

Critical Thinking Scenarios Ethical Issues

1. Maria is an RN who recently lost her husband after he suffered a massive stroke. One of her patients is a 42 year old male with a stroke or cerebrovascular accident. She notes on his history that he is married with 3 young children. Currently, his only form of communication is by slowly writing with his non dominant hand. He is requesting do not resuscitate (DNR) orders and that his feeding tube be removed. Maria finds the patient alert and oriented to time place and person. After spending time with the patient during rehabilitation therapy, she also determines that the patient is competent to make health care decisions. During their interaction, the patient asks that his wife not be informed of his wishes concerning the feeding tube and the DNR status. Marie has trouble acknowledging the patient's wishes because they go against her value of human life and belief in the patient's ability to recover with compensation for deficits.

A. Describe how Maria's values and recent experience influence her care of the patient.

Maria values life no matter what the form. Her recent loss of her husband might make her sympathetic to the wife and go against the patient's wishes for health care.

B. Identify how the principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, fidelity, justice and veracity apply to this case.

Autonomy:

The patient has the freedom to make decisions and choices about health care without interference. This does not mean that you can't help the patient make an informed decision or delve into asking the patient why he is so adamant about his decision---sometimes you can get the patient to open up about a circumstance that lead them to their decision that may be beneficial as to why they chose to go in that direction---Also, I would ask if he is willing to tell me why he doesn't want his wife told---many times, the patient doesn't want the significant other to know because they don't want them to change their mind. There are so many variables to how this scenario could play out.

Beneficence:

Marie needs to provide interventions designed to assist the patient to achieve the highest level of functioning. (If Marie gives the patient the impression that she is not his advocate, the patient may not try very hard in rehab, may lose hope and trust)

Nonmaleficence:

Provide nursing care that is designed to prevent harm to the patient.

Fidelity:

In this case, the patient requests confidentiality of information and that his choices be kept confidential concerning his DNR status and removal of his feeding tube. At this moment in the scenario, you have an obligation to the patient---this may change as circumstances change.

Justice:

In this case there is no reference to socioeconomic status or other variables that might influence patient care. (However, Marie may have responded differently if the patient was elderly and she had no connection to the situation)

Veracity:

The duty to tell the truth to the patient about the health status appears to be met in that the patient seems to understand his condition.

C. Describe how Maria's values conflict with the above principles.

Maria's values conflict with autonomy and fidelity. If the patient's family is considered an extension of the patient, then there is a problem with veracity, telling the truth to the patient's wife. Here in lies the dilemma☺ As the nurse, continue to maintain patient trust and keep an open dialogue with the patient that may open his eyes. Issues that would need to be discussed (1) is there a reason why you don't want your wife told (2) if their husband and wife relationship was strong prior to this— discuss how they have made other important decisions together---if their marital relationship is strained, he may have good reason to keep the information from her (3) what does that feeding tube mean to you.....