

Ethical Dilemmas in Healthcare

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1. Introduction

- An ethical dilemma occurs when moral principles conflict and every option has drawbacks.
- Healthcare settings regularly raise such conflicts involving care, rights, and resources.

2. Examples of Dilemmas

- Honouring a patient's refusal of life-saving treatment.
- Deciding how to allocate limited beds, drugs, or organs.
- Disclosing information that breaches confidentiality to protect others.

3. Underlying Tensions

- Conflicts between autonomy and beneficence.
- Tension between individual needs and the common good.
- Differences in cultural, religious, or personal values.

4. Decision-Making Frameworks

- Apply the four principles: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice.
- Follow steps: identify the problem, gather facts, weigh options, act, and review.

5. Support Systems

- Ethics committees provide guidance on complex cases.
- Documentation and consultation strengthen accountability.

6. Summary

- Ethical dilemmas demand structured, principled reasoning.
- Using frameworks and consultation leads to fair and defensible choices.