

# **Ethical Principles and their Application during Emergency care**



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# Ethical Principles in Emergency Care

- Key terms
  - Ethics – nature of morals and the specific moral choices to be made
- Main ethical principles
  - Autonomy
  - Beneficence
  - Non Maleficence
  - Justice



## AUTONOMY

*Acknowledge people's  
right to make choices  
for themselves based  
on their own values and  
beliefs*

# Autonomy

- Definition: Right to self determine, make decisions about their health care
- Conditions
  - Free from external influences that may enable, interfere with, hinder free decision making
  - Ability to comprehend, retain, interpret information
- Application
  - Provide information – adequate, clear, simple, truthful
  - Obtain informed consent and accept decision made
  - Maintain confidentiality, when to break it seek patient authorization



## **BENEFICENCE**

*One ought to prevent  
and remove evil or harm;  
One ought to do and  
promote good  
(Beauchamp &  
Childress, 2009, p. 151).*

# Beneficence

## ➤ Definition

- Act for the benefit of the patient (do good, be kind, merciful, generous)

## ➤ Application

- Prevent harm – remove conditions that will cause harm
- Defend rights of others
- Help and rescue others in danger
- Promote patient welfare



## NONMALEFICENCE

*"One ought not to inflict evil or harm," where harm is understood as "thwarting, defeating, or setting back some party's interests"*

# Non Maleficence

## ➤ Definition

- Not to harm the patient/others (Do no harm)

## ➤ Application

- Provision of care – to standard, on time, analyze benefit-risk of interventions, avoid inappropriately burdensome interventions, choose best course of action



**JUSTICE**

*Treat others  
equally and fairly.*

# Justice

## ➤ Definition:

- Fair, equitable, and appropriate treatment of people
- Key aspect: Distributive Justice – fair, equitable and appropriate distribution of health care resources
- Distribute justice according to criteria – an equal share; according to need, effort, contribution, merit

## ➤ Application

- Equality – every person's life is of equal worth
- Utility – do the greatest good for the greatest number
- Give priority to the worse off



# Conclusion

- There maybe conflict in applying these ethical principles in care
- It is prudent that we apply them for care to be ethical
- Therefore it calls for strengthened effort and intention