

Medical Ethics: A Primer for Students, Clinicians, and Ethics Committees

Matthew C. Altman and Cynthia D. Coe

Supplementary content

Definitions

Case studies: Short scenarios that could be used for small-group discussion, to apply theoretical concepts from the readings.

External resources: Materials that may be used to supplement lectures by showing them to the class as a whole and leading large-group discussions based on the issues they raise.

Primary texts: Additional readings to be assigned outside of class, to allow students to study key concepts or important texts mentioned in each chapter in more depth.

General resources:

- American Medical Association Code of Medical Ethics, <https://code-medical-ethics.ama-assn.org/>.
- American Nurses Association Code of Ethics, <https://codeofethics.ana.org/provisions>.
- International Council of Nurses Code of Ethics for Nurses, https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/2023-06/ICN_Code-of-Ethics_EN_Web.pdf.
- World Medical Association International Code of Medical Ethics, <https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-international-code-of-medical-ethics/>.

Chapter 1: Moral Reasoning in a Medical Context

- Case study: How the principlist approach can shape medical decision-making (article could be excerpted): <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6707131/>.
- External resource: Four-Box Method with case study: <https://depts.washington.edu/bhdept/ethics-medicine/bioethics-tools>.
- Primary text: Childress, James F., and Tom L. Beauchamp. 2023. "The Evolution of Principlism." In *Vita brevis, ars longa: Aktuelle Perspektiven zur Geschichte, Theorie und Ethik der Medizin*, edited by Hans-Jörg Ehni, Georg Marckmann, Robert Ranisch, and Henning Tümmers, 145-53. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Chapter 2: Collective Responsibility in Medicine

- Case study: Medical failure resulting from poor cooperation among clinicians: https://www.jointcommission.org/-/media/tjc/documents/about-us/case_study_failure_to_rescue_part_2_4_3_18_final.pdf.
- External resource: News report about the Mid-Staffordshire Hospital scandal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XeYUOp07Q>.
- Primary text: French, Peter A. 1982. "Collective Responsibility and the Practice of Medicine." *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (February): 65-86. doi:10.1093/jmp/7.1.65.

Chapter 3: Paternalism and Patient Autonomy

- Case study: How to take into account patient depression when the patient refuses treatment: <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/bioethics/resources/the-case-of-the-depressed-patient/>.
- External resources:
 - Invite member of local hospital ethics board to guest lecture.
 - Documentary about patient-clinician interactions related to transgender care: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1IFYUi56bw>.
- Primary text: Goldman, Alan H. 1980. "Refutation of Medical Paternalism." In *The Moral Foundations of Professional Ethics*, 173-89. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield.

Chapter 4: Clinicians' Obligations to Patients and Themselves

- Case study: Poses a question about medical error and provides analysis through the principlist approach: <https://www.seattlechildrens.org/research/centers-programs/bioethics/education/case-based-teaching-guides/truthfulness/case-discussion/>.
- External content:
 - Invite local clinician (including mental health practitioner) to guest lecture.
 - Discussion of whether physicians should be able to conscientiously refuse to treat: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0rPb-CRIUs>.
- Primary text: Baylis, Françoise. 1997. "Errors in Medicine: Nurturing Truthfulness." *Journal of Clinical Ethics* 8, no. 4 (Winter): 336-40. doi:10.1086/JCE199708403.

Chapter 5: The Ethics and Legality of Abortion

- Case study: Testimonies of women who chose to have abortions: <https://www.pbs.org/video/the-voices-of-three-wisconsin-women-who-have-had-an-abortion/>.
- External resource: Overview of state laws and policies governing abortion: <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/laws-policies>.
- Primary text: Thomson, Judith Jarvis. 1971. "A Defense of Abortion." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (Autumn): 47-66.

Chapter 6: Pregnancy and Reproductive Technologies

- Case studies:
 - Clinicians' responsibilities when faced with a pregnant patient addicted to heroin: <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/bioethics/resources/obey-law-on-criminal-reporting-for-a-pregnant-mother-addicted-to-heroin/>.
 - A hypothetical case of infertility that unpacks the bioethical issues around assisted reproductive technologies: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC81117/>.
 - Prenatal genetic screening: <https://www.beep.ac.uk/content/163.0.html>.
- External resource: Documentary about surrogacy as a global business: *Google Baby* (may be ordered through university library).
- Primary text: Parens, Erik, and Adrienne Asch. 2000. "The Disability Rights Critique of Prenatal Genetic Testing: Reflections and Recommendations." In *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights*, ed. Erik Parens and Adrienne Asch, 3-43. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Chapter 7: Advance Directives and Decision-Making for Incapacitated Patients

- Case study: End-of-life decision-making for a never-competent patient: <https://www.practicalbioethics.org/resources/case-studies/case-study-aarons-siblings-need-to-make-a-tough-decision/>.
- External resource: Discussion of how physicians, patients, and families can approach end-of-life decisions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQhI3Jb7vMg>.
- Primary text: Cantor, Norman L. 1998. "Making Advance Directives Meaningful." *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 4, no. 3 (September): 629-52. doi:10.1037/1076-8971.4.3.629.

