.
2. The basic norm was to maintain confidentiality between the doctor and patient, the confidential matter is also very vague. Whenever a patient undergoes treatment, there are always some ethical issues to negotiate.
3. Unethical issues are rampant within the medical field. Some healthcare providers engage in fraudulent activities, such as billing for services not provided.

4. Patient privacy is also compromised when medical personnel share confidential information without consent.
5. These unethical behaviours erode the trust between patients and healthcare professionals, ultimately compromising patient care and well-being.
6. In some medical cases doctors prescribe unnecessary medical tests or take advantages of various patients by prescribing different expensive surgeries for monetary gain.

Objectives

1. To identify how unethical medical practices violets the right to autonomy.
2. To identify the root cause behind these unethical activities and find out a solution.
3. To understand the motive behind the harmful activities in the vital sectors like Euthanasia, abortion, organ transplantation.
4. To find how these issues are hampering our modern society and treatment procedure.

History of Medical systems and some problems:

In India, Ayurveda is known as the oldest school of medical field. The word 'Ayur' means life, and the word 'veda' means knowledge. So together it indicates the knowledge about life. Charaka and Sushruta were the two pillars of Ayurvedic texts.

Bio medical ethics emerged as a distinct field of study in the early 1960s. They introduced several new techniques in treatments such as organ transplantation and kidney dialysis. Also, this modern system introduced taking some difficult decisions about which patients would receive treatment and which would be allowed to die, which are very important in our present life.

Three doshas and three dhatus

Since ancient times, medical ethics has been concerned about individual's well being and good health. According to Ayurveda, our whole body consists of three Doshas: Vatta (movement), Pitta (transformations) and Kapha (lubrication and stability). Also, there are three Dhatus: Rasa (bone), Flesh (mangso) and Blood marrow (Rakto). According to medical science, the balance between these three Doshas and three Dhatus are very important. An imbalance may occur some diseases in human health. The reason can be due to patients carelessness or lack of nutrition but sometime it is the Doctor who prescribed inappropriate drugs or due to wrong check-up.

Bio -Medical or Bio- Clinical Ethics

Medical field is a huge area of various important things. Bio medical ethics is in the domain of Applied Ethics. This is the study of ethical, social, and legal issues that arise in the domain of medical field. This theory focuses on various issues that are there in daily basis in several health care institutions.

The fundamental principles of Ethics

There are four principles which are very important for healthcare industry. From the Hippocrates School, Beneficence and Non - maleficence, these two principles were there. With times, both the Autonomy and Justice gained acceptance as equally important principles in ethics.

I. Beneficence:

This principle is about taking all types of care of an individual. The physician should act for the benefit of the patient. It is about to avoiding any types of harm and promote welfare of the patient. This principle talks about to provide all type of medical protection to the individual.

II. Non – maleficence:

The patient should feel protected and harmless when he or she is under any treatment with a doctor. So doctor should take care of that and there should not be any intention to harm that individual. This principle is about some moral rules - do not kill, do not cause suffering, do not cause offense and many more like this. By using appropriate medicine and providing accurate treatment the physician should treat the patient.

III. Autonomy:

This principle will work for people who can work autonomously, excluded the infants and incompetence due to developmental, mental or physical disorder. This principle work accordingly with patient's interest. This principle demands transparency, confidentiality, decision making ability, informed consent.

IV. Justice:

Justice is very important for a patient so the justice should be maintained. Justice is all about fairness, equal opportunities. This also claims appropriate treatment of the patient. Among several types of justice, this particular domain comes under Distributive justice. This type of justice demands - an equal share, according to need, effort, and contribution. And fairness plays a very important role in this domain. But in reality, the balance among these principles are vague and ethical norms are neglected.

Unethical practices in the medical field:

1. Doctors for their own practices, prescribed their experimental drugs to their patients. It may turned out as poisonous for that patient. According to me there should not be dishonesty between doctor and patient. There are some vagueness between doctor patient relationships.
2. Many unethical issues of medical field that should identify.
3. It is very common that there are always some privileged people who get extra advantages in every sector. Be it getting doctor's special treatment or take free medicines. This imbalance is increasing day by day and it should disappear from this field.
4. In the matter of euthanasia, there are some terrible incidents where the rules are not followed by the experts properly. This is absolutely not correct to take one individual's life through biased Euthanasia.
5. The surrogacy should be treated more carefully for that we can find more instances about surrogacy. If any imbalance occurs, it's the child who suffers the more.
6. A comparative study whether surrogacy is actually helpful or not, is important.

Modern issues in the medical field

Modern times come with modern problems in various ways, in which people are suffering with some unethical issues.

1. Negligence of patient when the hospitals find themselves incapable to provide the correct treatment
2. Providing misleading information to the patient in some serious medical problems such as Kidney Failure, which is highly unethical violation and unprofessional integrity

3. Creating pressure to the patients for choosing expensive treatment or operations over the more affordable options
4. Failure of doctors to pay attention to the individuals, the important symptoms or the medical background the patient has, which may include inaccurate diagnosis.
5. Crucial matter like Euthanasia and the matter of life death, hospitals are giving attention to monetary matters.

