

Pharmacy Ethics

Obj. 8.5: Differentiate between the four principles of ethics in pharmacy.



The Right Thing...

Describe a situation where you were not sure what the “right thing to do” was.

DISCUSS

Being Ethical

What does it mean to be "ethical"?



Ethics & Pharmacy

Review the notes about ethics & pharmacy.

Ethics:

1. Also known as “moral philosophy”
2. Is a branch of philosophy that involves the concepts of right and/or wrong conduct... how one should or should not act.
3. These behaviors can be defined by social, religious, and/or civil codes of behavior considered correct (or incorrect) (*Sometimes these are specific to a particular group, profession, or individual*).

Ethics in Pharmacy: values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions in the pharmacy profession

1. **Respect for Autonomy:** The patient should make the final decision about whether a procedure will be performed on his or her own body (*“Let the patient decide”*)
2. **Nonmaleficence:** Not taking actions that could inflict harm (*“At least don’t hurt the patient”*)
3. **Beneficence:** To do good, to remove harms, to promote welfare (*“Do something to help the patient”*)
4. **Justice:** Equal opportunity to obtain equal treatment for all people (*“Health for all!”*)

DISCUSS

Can you think of any examples of an ethical scenario a pharmacist or pharmacy technician may have to deal with?



Pharmacy Ethics Situations

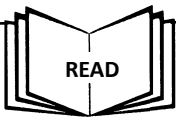
After you read each scenario, decide if it's an example of:

a) Respect for Autonomy, b) Nonmaleficence, c) Beneficence, or d) Justice.

1) Abby went to the pharmacy and asked the pharmacist which medication she should take for her headache. The doctor told her that she could take Tylenol or Ibuprofen but that Ibuprofen should not be taken if you are pregnant. Abby was clearly 8 months pregnant but decided to buy the Ibuprofen anyway.

2) John just graduated from Pharmacy School and is in his first week at work. A patient comes up and asks him what type of medication he should take for a headache. John asks if the patient is on any other medications. The patient tells John that he is on high blood pressure medication. John doesn't want to look stupid, but he can't remember which medications shouldn't be mixed, so he calls the other pharmacist on duty for help.

3) A new patient walks into the pharmacy with an inhaler and asks how to use it. Juanita, the pharmacist, is really busy with other things, but she decides to take a moment to help the patient.



Pharmacy Ethics Mini-Cases

As you read the **bolded** portion of each scenario, decide if it's an example of:

a) Respect for Autonomy, b) Nonmaleficence, c) Beneficence, or d) Justice.

4) An overnight pharmacist, Harold, works the night shifts at Feel Better Pharmacy, a 24 hour community pharmacy in Chicago. One morning as he was getting ready to end his shift, a young teenage mom walked into the pharmacy with an infant in a stroller. She handed Harold a prescription and informed him that the Rx was for her 10 month old daughter who was just discharged from the ER. 1) **She expressed that she really wanted to go home ASAP in order to catch the repeat of her favorite TV show she missed while in the ER.** As the RPH scanned the Rx, he quickly noticed that the ER MD has boldly written on the Rx "IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE TAKEN YOUR BABY FROM THE ER AGAINST THE JUDGMENT OF HER DOCTOR. YOUR BABY HAS PNEUMONIA & SEPSIS AND COULD LIKELY DIE WITHOUT URGENT CARE. 2) **IT IS STRONGLY ADVISED THAT YOU TAKE YOUR BABY TO ANOTHER HOSPITAL OR RETURN TO THIS ER IMMEDIATELY.**" The pharmacist was perplexed as to what to do; he did not know the legal implications of this sort of warning on Rx and has never seen or heard anything like this before since he started practicing two years ago. 3) **He thought about calling his pharmacy manager because he wanted to make sure he wasn't giving the woman the wrong information,** but decided against it given

that this was too early in the morning. He told himself that this is the time to use professional judgment and he went on to ask the mom some questions. After talking with her, the RPH gathered that the mom did not have any objections to the treatment proposed by the ER MD, she just wanted to be home at certain time to watch her favorite show. She thought that it wouldn't make any difference where the baby gets her medication, be it hospital or home.

5) A 17 year old female walked into an independent pharmacy near her home with the intent to fill her Rx for Ella, an emergency contraceptive pill. She had visited Planned Parenthood Clinic to obtain the Rx after having an unprotected sex approximately 48 hours ago. The pharmacy owner who objected to filling prescriptions for emergency contraception was the pharmacist on duty at the time. 4) **He promptly expressed to her that he does not fill/dispense these kinds of pills for any reason regardless of what the government says.** The pharmacist was really tired of the explanations and apologies he had to render each time someone walked in with Rx for contraception which has become too frequent. This was the third in one week and the other patients has threatened to report him to the authorities. 5) **The nurse practitioner who wrote the Rx had told the patient to contact her if the RPH refused to fill the script** because it is illegal for the RPH to refuse filling of contraception Rx without providing the patient with an alternative means of getting the Rx. With this in mind, 6) **she asked the pharmacist what he can do to help her obtain the drug since she was running out of time.**

6) Tom, a man with bipolar disorder, was on trial for the murder of his boss Gary whom he had stabbed to death with a kitchen knife following his demotion and a \$10,000 pay cut a day earlier. Tom asked the court to blame his Rx medications for his actions, not HIM. He claimed that the mix of medications he was taking caused a stupor punctuated by hallucinations and voices in his head asking him to kill his boss. During his trial, he put the blame squarely on the pharmaceutical industry and pharmacist(s) since 7) **both parties failed to warn him that his medications could turn him into a murderer.** His lawyers did not dispute that their client killed his boss rather; they argued that he is not guilty by reason of involuntary intoxication from Rx medications.

Choose one of the four principles of ethics and describe a new example scenario.



Ethics in Pharmacy Scenarios

C te sheet of paper write **two** new scenarios. For each scenario, show how the pharmacist demonstrates each of the ethical principles. Make sure to underline the part of the scenario that explains each principle. Use the following steps to help you write the scenarios.

1. Choose the pharmacist and patient characters
2. Based on the ethical principle, decide what type of situation they will be dealing with? (ie: Is the patient refusing care, is the pharmacist unsure of what to give the patient, is the patient sick, etc)
3. Write the scenario. Put the answers on the back.