Moral Courage: Building Resilience

Moral Courage & Moral Resilience

Vicki D. Lachman, PhD, APRN, MBE, FAAN
President, V.L. Associates

Katherine Brown-Saltzman, MA, RN
Co-director, UCLA Health Ethics Center

Objectives:

1. Utilize a case study to demonstrate key personal and organizational ethical strategies.
2. Identify research that can contribute to nurses’ approach to ethical concerns in their clinical practice.
3. Define moral distress, moral integrity, resilience, and moral courage.
4. Using the acronym CODE identify the key skills needed to demonstrate moral courage and resilience.

Moral Uncertainty

- Arises when you are unsure whether there is an ethical dilemma, or if you assume there is an ethical dilemma, then you are unsure which principles or values to apply.
Moral Dilemma

- Arises when two or more principles or values conflict.
- When this occurs, there can be good reasons to support mutually inconsistent actions (e.g., both are ethically permissible).
- It is not possible to take one action without some form of loss by not taking the other action.

Moral Wisdom

- Moral perception - ability to observe what is happening from a moral perspective.
- Moral sensitivity - ability to incorporate an extensive array of information, take action on it, and respond to individual needs in a moral way.
- Moral imagination - ability to reflect on what it might be like to be an individual in this set of circumstances.

Ethical Awareness

- The ability to recognize an ethical tension, understand the patient’s situation as being vulnerable and appreciate the ethical implications of the outcomes of decision made on behalf of the individual.
Moral Integrity & Moral Resilience

- The quality or state of being complete or undivided.
- To feel good about oneself in a fundamental way, to perceive oneself as both a professional who does good work and as a person of character who strives to live a moral life.
- The ability and willingness to speak and take right and good action in the face of an adversity that is moral/ethical in nature.

Remember

There is no ethical or legal difference between withdrawing of treatment or not starting treatment.

Definitions

Moral Disagreement
(Expected in complex care)
- From Latin ‘dis’ and ‘ad gratum’ which means ‘moving in different directions’
- Differences in conceptions of the good
- Different beliefs about moral obligations and who has a right to what

Ethical Conflict
(Disruptive to complex care)
- From Latin ‘confligere’ or ‘to strike together’
- Clashing of moral perspectives
- Evolve from moral disagreements that are ignored, poorly managed, intractable, authoritarian
Moral Distress

- You act in a manner contrary to your personal and professional values, which undermines your integrity and authenticity.
- Moral distress occurs when you know the ethically appropriate action to take, but you are unable to act upon it.
- Moral distress can be a positive catalyst for change, as you grapple with your own moral values and professional obligations.

Risk Factors for Ethical Conflicts
Nurses’ Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Risk Factors</th>
<th>Family Risk Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patient vulnerability (87%)</td>
<td>Disagreement with plan (42.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near end of life (72%)</td>
<td>Admancy (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient suffering (71%)</td>
<td>Uncertainty (27.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed treatments (64%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HCP Risk Factors</th>
<th>System Risk Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of team cohesion (34.3%)</td>
<td>Lack of limit setting (37.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unethical behavior (28.6%)</td>
<td>Unclear policies (25.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict among team (22.9%)</td>
<td>Limited resources (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False hope offered (21.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moral Distress and Risk Assessment

- Signs of moral distress among caregivers occurred in both high and medium-risk situations, but were more likely to occur in high-risk situations.
- Nurses never indicated signs of moral distress in low-risk situations.

Pavlish, Brown-Saltzman et al.
Nursing Regrets

40% reported regrets

“This case has haunted me for years as I feel I could have been a better advocate for her.”

Pavlish, Brown-Saltzman et al.

Risky Environments

Nurses perceived considerable risks when speaking up under conditions of:

- Moral uncertainty
- Significant power differentials
- Inadequate management support
- Fractured care planning
- Relational conflict

Pavlish, Brown-Saltzman et al.

Contextual and Dynamic Model of Moral Action®

(Pavlish, Brown-Saltzman, Jakel, & Rouinkle, 2012)

Challenges for Nurses Working in Ethically-Difficult Situations:

- Being the eyes and arms of suffering (often without a voice)
- Experiencing the precariousness of competing obligations
- Navigating intricacies of hope and honesty
- Managing urgency caused by waiting
- Straining to find time
- Weighing risks of speaking up in hierarchal structures

Nurse Actions in Ethical Conflicts:

- Speaking up:
  - directly addressing concerns
- Speaking around:
  - creating other avenues
- Speaking sideways:
  - “murmuring” to one another
- Staying silent: Suffering quietly
- Looking away: Focusing on tasks

Moral Sensitivity
Moral Judgment
Moral Motivation
Character

(Oncology Nursing Society 41st Annual Congress April 28–May 1, 2016)
Research Findings

(Pavlish, Brown-Saltzman et al.)

