

Ethics in Family Medicine

Behavioural Sciences
Large Group Workshop
September 2007

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Agenda

Introduction

- Review learning objectives
- A few notes about ethics in medicine

Clinical Decision Making

- Process: A framework for clinical decision-making
- Case scenarios and small group discussion

Learning Objectives

1. To introduce an method/framework for ethical decision making.
2. To focus on ethical issues that confront family practice everyday.
3. To improve patient care and professional conduct.

Your examples?

Daily decisions and ethical
conundrums

Resources



Part 1

Ethical Decision-making

Underlying principles

Underlying Principles:

- **Aim for the most ethically defensible option**

Difficult decisions are not a matter of good vs. bad.

Underlying Principles:

Ethical Elements of a Decision

- Motivation/reasons for the act
- Essential nature of the act
- Nature of the decision-making process
- Consequences of the act

Core Principles and Values:

- **Beneficence** (do good)
- **Non-maleficence** (do no harm)
- **Autonomy** (right to self determination)
- **Fidelity** (truthfulness)
- **Justice** (fairness and equality)
- **Respect for life**

Making Ethical Decisions in the Clinical Setting

A Framework – adapted from the
CFPC Working Group on Bioethics

Why a Method?

Similar to the clinical method:

- Prevents 'knee jerk' reactions and decisions
- Reduces uncertainty and chances of error in judgement
- Highlights missing information
- Adds clarity and assists in articulating decision to patients and peers
- Decision-making becomes a more ethical act thru careful consideration

A Framework for Decision-making

1. Acknowledge feelings and initial reactions
2. Identify the problem
3. Determine the ethically relevant facts
4. Consider alternatives
5. Examine values and principles
6. Evaluate alternatives
7. Articulate decision
8. Implement plan

1. Acknowledge Feelings



- What are your “gut reactions?”
- Biases?
- Loyalties?

2. *Identify the problem*



- State the problem clearly. Where is the conflict in *ethical terms*?

3. Determine the Ethically Relevant Facts

a. Clinical factors:

- a. Diagnosis
- b. Prognosis
- c. Certainty

b. Psycho-social factors:

- a. Family situation
- b. Mental state of patient
- c. Personal and social history
- d. Legal and institutional considerations

4. *Consider Alternatives*

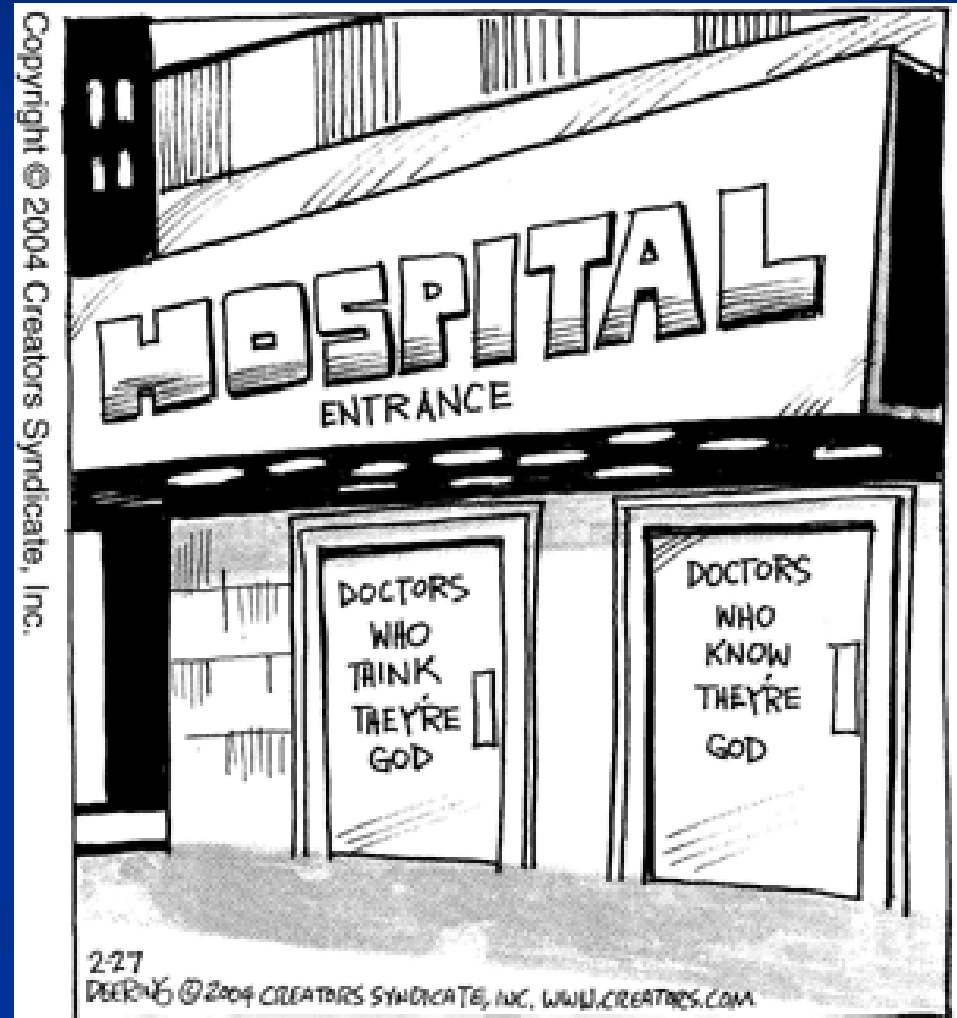
- a. What are all the ***REALISTIC*** options/alternative courses of action?
- b. What are the likely consequences of each including patient and personal outcomes, quality of life, relationships and legal impact?

