

Principles of Medical Ethics

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1. Introduction

- The principles of medical ethics are core values that guide ethical decisions in healthcare.
- They provide a shared framework for analysing moral problems.

2. Respect for Autonomy

- **Autonomy:** respecting a competent patient's right to make their own decisions.
- It requires honest information and voluntary, informed consent.

3. Beneficence and Non-Maleficence

- **Beneficence:** acting to promote the patient's wellbeing and best interests.
- **Non-maleficence:** the duty to avoid causing harm, captured in "first do no harm".
- Care often involves balancing benefits against potential risks.

4. Justice

- **Justice:** treating patients fairly and distributing resources equitably.
- It addresses access to care and non-discrimination.

5. Applying the Principles

- Real cases may set principles in conflict, requiring careful weighing.
- Context, law, and patient values guide the final decision.

6. Summary

- The four principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice form the foundation for ethical reasoning and balanced decision-making in healthcare.