Nursing Ethics at the Heart of Health Care

June

Emergency Nursing

Change of Venue – Please meet in MM1 – ED Conference Room #1809

Questions to consider:

In what ways do you think dignity is diminished when someone becomes a patient in the Emergency Room? What do you do in your own practice to protect your patient’s dignity?

How is triage influenced by EMTALA and deaths in the Emergency Room? What ethical considerations would you like to discuss regarding those issues?

**Topic 1: Ethics and The Emergency Medical Treatment & Labor Act**

- Federal Law passed in 1986 that states that all patients must be stabilized and treated. This law was enacted to prevent the “dumping” of uninsured or undesirable patients to other hospitals. [https://www.acep.org/news-media-top-banner/emtala/](https://www.acep.org/news-media-top-banner/emtala/)
  - Because of this, the needs of the individual verses the department can sometimes come into conflict – how do you feel impacted by this? What ethical principles come into conflict and how do you resolve them?
  - Is it OK to discharge a patient to a homeless shelter?
    - An example of patient dumping from Michael Moore’s movie, Sicko [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeGPlL4BD_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeGPlL4BD_M)

**Topic 2: Dignity and Death in the Emergency Room**

“But our responsibility, in medicine, is to deal with human beings as they are. People die only once. They have no experience to draw upon. They need doctors and nurses who are willing to have the hard discussions and say what they have seen, who will help people prepare for what is to come—and to escape a warehoused oblivion that few really want.”

- Atul Gawande, The New Yorker, 2010

  - What are your thoughts on this? Is this something that should happen in the Emergency Room? Is this really an option?

- Please read: Defining dignity in end-of-life care in the emergency department (attached)
  - What attributes do you associate with dignity in end-of-life care?
Additional Readings

http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/08/02/letting-go-2


http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/23/3/222.full

https://bioethicsarchive.georgetown.edu/pcbe/reports/human_dignity/chapter19.html