

Introduction to Medical Ethics

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1. Introduction

- Medical ethics is the branch of ethics that analyses the moral duties and conduct of health professionals.
- It guides decisions where competing values such as life, autonomy, and resources are involved.

2. The Four Principles

- **Autonomy:** respecting a patient's right to make their own informed decisions.
- **Beneficence:** acting in the patient's best interest.
- **Non-maleficence:** avoiding causing harm, captured by "first, do no harm."
- **Justice:** treating patients fairly and distributing care equitably.

3. Key Concepts

- **Informed consent:** voluntary agreement to treatment after understanding risks and benefits.
- **Confidentiality:** keeping patient information private unless disclosure is justified.

4. Ethical Theories

- Deontology judges actions by duties and rules regardless of outcome.
- Consequentialism judges actions by their results, such as the greatest overall good.

5. Importance in Practice

- Ethics builds trust between patients and providers.
- It provides a framework for resolving dilemmas and protecting vulnerable people.

6. Summary

- Medical ethics centres on four principles applied to clinical situations.
- It ensures care is respectful, safe, fair, and trustworthy.