5. Examine Values

- a. Patient preferences, wishes, values, goals?
- b. Other's values –family and health care professionals?
- c. Which of the values are in conflict?

6. Evaluate Alternatives

- Identify the decision makers
- Rank values/principles
- Evaluate consequences of alternatives in terms of principles



7. Articulate your Decision

- a. Which alternative best balances more of the values and principles?
- b. Have any other alternatives come to light?

8. Implement Plan



- How best to communicate decision?
- Who needs to know it?
- Who needs to act?

Clinical Scenarios

Small group discussion

Take Home Messages....

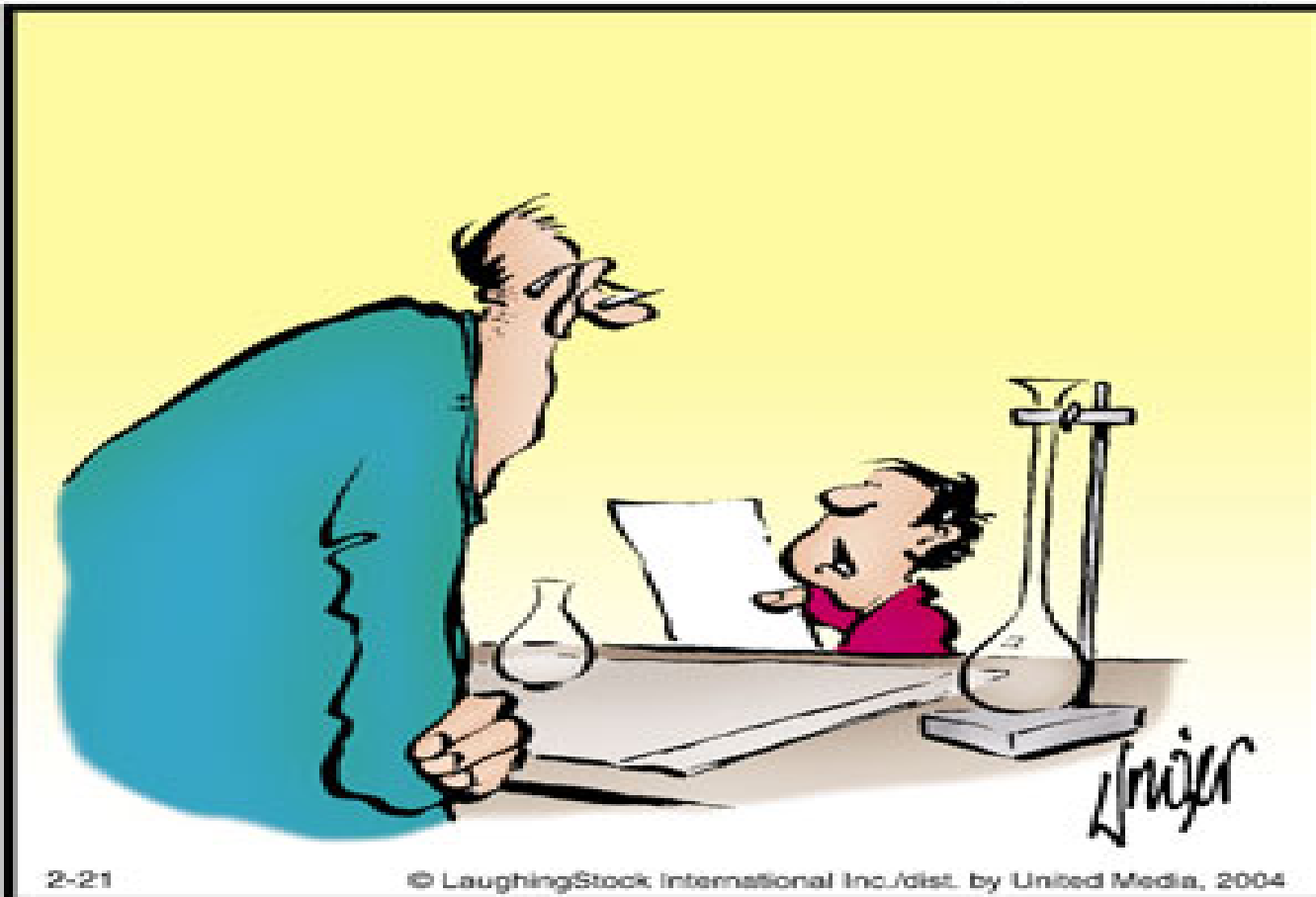
- “ The goal is to help you make ethics an integral part of your daily practice rather than flourish after all the important medical thinking has been done. Ethics is central to your relationship with your patients, the quality of care you provide and your role as a model for those physicians who follow you.”
 - (eph.aecom.yu.edu/webApplication/upload/studies/nancydublercurr/EthicsCurriculum.htm)

More Take Home Messages...

- Ethics is more than doing what feels right
 - Clinical Method
- Ethics is around us all the time
 - Must always be aware/thinking
- We are “doing” ethics all the time!

HERMAN[®]

by Jim Unger



“I think my test results are a pretty good indication of your abilities as a teacher.”