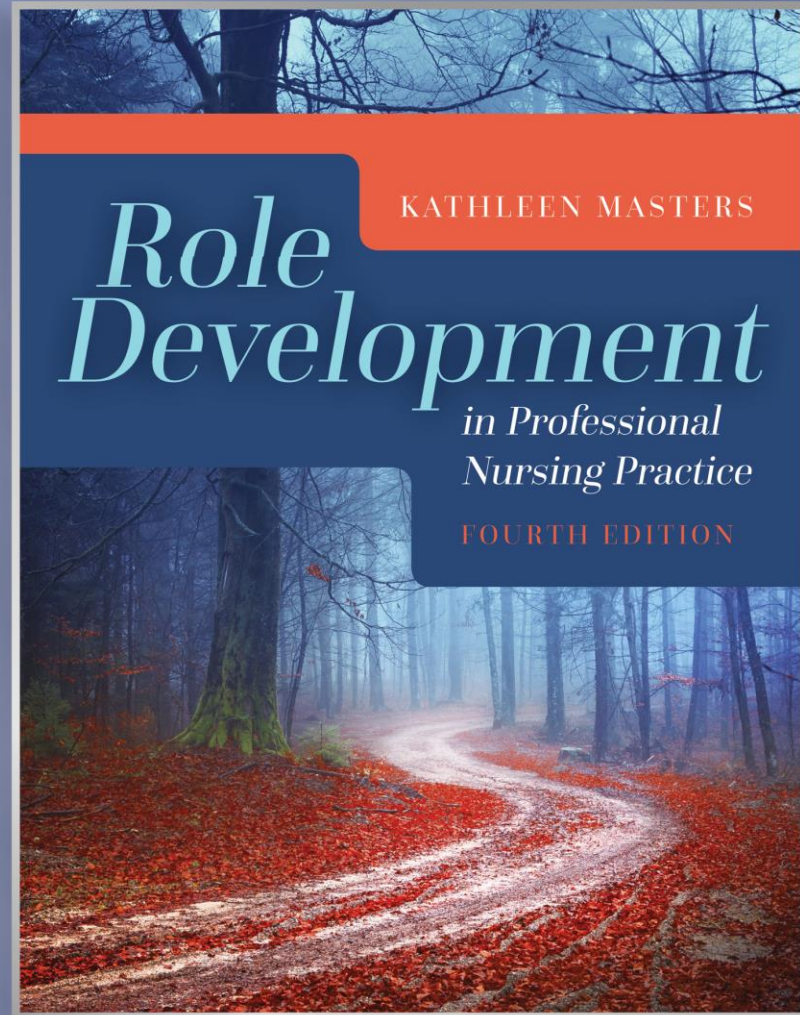


# Chapter 14

## Ethical Issues in Professional Nursing Practice



# Relationships and Professional Ethics

- Nurse–physician relationships
- Nurse–patient–family relationships
  - Unavoidable trust
  - Boundaries
  - Dignity
  - Patient advocacy
- Nurse–nurse relationships

# The National Council of State Boards of Nursing's *Professional Boundaries in Nursing* Video

<https://www.ncsbn.org/464.htm>

# Moral Rights and Autonomy (1 of 2)

- Moral rights are defined as rights to perform certain activities
  - Because they conform to accepted standards or ideas of a community
  - Because they will not harm, coerce, restrain, or infringe on the interests of others
  - Because there are good rational arguments in support of the value of such activities

# Moral Rights and Autonomy (2 of 2)

- Two types of moral rights
  - Welfare rights
  - Liberty rights
- Informed consent
- Patient Self-Determination Act
- Advance directives
  - Living will
  - Durable power of attorney

# Social Justice

- Sicilian priest first used term in 1840; in 1848, popularized by Antonio Rosmini-Serbati
- Center for Economic and Social Justice definition
- John Rawls' concept of veil of ignorance
- Robert Nozick's concepts of entitlement system

# Allocation and Rationing of Healthcare Resources

- Does every person have a right to health care?
- How should resources be distributed so everyone receives a fair and equitable share of health care?
- Should healthcare rationing ever be considered as an option in the face of scarce healthcare resources? If so, how?

