

Ethical Decision-Making Models

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1. Introduction

- Ethical decision-making models provide a structured process for resolving moral dilemmas in practice.
- They help professionals reach consistent, defensible choices rather than relying on instinct alone.

2. Why Models Matter

- Dilemmas often involve competing values such as autonomy versus beneficence.
- A model reduces bias, supports documentation, and improves transparency of reasoning.

3. Common Frameworks

- **Four-principles approach:** weighs autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice.
- **Utilitarian model:** chooses the action producing the greatest good for the greatest number.
- **Deontological model:** judges actions by duties and rules rather than outcomes.

4. A Typical Decision Process

- Identify and clarify the ethical problem and the stakeholders involved.
- Gather relevant facts, then list and evaluate possible options against ethical principles.
- Choose, act, and afterwards reflect on and evaluate the outcome.

5. Application in Practice

- Models guide end-of-life decisions, consent issues, and resource allocation.
- Clear reasoning protects both patient welfare and the practitioner against legal challenge.