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A Textbook of BIOETHICS

for Healthcare Professionals



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CHAPTER 2

Terminologies in Bioethics

Bioethics: Literally 'life ethics'. The term was coined by oncologist Van Rensselaer Potter. An exploration of ethical dilemmas arising in the healthcare field, as well as relating to medical aspects of human beings.

Ethics: Ethics is the systematic study of how we ought to act toward ourselves and others. Medical ethics is a branch of ethics.

Autonomy: Auto-self; nomy-governance. Autonomy is defined as 'respecting the decisions of an individual' on the grounds of his/her values and belief.

Beneficence: Beneficence is performing an act, which is good or which ultimately leads to good results. It is one of the principles of bioethics.

Consent: Consent is defined as voluntary agreement or compliance for a specific act or purpose.

Nonmaleficence: 'Above all do no harm' as said in the *Hippocratic Oath* stress on not causing any harm to the patient by the act of the healthcare professional.

Deontology: Literally 'the study of rules'. An ethical theory concerned with following the proper duties pertaining to one's given role.

Utilitarianism: A moral theory introduced by John Stuart Mill that aims at bringing about the greatest good for the greatest number of people. In this system of moral theory the final outcome is what is important.

Abortion: Abortion has been defined any act leading to termination of a pregnancy prior to birth.

Categorical imperative: A term used by Immanuel Kant and refer to an unconditional duty one is required to perform.

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Competence: Competence is the patient's ability to make decisions about the provision of medical care for him/her or himself/herself (see also decision-making capacity). Competence of the patient is essential to be analyzed before an informed consent is taken. Skill and knowledge to perform by authority refers to professional competence.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality refers to nondivulging information, which another has revealed on condition of secrecy or as implied by profession, e.g. doctor, lawyer.

Consequentialism: Consequentialism is an ethical theory that are concerned with the consequences that follow from specific actions.

Descriptive ethics: Descriptive ethics describes how people act in given situations or societies.

Emotivism: The theory that morality is primarily based not on reason but rather on human emotions.

Empiricism: Empiricism is reasoning from experience and sense observation.

Ethical absolutism: Ethical absolutism is the theory that stresses on morality being absolute rather than relative; there are moral truths that must be obeyed at all times, in all situations.

Ethical egoism: A consequential system of ethics in which one is primarily concerned with one's own self-interest.

Ethical relativism: The theory that acts is determined to be right or wrong depending upon the society in which one lives.

Euthanasia: A Greek word meaning 'happy death'. It has come to mean the deliberate ending of a human life. 'Active' euthanasia refers to the direct killing of a patient. 'Passive' euthanasia involves the withdrawal of medical technologies in order to allow the underlying disease to take its natural course. 'Voluntary' euthanasia means that the act is undertaken at the behest of the patient, and should be distinguished from 'nonvoluntary' euthanasia, where the patient has made no such request, and 'involuntary' euthanasia, where the action is performed against the patient's wishes.

Morality: From the Latin moralis, meaning 'customs or manners'. How people act. Ethics is the study of morality.

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Normative ethics: Theories, which prescribe how people should act. Valuation is placed on right or wrong. Contrasted with descriptive ethics.

Paternalism: A type of human relationship in which one person acts as a father figure and another acts as a child.

Prima facie duty: Literally a duty 'at first glance' or 'at face value'. Accepting a duty unless there is good reason to question it or examine it further.

Proposition: A statement that asserts a particular view or position.

Slippery slope argument: A definite unacceptable consequence following an acceptable act.

Supererogatory act: In deontology, an act that goes above and beyond what one is required to perform.

Triage: Triage is derived from the French word to mean 'sorting'. It is applied in emergency situation where medical reasons cannot be used rational so as to obtain an organized way of handling the situation.

Virtue ethics: A moral theory that can be traced to the writings of Aristotle, which holds that ethics is concerned with developing a virtuous character.

Altruism: Altruism is derived from the Greek words meaning 'self-ruled'. The concept of altruism is concerned primarily with the well-being of others rather than one's own self-interest.

Situation ethics: The theory invented by Joseph Fletcher that says there are no moral absolutes except for love—what is moral in any situation is the loving thing to do in that situation.

Artificial insemination: Artificial insemination is the procedure in which the sperm is deliberately introduced into the female genital tract.

Artificial womb: Artificial womb is a device that is used to grow embryos outside the uterus of a female body. These devices provide the same environment as that of the female uterus for the growth of the embryo.

Biocentrism: Biocentrism is an ethical stance that asserts for inherent value to all living things in nature.

Anthropocentrism: It is an ethical point of view that centers on human beings. It is in contrast to biocentrism.

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Biopiracy: Biopiracy is an act in which indigenous knowledge regarding nature posed by indigenous people are used by other people for profit, without permission.

Brain computer interface: It is a technique in which a direct communication is established between the brain and an external computer.

Chimera: A chimera is an individual organism composed of two groups of genetically different cell types, arising from fusion of two zygotes.

Medical confidentiality: Medical confidentiality implies limiting access to patient's information and diagnosis to others unless and until found necessary.

Cryonics: Cryonics is a technique in which human beings are preserved in low temperature, when they cannot sustained by contemporary medicine, hoping to treat the illness in future.

Eugenics: Eugenics refers to the practice of improving the quality of genetic material in human population.

Faith healing: The technique of healing by spiritual means.

Gene therapy: A new advance in medicine, where the illnesses are treated at the genetic level.

Human cloning: Technique of producing genetically identical replicate of an organism is referred to as cloning.

Iatrogenesis: Iatrogenesis is the adverse effect or complication arising because of treatment by a doctor.

Lobotomy: Lobotomy is a procedure in which most of the connections to and from the prefrontal cortex to the rest of the brain is cut-off. It was used as a treatment modality for psychiatric illnesses.

Nanomedicine: Medical application of nanotechnology such as the use of nanoelectric biosensors, use of nanomaterials as drugs, etc.

Placebo: Placebo is a medically inefficient treatment given for a disease, most commonly used in research for control groups.

Reprogenetics: Reprogenetics refers to the fusion of genetic and reproductive technology, so as to produce babies with the best genetic makeup.

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Three parent babies: These are babies having three parent genetics, usually intended to prevent diseases because of mitochondrial abnormality.

Advance care planning: This involves decision regarding person's health care in future by the person himself/herself, so that if he/she is unable to make decisions during his/her future illness, his/her predecided methods of intervention will be used.

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A Textbook of BIOETHICS for Healthcare Professionals

Salient Features

- An important requisite with the introduction of the Bioethics core curriculum in the medical and health sciences courses reflecting the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights of the UNESCO, adopted by 200 countries
- Provides approaches, methodologies and insights from the viewpoint of ethical perspectives in health sciences
- Explores the philosophical and ethical aspects to confront the ethical challenges in the healthcare profession
- Updated with the latest guidelines on the bioethics
- Useful for medical science beginners, professionals, as well as academicians.

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ISBN 978-93-5270-468-2