Chapter 8: Medical Aid in Dying

- Case study: Two brief scenarios at the end of the article that consider who should be eligible for medical aid in dying: <https://depts.washington.edu/bhdept/ethics-medicine/bioethics-topics/detail/73>.
- External resource: Audio-only interview with Dan Diaz, Brittany Maynard's husband, about her decision to use medical aid in dying: <https://www.podchaser.com/podcasts/thanks-for-asking-24324/episodes/the-ending-matters-20752999>.
- Primary text: Dworkin, Ronald, Thomas Nagel, Robert Nozick, John Rawls, Thomas Scanlon, and Judith Jarvis Thomson. 1997. "Assisted Suicide: The Philosophers' Brief." *New York Review of Books* 44, no. 5 (March 27): 41-47. <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1997/03/27/assisted-suicide-the-philosophers-brief/>.

Chapter 9: Healthcare and Social Justice

- Case study: Whether countries should provide healthcare to all residents, even if they are not citizens: <https://cssh.northeastern.edu/informationethics/wp-content/uploads/sites/44/2023/03/2023-Bioethics-Bowl-Packet-PDF-2.pdf> (Case 6).
- External resource: Discussion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its relation to healthcare: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feizz53uD4s>.
- Primary text: Daniels, Norman. 2001. "Justice, Health, and Healthcare." *American Journal of Bioethics* 1, no. 2 (Spring): 2-16. doi:10.1162/152651601300168834.

Chapter 10: Allocating Scarce Medical Resources

- Case study: Allocation of scarce resources when a patient needs non-curative blood transfusions: <https://www.practicalbioethics.org/resources/case-studies/case-study-allocation-of-scarce-resources-and-non-beneficial-treatment/>.
- External resource: News segment on the organ transplant system and inequalities within it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmRMXt9OOgQ>.
- Primary text: Tallman, Ruth. 2014. "Valuing Lives and Allocating Resources: A Defense of the Modified Youngest First Principle of Scarce Resource Distribution." *Bioethics* 28, no. 5 (June): 207-13.

Chapter 11: Racial Disparities in Healthcare

- Case study: How structural racism might impact treatment for a Black woman with breast cancer: <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1811499>.

- External resource: Trailer for documentary (*No Más Bebés*) about forced sterilization: <https://www.nomasbebesmovie.com/>. (Full documentary may be ordered through university library.)
- Primary text: Brandt, Allan M. 1978. “Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study.” *Hastings Center Report* 8, no. 6 (December): 21-29. doi:10.2307/3561468.

Chapter 12: Pediatric Ethics

- Case study: Right of minors to refuse treatment: <https://journals.library.columbia.edu/index.php/bioethics/article/view/6382>.
- External resource: Recorded Grand Rounds lecture on a framework for decision-making with pediatric patients: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zasHQiYZH6I>.
- Primary text: Bester, Johan C., and Jeffrey Blustein. 2024. “Childhood Interests: What They Are and Why It Matters.” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 67, no. 2 (Spring): 197-208. doi:10.1353/pbm.2024.a929018.

Chapter 13: Nursing Ethics

- Case study: Moral distress in the neonatal intensive care unit: <https://nursing.ceconnection.com/ovidfiles/00129191-201412000-00004.pdf>.
- External resource: Documentary showing how ethics arises in real-world nursing practice: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbSwT_tmasA.
- Primary text: Stokes, Felicia, and Amitabha Palmer. 2020. “Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Nursing: Ethics of Caring as a Guide to Dividing Tasks between AI and Humans.” *Nursing Philosophy* 21, no. 4 (October): e12306. doi:10.1111/nup.12306.

Chapter 14: Experimentation on Human Subjects

- Case study: How to protect vulnerable groups in clinical trials: <https://bioethicsresearch.org/resources/case-studies/subjects-at-high-risk-for-aids-used-in-aids-research/>.
- External resources:
 - Invite the university’s research compliance administrator or a member of the institutional review board to guest lecture.
 - Webinar about the principles of the Belmont Report and continuing questions about their application: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv0CC6oT-7E&t=3576s>.
- Primary text: National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. 1979. *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/read-the-belmont-report/index.html>.