# Organ Transplant Ethical Issues

- Moral acceptability of transplanting an organ from one person to another
- Procurement of organs
- Allocation of organs
  - Justice
  - Medical utility



# Balanced Caring and Fairness

## Approach for Nurses (1 of 2)

- Encourage patients and families to express their feelings and attitudes about ethical issues involving end-of-life, organ donation, and organ transplantation
- Support, listen, and maintain confidentiality with patients and families
- Assist in monitoring patients for organ needs

# Balanced Caring and Fairness

## Approach for Nurses (2 of 2)

- Be continually mindful of inequalities and injustices in the healthcare system and how the nurse might help balance the care
- Assist in the care of patients undergoing surgery for organ transplant and donation patients and their families
- Provide educational programs for particular target populations at a broader community level

# Definitions of Death

- Uniform Determination of Death Act definition of death: “An individual who has sustained either (1) irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions or (2) irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem is dead. A determination of death must be made in accordance with accepted medical standards.”
- Traditional, whole-brain, higher brain, personhood.

# Euthanasia

- Types of euthanasia:
  - Active euthanasia
  - Passive euthanasia
  - Voluntary euthanasia
  - Nonvoluntary euthanasia
- Blending of types may occur
- “Is there a moral difference between actively killing and letting die?”

# Rational Suicide

- Self-slaying
- Categorized as voluntary active euthanasia
- Person has made a reasoned choice of rational suicide, which seems to make sense to others at the time
  - Realistic assessment of life circumstances
  - Free from severe emotional distress
  - Has motivation that would seem understandable to most uninvolved people within the community

# Palliative Care

- Approach that improves the quality of life of patients associated with life-threatening illness, through prevention and relief of suffering
- Do-not-resuscitate order:
  - There is no medical benefit that can come from cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
  - The person has a very poor quality of life before CPR
  - The person's life after CPR is anticipated to be very poor

# Rule of Double Effect

- Use of high doses of pain medication to lessen the chronic and intractable pain of terminally ill patients even if doing so hastens death
- Critical aspects of the rule:
  - The act must be good or at least morally neutral
  - The agent must intend the good effect not the evil
  - The evil effect must not be the means to the good effect
  - There must be a proportionally grave reason to risk the evil effect

# Deciding for Others

- A surrogate, or proxy, is either chosen by the patient, is court appointed, or has other authority to make decisions
- Three types of surrogate decision makers:
  - Standard of substituted judgment
  - Pure autonomy standard
  - Best interest standard



# Withholding and Withdrawing Treatment: 3 Cases

- Case 1: Karen Ann Quinlan
- Case 2: Nancy Cruzan
- Case 3: Terri Schiavo

# Terminal Sedation

- “When a suffering patient is sedated to unconsciousness...the patient then dies of dehydration, starvation, or some other intervening complication, as all other life-sustaining interventions are withheld”
- Has been used in situations when patients need relief of pain to the point of unconsciousness

# Physician-Assisted Suicide

- Act of providing a lethal dose of medication for the patient to self-administer
- Oregon Nurses Association special guidelines related to the Death with Dignity Act
  - Maintaining support, comfort, and confidentiality
  - Discussing end-of-life options with patient and family
  - Being present for patient's self-administration of medication and death
  - Nurses may **not** administer the medication
  - Nurses may **not** refuse care to the patient or breach confidentiality

# End-of-Life Decisions and Moral Conflicts with the Nurse

- Communicating truthfully with patients about death due to fear of destroying all hope
- Managing pain symptoms because of fear of hastening death
- Feeling forced to collaborate relative to medical treatments that in the nurses' opinion are futile or too burdensome
- Feeling insecure and not adequately informed about reasons for treatment
- Trying to maintain their own moral integrity