

# Ethics in Medical Education.....

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With so much attention being focused on the current state of health care, many people are now beginning to look deeper into how and why the system isn't working so well. An important element of affecting positive change and ensuring that those in charge are being fair and equitable is to keep an eye on the ethics of the profession. From bioethics to law and medicine to pharmaceutical ethics, this series of **“issues on medical ethics”** will lead all of us to the reality of current medical era.

**“Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make a man more clever devil” — C. S. Lewis**

**Medical ethics** is a system of moral principles that apply values and judgments to the practice of medicine. Medical ethics embraces its practical application in clinical scenarios as well as work on its history, philosophy, theology, and sociology.

Historically, Western medical ethics may be traced to advices on the duty of early physicians, such as the Hippocratic Oath, and early Christian teachings.

In England, Thomas Percival, a physician and author, hewed the first modern code of medical ethics. He drew up a guide with the code in 1794 and wrote an

expanded version in 1803, in which he coined the expressions "medical ethics" and "medical jurisprudence"

### **Value of ethics in medical research:**

A basic outline used in the analysis of medical ethics is spelt in four principles approach postulated by Tom\_Beauchamp and James\_Childress in their textbook Principles of biomedical ethics. It recognizes four basic moral principles, which are to be judged and weighed against each other, with attention given to the scope of their application. The four principles are

- Respect for autonomy - the patient has the right to refuse or choose their treatment. (*Voluntas aegroti suprema lex.*)
- Beneficence - a practitioner should act in the best interest of the patient. (*Salus aegroti suprema lex.*)
- Non-maleficence - "first, do no harm" (*primum non nocere*).
- Justice - concerns the distribution of scarce health resources, and the decision of who gets what treatment (fairness and equality).

Other values that are also discussed include:

- Respect for persons: The patient (and the person treating the patient) has the right to be treated with dignity.
- Truthfulness and honesty - the concept of informed\_consent has increased in importance

### **Ethics & research:**

**Social and clinical value:** Every research study is designed to answer a specific question. Answering certain questions will have significant value for society or for present or future patients with a particular illness.

**Scientific validity:** A study should be designed in a way that will get an understandable answer to the valuable research question.

**Fair subject selection:** Whom does the study need to include, answer the question it is asking? The primary basis for recruiting and enrolling groups and individuals should be the scientific goals of the study — not vulnerability, privilege, or other factors unrelated to the purposes of the study.

**Favorable risk-benefit ratio:** Uncertainty about the degree of risks and benefits associated with a drug, device, or procedure being tested is inherent in clinical research otherwise there would be little point to doing the research.

**Independent review:** To minimize potential conflicts of interest and make sure a study is ethically acceptable before it even starts, an independent review panel with no vested interest in the particular study should review the proposal

**Informed consent:** For research to be ethical, most agree that individuals should make their own decision about whether they want to participate or continue participating in research.

**Respect for potential and enrolled subjects:** Individuals should be treated with respect from the time they are approached for possible participation even if they refuse enrollment in a study throughout their participation and after their participation ends.

There are many more vital aspects of this burning issue. To practice ethics in day to day clinic and in research is a real challenge. But it can be well commented that revising and reanalyzing ourselves would definitely keep one alert and safe.

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**“I’d like you to do a presentation on business ethics. If you don’t have time to prepare something, just steal it off the Internet.”**

To be continued in the next issue.....

#### **References:**

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