AMA Journal of Ethics Case

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The case study chosen from the AMA Journal of Ethics Case is “How should clinical ethics consultants support parents’ decision making?” The issue raised in this article is the misinterpretation of the role of ethics consultant in the shared decision making. It has also been mentioned that how there is a gap in the clinical setting for the utilization of the patient decision aids 1. However, decision making in the end of life cases is a tougher choice as parents still want to provide that is best for their child. Their logical thinking capabilities are clouded by emotions and stress. On the other hand, ethics consultants are emotionally less connected with the patient and decisions made by him would have no bias and thorough assessment of short term long term effects of any clinical decision. The decisions made by the consultants should be consulted before finalizing based on the cultural values and noms of the patient and their family.

Nurses have a significant role in establishing relationships with the patients and their families, community and other populations and service providers in a multi cultural diverse health care setting. The relationship of patient and nurse is primarily the exchange of information which is important for shared decision making. However, the expectations of the patient’s family is hard to meet. The ethical consultants and nurses need to discuss the case together and then come to any conclusion that can be shared with the patients or other involved stakeholders 2. Nurses along with these consultants have to look for the greater good and that might even go against the wishes of the parents. Yet, majority of the work is entirely based on learning the ethically defensible decisions.

The possible solution in order to over the particular issue is to consider the process of shared decisions making and other legal and ethical values. The implementation of such practices where all the related health care professional in making a combined decision should be made mandatory. The patient’s autonomy should be given its due consideration along with measuring parent’s views. The ethial consultant should present the positive and negative implications of many choices that are available in any cases. The assessment of the greater good and societal pressure can also prove affective in making decisions. There is also a need for the consultants to include all the members and their opinion in order to make an informed decision without any element of biasness. In a healthcare setting, a single patien is basically the center of attention and their norms, values and culture should be given respect. As nurses spend majority of their time with their patients, patients are more comfortable sharing their thoughts and having discussions with the nurses realted to any ethically based decision.

This case provides insight for further research and assessment for the role of ethical consultants and the degree to which their involvement should be considerd appropriate. The same kinds of decisions made by the consultants might not be interpreted by different parents as the same. The process of making ethical decsions for the consultants and health care providers is limited due to the cultural barriers. They need to respect and give due importance to the values of any patient belonging from different society, religion or geographical location. They also need to get culturally intelligent education and learn the ethical and legal differences among different cultures 3. The role of ethics consultants is quite challenging in a culturally diverse health care setting and its responsibilities and should be clearly known to the patients and their families.

End Notes

1. Feder KJ, Firn JI. How Should Clinical Ethics Consultants Support Parents’ Decision Making? *AMA J Ethics*. 2019;21(10):831-837. doi:10.1001/amajethics.2019.831.

2. Truglio-Londrigan M, Slyer JT. Shared Decision-Making for Nursing Practice: An Integrative Review. *Open Nurs J*. 2018;12:1-14. doi:10.2174/1874434601812010001

3. Pozgar GD. *Legal and Ethical Issues for Health Professionals*. 4 edition. Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning; 2014.