**Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VIII**

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Discuss the history of bioethics.
2. Identify the formal mechanisms developed to ensure that health care and health research is conducted ethically.
3. Evaluate the impact of bioethics on research, medical education, and clinical practice.

**Unit Lesson**

We have come to the final discussion of socially related perspectives of health care. The topic is one that has been met with much controversy and conflict since the early 1800’s: bioethics. Bioethics deals with issues of moral and professional standards of practice and treatment involving life issues such as euthanasia, which deals with the practice of assisting a patient with ending their life, and research that serves as a threat to human or animal subjects. As early as the 1840s, unethical medical practice came into existence when Dr. Marion Sims subjected African American female slaves to a procedure aimed at repairing fistulae tears in their reproductive area with the use of addictive drugs to numb the pain. In 1933, unethical treatment of millions of Germans under the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi group brought about the creation of the Nuremberg Code, which is a code of ethics set forth which requires a medically justifiable reason for the experimentation of human subjects.

It was not until the 1960s that bioethics became a major focus of attention and discussion in government circles. Even with these discussions, there seemed to be an increase in the number of unethical medical practices including the Willowbrook Hepatitis study, the Tuskegee Syphilis study, and the Karen Quinlan case, which involved the issue of the right to die. The 1980s and 90s brought about new challenges and issues of ethics such as reproductive technology, in which doctors acted as control agents in the process of fetal development with the birth of the world’s first test-tube baby, and even in the millennium with drugs aimed at enhancing human traits such as Viagra. Also more recently we have seen controversy surrounding stem cell research involving the practice of extracting cells from human embryos for the purpose of cloning or recreating human life. Now, even more efforts have been launched to bring order and integrity to the way in which human and animal life are respected through research with the formation of review boards, advisory boards, and ethics committees aimed at ensuring that ethical standards of practice are adhered to.

We will also assess the impact that bioethics has had on research efforts in the medical/health care field, on medical education, and clinical practice. As a health care administrator, it is important that you help to build an ethics infrastructure in your workplace. Just like there have been numerous scandals in the corporate world, so too have there been in health care organizations (Cornett, 2005). Just
like in the corporate world, health care is a business and has to make money to continue running. However, in health care, the product being produced is proper care for people, not the next smartphone (Cornett, 2005). While health care administrators are expected to offer the most high-tech medical treatments possible, there is also the human factor to consider. Think about it. Is convincing someone to accept a treatment that they really do not need simply to collect the insurance money ethical? How about covering up for the doctor who drinks alcohol before he performs surgery? Health care administrators are expected to keep the hospital they work for solvent, but should that be done at the expense of human life?

It is for this reason that some sort of ethical infrastructure should be put into place. Health care organizations were established to help people and not use them to make money. Mistakes that occur should be dealt with together as a team in a “collaborative, non-threatening manner” and should never be covered up (Cornett, 2005). Renz and Eddy (1996) list four strategies that health care administrators can use to begin building a solid ethics infrastructure:

1. Formally clarify with all staff what the values of the organization are and link them to its mission and vision.
2. Hold training sessions with the staff to give them more knowledge about ethics and ethical issues and how they go hand in hand with the practice of medicine.
3. Ensure that each staff member feels that they have the encouragement and support of the hospital administration.
4. Create methods to monitor ethical performance and give feedback when necessary.

Ensuring that you, as the healthcare administrator, and your staff are all on the same page and understand that the patients’ needs really do come first and that you are all there to support one another, you will see a decrease in ethical dilemmas and issues and an increase in employee satisfaction. Most importantly, there will be an increase in patient satisfaction, which is who we are all here for after all.

References


Suggested Reading

Click [here](#) to access a PDF of the Chapter 13 Presentation.

Using the CSU Online Library, locate and read the following articles:


**Learning Activities (Non-Graded)**

**Reflection Paper**

For this activity, you are asked to reflect on the concepts covered in the reading assignment and the written lecture, and write about them. What did you understand completely? What did not quite make sense? The purpose of this activity is to provide you with the opportunity to reflect on the material you finished reading and to expand upon those thoughts. If you are unclear about a concept, this will give you a chance to write those questions down and email them to your professor for feedback. Can you apply the concepts you learned in this unit toward your career? How?

This is not a summary, but is instead a chance for you to express your thoughts about the material learned in this unit by writing about it.

The reflection paper should meet the following requirements:

- At least one page
- Contain your thoughts about the material and its value to you personally
- Contain any questions you may have concerning the material

Format your writing using APA style. Because this is not a graded assignment, it does not need to be submitted to your professor. This activity was designed to allow you an opportunity to put your thoughts down on paper so you can determine what concepts still may be foreign to you and give you a chance to ask your professor any questions you may have.

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions contact your instructor for further guidance and information.