Reflection Paper 4: Ethical Case Analysis

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My ethical case analysis focused on the severely burned man “Jon” who wants to die. This young man was involved in a car accident with his best friend. The car burst into flames and the patient suffered severe burns over two-thirds of his body. He was left without the use of his hands in addition to the loss of his eyesight.

While in the intensive care unit Jon demanded that all medical treatment be stopped. He was evaluated by a psychiatrist multiple times and was deemed competent to make his own decisions regarding his care and treatment. Jon’s mother was not in agreement with his decisions and demanded that his medical treatment continue. She felt that after time has passed and he was in less pain he would change his mind. The ethical dilemma in this case was the Right to die and asked the question, “Who has the right to make decisions regarding end of life”.

There were several ethical principles that I felt applied to this case. The ethical principle of Autonomy addresses the right to choose what will happen to oneself. As his health care provider it would be important to be respectful of his decision even if they did not match their own. The ethical principle of beneficence involves the goal to promote good. His health care providers have the obligation to support his decision to withhold treatment because Jon felt his decision was for his best interest. The ethical principle of nonmaleficene involves making sure that the patient does not suffer any undue pain or discomfort. Finally, the ethical principle of veracity makes sure that all information provided will be truthful and accurate.

The review of this case invokes an important period of self-reflection when considering how my own beliefs might be impacted if I were involved in this case. We do not live in a vacuum and as long as there are more than one person involved in the patient nurse relationship there will also be an opportunity conflict between the nurse’s and patient’s values and beliefs. That is why in my opinion it is so important for nurses to use as a guide the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics for Nursing. Provision 1 of the Code of Ethics for Nursing states that the nurse will practice with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth and unique attributes of every person. (ANA, 2015) I would have to make my patient the priority. I would serve as an advocate for the patient to ensure that his voice was expressed in regards to his wishes for the course of his treatment. Provision 1.4 in the Code of Ethics compels the nurse to respect the patient in his assertion of his rights to self-determination. Within this provision, the patient has the moral and legal right to determine what will be done with and to their own person. They have the right to accept, refuse, or terminate treatment without deceit, undue influence, duress, coercion, or prejudice and to be given the necessary support throughout the decision-making and treatment process. (ANA, 2015)

I believe that it is important to remember that when a nurse establishes a professional relationship with a patient this relationship transcends the nurse’s personal values and beliefs. This involves the nurse becoming a voice and support for the patient in all situations when the patient is unable to advocate for himself without personal prejudice and judgement. To not do so threatens the nurse patient relationship and can have a profound negative affect on the patient and his plan of care.

References

American Nurses Association (ANA). (2015). Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements. Silver Springs, MD: Nursesbooks.org

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Wants to Die.