- Nurses are **keenly aware of pertinent risk factors and early indicators** of unfolding ethical conflicts.
- Many nurses **reported feeling powerless** in the face of ethical conflict.
- If not **managed effectively**, ethically challenging situations **can escalate into more complex conflicts** that erode communication resulting in compromised care.
- Systems that encourage and support open ethics dialogue are **key to successful and satisfying resolution** of ethical situations.

Consequences of Unresolved Ethical Dilemmas / Conflicts

- Persistent moral discomfort / stress / distress
- Crescendo effect of moral distress; moral residue
- Affects all HCPs, especially nurses (time / space)
- Influences professional relationships, teamwork
- Contributes to disengagement, professional burnout
- Can lead to medical errors, harmful decisions and unnecessary patient suffering
- Accounts for substandard health care

Austin, 2012; Balvere et al, 2012; Epstein & Hamric, 2009

What is Moral Courage?

- Moral courage is the ability to overcome fear and stand up for one’s core values and ethical obligations.
- It is the willingness to speak out and do that which is right in the face of forces that would rather have you act in some other way.
- Therefore, moral courage includes experiencing fear, and **still** acting from core professional values and obligations.
- What is required of the professional is to put principles into action.
Courage to be Moral Requires:

- Obligations to honor (What is the right thing to do?)
- Danger to manage (What do I need to handle my fear and uncertainty?)
- Expression and action (What action is needed to meet my obligations to the patient and to maintain my integrity?)

Aristotle

- Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees the others.
- Courage is the balance between cowardice and rashness.
- Risks are humiliation, rejection, ridicule, unemployment, and loss of social standing.

Managing Obligations

- The Code of Ethics for Nurses (2015) conveys the values and obligations regulating the conduct of nurses in relation to their patients, colleagues, communities, and the nursing profession.
ANA Code of Ethics (Provision 1.4)

Patients have the moral and legal right to determine what will be done with their own person; to be given accurate, complete, and understandable information in a manner that facilitates an informed judgment; to be assisted with weighing benefits, burdens, and available options in their treatment, including the choice of no treatment; to accept, refuse, or terminate treatment without deceit, undue influence, duress, coercion, or penalty; and to be given necessary support throughout the decision-making and treatment process.

Universal Five Most Important Moral Values

- Honesty
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Compassion


To see what is right, and not do it, is a want of courage or of principle.

Confucius
Managing Danger

- Danger is endured for the sake of an obligation to conscience, ethics or core values.
- Calm the inner fear, so it does not paralyze professional judgment
- Reframe the thought process.
- Assess the risk in the consequences flowing from the possible alternatives.

Resilience

- The ability to absorb energy from a disruption.
- Resilient people look at a problem and say: "What's the lesson? What is this trying to teach me?"

Resilience

- Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress; the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.
- Ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens.
Characteristics of Resiliency

- Adaptability
- Self-Control
- Self-Sufficiency
- Creativity
- Optimism
- Persistence
- Humor

CALM THE INNER FEAR, SO IT DOES NOT PARALYZE FRONTAL CEREBRAL FUNCTION

- Self-soothing, which involves a combination of relaxation and cognitive reframing strategies
- Deep breathing
- Counting backwards from ten slowly
- Visualization
- Calming inner words (e.g. "I am fine. I can manage this situation.")

Cognitive Reframing Strategies

Awareness of the one’s thoughts and then a change of thoughts that would better serve the individual in solving the problem.
Ability to Assess the Risk

- Risk taking is doing something because the individual believes that what they will gain is better than what they have.
- Though they are entering uncharted territory- the unknown, the uncertain- they believe the outcome will be worth the effort.
- In taking a risk they learn and gain confidence by facing a challenge that will demand of them courage or faith in themselves or others.

Decrease Uncertainty

- Decrease ambiguity- get more information and have consultation with people who are less emotionally attached to the outcome.
- Decrease potential for loss- construct the worst case scenario and have a contingency plan to cope with the outcome.

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.

Martin Luther King
Moral courage is a means to overcome fear through practical action.

- Knowing professional, ethical obligations, and personal values is not the same as expressing and acting on those obligations and core values.
- Assertiveness
- Negotiation
- Conflict resolution

Conversation

What tools have you used in the past to support your moral courage and resilience?

Importance of Practice

Man acquires a particular quality by constantly acting a particular way...we become just by performing just actions, we become temperate by performing temperate actions, brave by performing brave actions.

Aristotle
Summary: How to Build Resilience

- Accept that change is a part of living
- Keep things in perspective
- Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems
- Look for opportunities for self-discovery
- Maintain a hopeful outlook
- Get needed social support

Summary: Moral Courage

- Nurses with moral courage know the rewards are different from and greater than those that come from simply pushing with blind determination or seeking the safety of avoidance.
- They abide by principles in the face of danger because they take the time to discern what the right thing is to do.
- Nurses with moral courage are willing to endure the fear and act, even at personal cost.

“Courage is the price that Life extracts for granting peace.”

Amelia Earhart
References


References

References

- McQuilkin, J. (2014). *How to control your emotions: How to control your emotions so your emotions don’t control you* (Emotional Intelligence). Amazon Digital Services, Inc.

References

References


References