

Nursing 4210: Health: Transitions

Learning Activity #4
Ethics and Social Theory in the Community

Overview:

The vision, values, and principles proposed by the Ministry of Health requires the adoption of a new “culture” within the health and social service arena. The system’s culture must place a greater emphasis on the importance of clients being decision-makers, and valued members of the community. An emphasis on caring relationships over service provision is needed; flexibility over rules; wellness over illness; and risk taking over rigid safety concerns. The envisioned culture is one in which the system and its clients share the same values, and in which a wide range of coordinated services is readily available.

Ethics has been a strong part of nursing since the beginning of the profession. Now that nursing and health care of moving to a regionalization focus, theoretically, more and more decisions related to funds allocation and approval of proposed programs is in the jurisdiction of Regional Health Authorities. As well, more and more health care is being provided in the community setting, including clients’ homes, clinics, and both large and small community agencies. Mental health initiatives has decentralized health care for chronically ill mental health clients to a more regional milieu, plus tertiary care at institutions, such as Riverview Hospital.

The ethical dilemmas both predicted and currently common that nurses may face while working in the community setting are both multiple and complicated. “Whistle blowing” has become a concern of many nurses, which impact on the protection of high standards of care, patient advocacy and client rights, and support for peers and colleagues.

Ends In View:

This learning activity is intended to give the learner the opportunity to:

1. Explore ethical issues that nurses may be confronted with, within the community health care setting.
2. Recognize ethical dilemmas intrinsic to social theory within the community setting.
3. Explore the issues related to “whistle blowing” within the community based workplace.

In Preparation:

1. Read: CNA. (1999). I see and am silent/ I see and speak out: The ethical dilemma of whistleblowing. *Ethics In Practice*.

<http://www.cna-nurses.ca/pages/ethics/ethics%20in%20practice/i%5Fsee%5Fand%5Fam%5Fsilent%5Fi%5Fsee%5Fand%5Fspeaking%5Fout.htm> (web page)

OR

<http://www.cna-nurses.ca/pages/ethics/ethics%20in%20practice/i%20see%20and%20am%20silent%5Fnovember%201999.pdf> (pdf file)

In Practice:

1. In the discussion forum, participate in the dialogue on the issue of “whistle-blowing” within the nursing profession, and how it relates to acute care as well as community nursing.
2. Include in your discussion, views on the potential ethical issues that can arise in community nursing, that arise from social theory trends and changes.
3. Consider the following scenarios using the 12 questions below to approach them, write your analysis in your online Journal :

“You have just been hired to work as a public health nurse in a local region. One of your new clients slowly discloses accounts of domestic violence within her family, and you notice bruises on one of her children’s arms during a home visit. What are your responsibilities in this instance within the new regionalized health care system?”

“You have reasonable suspicions that one of your community health nurse colleagues is misrepresenting her care, by documenting home visits to continuing care clients without actually making the visits. However, you have no concrete evidence that this is occurring. What are your ethical responsibilities?”

Twelve Questions to Address Ethical Dilemmas

Laura L. Nash posed 12 questions to help managers and professionals address ethical dilemmas.

1. Have you defined the problem accurately?
2. How would you define the problem if you stood on the other side of the fence?
3. How did this situation occur in the first place?
4. To whom and to what do you give your loyalty as a person and as a member of the corporation?
5. What is your intention in making this decision?

6. How does this intention compare with the probable results?
7. Whom could your decision or action injure?
8. Can you discuss the problem with the affected parties before you make your decision?
9. Are you confident that your position will be as valid over a long period of time as it seems now?
10. Could you disclose without qualm your decision or action to your boss, your CEO, the board of directors, your family, society as a whole?
11. What is the symbolic potential of your action if understood? misunderstood?
12. Under what conditions would you allow exceptions to your stand?

(Excerpted from: Nash, L. (1981). Ethics Without the Sermon. *Harvard Business Review*, 59.).

In Reflection:

1. What steps will you take to ensure that you provide only ethical care within the community and acute care health settings.

References:

CNA. (1999). I see and am silent/ I see and speak out: The ethical dilemma of whistleblowing. *Ethics In Practice*.

<http://www.cna-nurses.ca/pages/ethics/ethics%20in%20practice/i%20see%20and%20am%20silent%5Fnovember%201999.pdf>

Nash, L. (1981). Ethics Without the Sermon. *Harvard Business Review*, 59.