Medical Ethics
Medical Decision Making

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Objectives

- Review the factors that are important in medical decision making
- Review the history of Conflict in Medicine
- Review the ethical principle of Justice and understand different viewpoints
- When there are different value systems at work in a case, conflict can arise.

Factors to Consider

- Medical Indicators
- Patient Preference
- Quality of Life
- Context

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- Medical Indicators
  - Diagnosis
  - Prognosis
  - Treatment
- Quality of Life
  - What Kind of quality?
  - Who decides ?

Factors to Consider

- Patient Preference
  - Advance Directive
  - Prior Statements
  - Prior Choices pt has made.
- Context
  - Social
  - Cultural
  - Legal
  - Financial

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  - Social
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Medical Decision Making

- Heirarchy for decision making
  - 1. Competent Patient is always first
  - 2. Substituted judgment
    - Family in rank order:
      - Spouse
      - Parents
      - Children
      - Others
  - 3. Best Interest of the Patient
    - Paternalistic approach by caregivers
  - 4. Ethics Committee.

Justice in Clinical Medicine

- Edmund Pellegrino, MD
  - Professor Emeritus of Medicine and Medical Ethics, Georgetown University Medical Center
  - Lecture from conference:
    - Conflict and Conscience in Healthcare
    - July 16, 2004

History of Conflict in Medicine

- Pre-Hippocrates: Self Interest of Physician
- Hippocrates dared to see pt as primary focus
- This was taken up by all of the monotheistic religions, and preserved by Arabic/Islamic Culture during the middle ages
- Adam Smith: Enlightened self interest
  - Bad outcome is bad advertising
- Karl Marx: All serve society

History of Conflict in Medicine

- Managed Care
  - Limited Resources (Marx influence)
    - Are they really limited?
  - Physician/NP/PA is steward of those resources
  - Inevitable ranking of the Worth of Patients
    - Healthy pt is good for society
    - Chronic illness is bad for society
    - Patient may not be the primary focus

Justice in Medicine

- Assumptions:
  - Physician/NP/PA has competence, acts professionally, and in the interest of the *patient*.
  - Implicit covenent with society
    - We are allowed to do *Illegal acts*, in order to learn the art.

Justice in Medicine

- Commutative Justice
  - Contract with patient
- Distributive Justice
  - Allocation of resources
- Charitable Justice
  - What we ought to do even if pt is abusing themselves
- General Justice
  - What do we owe the common good?
  - What does the patient owe the common good?

Justice in Medicine

- General Justice
  - Patient has obligation to follow the recommendations of the physician
  - We must take responsibility to define what the patient needs
    - Not required to do what pt wants
    - What good can we do for the patient.
- Epicaya
  - Preservation of equity
    - Look at the big picture/everyone makes mistakes

Social Responsibility of Physician Assistants

- Best Medicine possible
- Stay up to date
- Participate in public debate
  - We have the knowledge needed to inform the debate
- Advocacy for those who need help
- Legislators have the responsibility to make decisions about distribution of resources.

Summary

- History of Conflict in medicine
- Justice in Medicine
- Social responsibilities of Physician Assistants
- Medical Futility