



**Manitoba Provincial
Health Ethics Network**

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No Man is an Island:

The Ethics of Isolation

June 17, 2011

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Learning objectives

- Understand what an ethics issue is
- Explore ethical issues in infection control
- Identify strategies for addressing these issues



Thank you

- for modifying details of any scenarios you share today so that names and identifying features remain anonymous.



Scenario



“Fitzgerald timed the minutes of human contact starting when the person entered the room, and ending when the person left...They took his vitals, and checked his intravenous line. The fever clawed at his skin and he gripped the armrests of the chair to control the shaking while the nurse took his blood pressure. The nurses brought the food as well, so the attendants wouldn't be exposed. Then they left. Seven minutes, was what he timed each day. Seven minutes of human contact in twenty-four hours.” (Vincent Lam, Bloodletting and Miraculous Cures)



The “Right” Thing

- Virtue
- Rules
- Consequences



Extraordinary Ethics

- Quarantines
- Patient Zero
- Organ trafficking
- Compelled treatment



Everyday Ethics

- Calling in sick
- Hand washing
- Contact tracing
- Reportable diseases



What ethical dilemmas have you come across?

- Keep your examples in mind throughout the presentation
- Think about what went well and what you needed help with



What do ethical dilemmas have in common?

- Cause distress
- Don't know the right answer
- Choice between two bad options
- Conflicts
- Values



Values

- Ethics is about the value dynamics in human relationships



Values

- Autonomy
- Beneficence
- Non-Maleficence
- Justice



When Values Conflict

- Ranking or weighing values is hard!
 - Upholding one can compromise another
- Result – ethical dilemma



Isolation

- Protecting society/community (greater good)
- Restricting or constraining personal freedom (autonomy)
- Causing harm to cause good
- Cost-benefit analysis, fairness



Public Health Ethics

- Balancing individual freedoms with the advancement of good health outcomes



Beneficence and Non Maleficence

Doing good

Preventing harm

- What is more important to you?
- How might this be different for the patient?



Autonomy

- Necessary to restrict autonomy/freedom in isolation situations
- Complicated by competence, families, lack of concern
- Implications for staff time with patient
- May increase recovery time



Justice

- Allocation of scarce resources
 - Linens
 - Alcohol gel
 - Dedicated patient equipment
 - Space
 - Time
 - LOS
 - Flow/bed turnover



Other values

- Confidentiality – respecting the patient’s right to keep his or her personal health information
- Veracity or the obligation to tell the truth – a challenge when we need to remove a roommate
- Fidelity – trustworthiness – can a patient rely on the availability of a staff person when they need them?



Decision-Making Strategies

How to decide?



Decision Making Tools

- Frameworks
- Policies
- In-house resources
 - Ethics Committee
 - Experts
- Professional Codes of Ethics – CNA, APIC/CHICA
- Accreditation Canada
- Manitoba Provincial Health Ethics Network
- WRHA Ethics Services workshops





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Thank you!