Day by day as Medical science has evolved, it introduced new types of real life problems and solutions such as euthanasia, abortion, surrogacy and many more. At the same time, modern time brings some unethical environment also. This profession is more like a business now. Though these all are for people's welfare and good life, there are some major negligence also. From my point of view there are some unethical and biased or partial activities happening in our daily life. Here are some popular concepts of medical domain with problems in those area.

Three major problematic areas in Medical field

A. Euthanasia

Though it seems that euthanasia is a modern concept but it was there in Kurushetra the battle field. The heroic Bhisma turned to Duryodhana the king and said, *"Give generous and benefiting presents of money to these good surgeons and pay them due honor and send them away for to me in this condition no treatment is welcome... I must be allowed to die..."*

Euthanasia is the practice of ending the life of a patient to limit the patient's suffering. Euthanasia is of two kinds; active euthanasia and passive euthanasia. Active euthanasia is killing a patient by active means, for example injecting a patient with a heavy dose of drug. Passive euthanasia is intentionally letting a patient die by withholding his or her treatment such as a ventilator or feeding tube.

Related questions

An individual who is unconscious and has no hope for recovery, do they have the right to decide how to end their own life?

In any critical situation of the patient, is it morally right for his family members to decide about his death, when the patient himself is unaware?

B. Abortion

Abortion in medical science is the expulsion of a fetus from the uterus before it has reached the stage of viability. Basically it is a pregnancy interruption. Before the 20th week of pregnancy it may happen.

Related questions

1. Every year close to 20 million women risk their lives and health by undergoing unsafe abortions and 25% will face a complication with permanent consequences. Is this action morally right?
2. In rural areas these problems are very common among under aged women. Sometimes their family also pressurize them to do abortion.
3. There are some instances where the hospital or the atmosphere are very unhygienic for the mother. In that case it is possible to get infected.

C. Surrogacy

Surrogacy is a process in which the mother is artificially inseminated with the sperm of intended father. The child will be genetically connected with the mother. It is a legal process between both the parties.

Related questions:

1. As the child will not be her own, sometimes the surrogate mothers are careless such as they do not give up their drinking habit or smoking habit. They became less bothered about the child so they continue their regular lifestyle without taking any extra care of the upcoming child. I think that is not the correct way to harm a life.
2. After pregnancy the child might get rejected because of certain abnormalities. Then some major problems occur and ultimately it's the child who suffers unknowingly the most. Who gave them the right to do so for their own pleasure?
3. Also, in this long process, the surrogate mother and her family may demand for more money, threaten to terminate the child and many more complications may arise.

To enhance ethics in the medical field, healthcare professionals should undergo regular training on ethical principles and dilemmas. Encouraging open communication and transparency with patients can also help in promoting ethical behavior. Additionally, establishing clear guidelines and protocols for handling ethical issues can guide professionals in making ethical decisions. Overall, improving ethics in the medical field requires a collective effort from healthcare professionals, patients, and policymakers. By upholding ethical standards and promoting a culture of ethics, the medical field can better serve the needs of patients and uphold its commitment to providing quality healthcare.

Conclusion and critique

It has become a terrible affair nowadays to find instances where patients dying from seemingly negligent therapy followed by the doctors or even by reputed hospitals. There is no doubt that like other public sectors of India, widespread corruption has also entered in our medical education and healthcare system. From the very beginning of students to enter in a medical college to go for a treatment and paying a hefty fee, there are no limits for unethical activities in hospitals today.

The Delhi High Court recently declared the Medical Council of India (MCI) the highest medical regulatory body in the country, as a 'den of corruption'. As an evidence Dr. Ketan Desai was caught on 2010 by CBI for taking bribe of crore rupees in exchange of granting recognition to a private medical college.

In a huge population like India, medicine could be the number one money making profession if one use this profession as their own profit. Also, sometimes power comes with greed, dishonesty and selfishness. A country like India, where people are busy with their own money making profit and where everything is business, the ethical guidelines are just a recommendation, not a law. Everything under the treatment is important and should deal with care. The essentially of the treatment, the voluntariness, informed consent, community agreement should be maintained. In the ongoing process of checking up, the privacy and confidentiality except legal reasons are the basic principles which should maintained? The risk to do any operation or surgery the doctor's concern should be unbiased. The transparency is another important thing for the treatment, both the patient and the doctor should be transparent to each other. Overall, both the individuals should be responsible to each other and should have mutual trust and respect to complete the process with an unethical and unbiased manner.

Being a student of Philosophy I always find myself to think in an unbiased and ethical manner. It has been always my concern that in a professional field like hospital and nursing homes there are several unethical activities happening in a regular manner. Which is unavoidable. People are their best when it's the matter of missus one's power. And the unprivileged people suffers the most. My interest is to know more about these concepts and further analyse those problems.

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