

A Process for Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

- I. Gather and assess the facts
 - A. Medical facts
 - B. Patient preferences
 - C. Family, friends, caregivers
 - D. Contextual factors

- II. Prepare ethical analysis
 - A. Principlism: balancing the four principles and determining which one(s) outweighs the others in a particular situation
 - i. Autonomy: respect for persons, the right to make decisions about one's own medical treatments

 - ii. Beneficence: the duty to "do good" for others

 - iii. Nonmaleficence: the duty to not harm others

 - iv. Justice: treating patients in a similar condition in a similar manner (e.g. to not treat differently based on race, social status, etc.)

 - B. Casuistry
 - i. Case-based reasoning

 - ii. Analyzing cases by considering the clinical circumstances that surround and affect the cases, instead of by applying a set of rules or principles to them

 - iii. Moral judgments emerge from experience with a number of cases that can be compared to one another. Rejects notion there is any "first" principle

- III. Propose ethically acceptable actions

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Medical Facts	Patient Preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Age</i> • <i>Status prior to this illness</i> • <i>Diagnosis</i> • <i>Current Status</i> • <i>Prognosis</i> • <i>Goals of Treatment</i> • <i>Treatment Options</i> • <i>Risks and Benefits of Treatment (with probability of each)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Decisional?</i> • <i>Informed?</i> • <i>Current wishes</i> • <i>Previous wishes</i> • <i>Written statements (AMD)</i> • <i>Oral statements</i> • <i>Religious, spiritual, cultural values and beliefs</i> • <i>Quality of Life</i> • <i>Social Situation</i>
Family/friends/caregivers	Contextual Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Who are they?</i> • <i>Do they understand condition, options?</i> • <i>Do they agree?</i> • <i>Reasons to question motives?</i> • <i>Identified decision maker?</i> • <i>Views of caregivers</i> • <i>Do they agree?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Laws</i> • <i>Potential liability</i> • <i>Hospital policies</i> • <i>Expense</i> • <i>Payer</i> • <i>Community standard</i> • <i>Allocation of Resources</i> • <i>Confidentiality</i> • <i>Recommendation of others</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Attorney</i> ○ <i>Literature</i> ○ <i>Administration</i>

Adapted from Albert Jonsen, Clinical Ethics, 1998

Word/Ethics/Consultation Table