

UNIT-III
MEDICAL ETHICS

Topic- Introduction of Medical Ethics

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INTRODUCTION

Ethics is concerned with **moral principles, values and standards of conduct**. (WHO)

Dictionary meaning – “System of moral principle, rules and conduct.”

Origin of this word is from ETHOS which mean ‘Character’.

Ethics is defined as “the ability to distinguish between right and wrong and to act accordingly.”

“Ethics is the activity of man directed to secure the inner perfection of his own personality.” - Albert Schweitzer.

Ethics is the study of morality – careful and systematic reflection on and analysis of moral decisions and behavior.

Morality is the value dimension of human decision- making and behaviour.

VALUES, MORALS, ETHICS

‘ **Value** ’ signify what is important and worthwhile. They serve as a basis for moral codes and ethical reflection.

someone who values friendship drops everything to help a friend

‘ **Morals** ’ are codes of **conduct governing behavior**. They are values put into practice as actions.

Helping a friend is a good thing to do (based on a value of friendship)

‘ **Ethics** ’ provide a systematic, rational way to work through dilemmas and to determine the best course of action in the face of conflicting choices.

A student who helps another student cheat on a test is breaking their school's ethics. Even though they are doing it for a moral reason (helping a friend), they are committing an ethical violation and can be punished.

WHAT IS ETHICS?

The Greek word *ēthikós* (Ethos) means action, character.

The Latin word *mos* (morals) means habit or custom.

In simple words, Ethics is a set of philosophical beliefs and practices concerned with the distinction between right and wrong.

Ethics is a very large and complex field of study with many branches or subdivisions.

Ethics is concerned with what is good for individuals and society and is also described as moral philosophy

Ethics covers the following dilemmas:

how to live a good life

our rights and responsibilities

the language of right and wrong

moral decisions - what is good and bad?

A system of moral principles or standards governing conduct.

a system of principles by which human actions and proposals may be judged good or bad, right or wrong;

A set of rules or a standard governing the conduct of a particular class of human action or profession

Any set of moral principles or values recognized by a particular religion, belief or philosophy.

The principles of right conduct of an individual.

(UNESCO/IUBS/Eubios Living Bioethics Dictionary version 1.4)

WHAT IS MEDICAL ETHICS?

Medical Ethics is described as code of behaviour accepted voluntarily within the profession as opposed to statutes and regulations imposed by official legislation.

Medical Ethics is the branch of ethics that deals with moral issues in medical practice.

Medical ethics is closely related, but not identical to, bioethics (biomedical ethics)

Whereas medical ethics focuses primarily on issues arising out of the practice of medicine, bioethics is a very broad subject that is concerned with the moral issues raised by developments in the biological sciences more generally.

MEDICAL ETIQUETTE

The conventional laws, customs of courtesy and the code of conduct governing the relationship of the physician with his professional colleagues.

IMPORTANCE OF MEDICAL ETHICS

In recent times medical ethics has been greatly influenced by developments in human rights.

Physicians frequently have to deal with medical problems resulting from violations of human rights, such as forced migration and torture.

Health care decisions are based not only on clinical and technical grounds, but also on ethical grounds. Although we carefully weigh the clinical and technical aspects, ethical issues involved may be overlooked.

Ethical principles such as respect for persons, informed consent and confidentiality are basic to the physician- patient relationship.

Application of these principles in specific situations is often problematic, since physicians, patients, their family members and other healthcare personnel may disagree about what is the right way to act in a situation.

The study of ethics prepares medical professionals to recognize difficult situations and to deal with them in a rational and principled manner.

Ethics is also important in physicians' interactions with society and their colleagues and for the conduct of medical research.