

Ethical Dilemmas in Healthcare

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1. Introduction

- An ethical dilemma arises when there is a conflict between two or more moral principles.
- Healthcare workers must weigh competing duties to reach a justifiable decision.

2. Common Dilemmas

- **End-of-life care:** balancing prolonging life against quality of life and patient wishes.
- **Resource allocation:** deciding fairly how to distribute limited beds, organs, or funds.
- Confidentiality may conflict with the duty to protect others from harm.

3. Conflicting Principles

- Respecting autonomy can clash with beneficence when patients refuse beneficial treatment.
- Justice may conflict with individual patient needs during scarcity.

4. Approaches to Resolution

- Gather facts, identify stakeholders, and clarify the competing values involved.
- Apply ethical principles and consult colleagues or an ethics committee.

5. Supporting Factors

- Clear policies, good communication, and documentation aid difficult decisions.
- Cultural and legal contexts must also be considered.

6. Summary

- Ethical dilemmas involve genuine conflicts between moral principles, resolved through structured reasoning, consultation, and respect for patient values.