
ETHICS IN NURSING PRACTICE

Word ethics is derived from the word "Ethos". It is a Greek word and meaning of this word is customs, character or conduct. It may be related to a person or a profession or a professional body. When we study beliefs and assumptions it is moral philosophy and principles of morality tell us how human beings should behave with each other. In scientific words it is branch of science which deals with morality. Ethics are meant for holistic development of a professional.

Ethics gives the professionals various guidelines that how should they behave with each other, with the public and with governments. These are guideline which the professional should follow when they are dealing with their clients or patients. Ethics also tell the public that what they can expect from a professional and tells the professionals that what the public expects from them. Ethics are needed for every profession so that nobility and respect of that profession remains undiminished.

Nursing is a great profession, giving a healing touch to patients along with taking care of their diseases and maintaining their health. This profession is held in high esteem but this esteem varies in different countries. This difference is not without reasons. In some countries the associations of nurses have their own code of ethics. These associations lay stress on the following of ethical codes. Strict following of the codes in some countries leads to credibility of that profession and esteem of that profession rises automatically. This leads us to believe that there is no alternative to following of the codes of ethics. Ethics are needed both for the nurses as well as the nursing students.

Trained nurses need to respect the dignity of client and respect his cultural and religious beliefs. They are required to give services to their client in a professional and compassionate manner. They are required to maintain confidentiality of matters which they come to know during their professional services. They should respect the professional secrecy. Only under privileged communication they can divulge this information to the courts under protest. While carrying on the treatment of the patients they will take care of their safety as well as their own safety. They will always take the consent of the patient or his guardian before giving any treatment. They should avoid unsafe practices. They will work in a manner that safety of the patients and public is not jeopardized.

Like medical profession newer concepts go on emerging in the nursing practice so they will take care to learn the new things. They have to be trustworthy so that doctors can believe that all the orders will be carried out perfectly well. They will act in team spirit and collaborate with other professionals working in the team for the benefit of the patient. She will not discriminate on the basis of rich or poor or kind of disease. They should not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they are working. They will become dangerous to themselves and to the patients. They should respect the treatment policies of the institution where they work. They should be punctual. They should wear proper dress taking care that their body is not unnecessarily exposed while performing their duties. They should address the patient by their name rather than mentioned patient on bed no so and so or patient on trolley number so and so. Human touch should always be maintained and never forgotten. Professional nurse should always be calm even if tired or overworked.

All the above mentioned ethics hold true for the nursing students. Nursing students also require code of ethics because they are coming in contact with the patients and take part in their treatment while pursuing their studies. They will affirm to the idea of life long learning and development of their profession. They will treat others with respect and take care of their religious and cultural beliefs. They should value their human rights. They should work with others in such a manner that highest quality of possible care be given to the patients depending upon the facilities available in a particular set up of a hospital. They should make efforts so that academic staff understands their learning needs. They should not do any thing for which they are not eligible or they do not know. They should not do anything which risks the life of the patient. They should respect the policies of school or college in which they are studying regarding clinical performances and academics. It is the teacher's responsibility to tell the students about ethics. Teachers should follow them first so that they become peer role models so that students can follow them.

Code of ethics should be developed by all the nursing councils or the associations in different countries keeping in view the local customs and traditions as well as those developed by the international associations. All the nurses should be taught these ethics at various stages of their career e.g. entering the schools, while clearing their final exams with ethics as part of the syllabus and when they are entering jobs. They should take a pledge to follow these ethics when they are registering with the nursing councils.

International council of nursing has a code of ethics and every nurse must know the ethics listed in this code and abide by it. In addition to the ethics mentioned in it each country and each state may have own code of ethics and nurses should follow them. The essence of all this is that you should behave to the patients as you will like to be treated if you yourself were a patient. This will solve majority of the problems of ethics. Religiously following the code of ethics will ultimately lead to enhancement of esteem of nursing profession in the public.

Prof. R.K.Gorea