



Teaching Ethics

In HD/HD and EM Programs

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What are Ethics?

- How people ought to act
- Defining “right” conduct
 - How should people act?
 - Normative or Prescriptive ethics
 - What do people think is right?
 - Descriptive ethics
 - What does “right” even mean?
 - Meta-ethics
 - How do we take moral knowledge and put it into practice?
 - Applied ethics

Who Teaches Ethics?



- How many of your programs teach ethics?

Why Teach Ethics?

- HS/EM professions have ethical issues
 - Crucial and forced ethical choices
 - Involve protection and saving of life and property
 - Occur in all phases of the disaster/emergency cycle
 - Grounding in ethical theory leads to understanding
 - Practice applying ethical theory develops learned response

Methodology Considerations

- Delivery type
 - Deliver within content of other courses
 - Pure ethics course
 - Ethics and policy
 - Ethics, law and policy

What types do each of you teach?

Why?

Methodology Considerations

- Begin with the course design
 - Type of program?
 - HD/HS
 - EM
 - Blended
- Why?

Methodology Considerations

- Types of knowledge delivery
 - Readings only
 - Lecture only
 - Guided discussions
 - Case-based learning

Methodology Considerations

- Most effective is case-based learning – positive effects on:
 - Decision making
 - Critical thinking
 - Deductive and inductive reasoning skills
- Literature is limited on appropriate case construction and content to maximize effectiveness

Case-based reasoning aids understanding ethical dilemmas by providing examples of situations and methods that can be employed to resolve them

Selecting Course Content

- Foundational ethics
 - Where did ethical concepts originate?
 - Socrates
 - Plato
 - Aristotle
 - How are the concepts relevant today?

Selecting Course Content

- Overview of Current Ethical Models
 - Normative or Prescriptive Ethics
 - Meta-Ethics
 - Descriptive Ethics
 - Applied Ethics

Selecting Course Content

- Normative or Prescriptive Ethics
 - Concerned with how things should or ought to be – three main categories
 - Teleological Ethics (aka Consequentialism)
 - Deontology
 - Virtue Ethics

Selecting Course Content

- Meta-Ethics
 - Concerned primarily with the meaning of ethical judgments, understanding the nature of ethical components and how they can be supported or defended (does not evaluate specific choices)
 - Moral Absolutism
 - Moral Universalism
 - Moral Relativism

Selecting Course Content

– Descriptive Ethics

- A value-free approach that examines ethics from observation of actual choices made in real circumstances
- Doesn't provide guidance or evaluate the reasonableness of moral choices

Selecting Course Content

- Applied Ethics – application of ethical theory to real-life situations.
 - Where strict application of traditional ethical theories can result in solutions to specific problems that are not acceptable or capable of implementation
 - Includes insights from other disciplines (e.g., sociology, psychology, etc.) in making decisions
 - Useful in creating public policy
 - Branches include medical ethics, legal ethics, bioethics, etc.

Selecting Course Content

- Privacy, security and human rights
 - Balance of rights of the few vs. the many
 - Obligation to provide safe and secure community
 - Respect for all persons and their capacity for choice

Selecting Course Content

- Ethical aspects of duty and loyalty
 - Duty
 - Standard of care
 - Conflicts of interests
 - Legal implications

Selecting Course Content

- Ethical considerations in community disaster planning
 - Consequences
 - Duties and obligations
 - Rights and fairness
 - Respect community norms

Selecting Course Content

- Professional ethics
 - Codes of Professional Conduct
 - Conflicts
- Control and coercion during times of crisis
 - Quarantine
 - Mandatory evacuation
- Many other relevant subjects that can be incorporated

Sample Case

Terrorists have taken hundreds of people hostage inside an auditorium in your city. As the city's HS director, you are informed that the police department is going to deploy a new aerosol that will incapacitate everyone inside and allow them to storm the building. You are ordered to keep this information secret so as not to compromise the mission. You remember the many hostages that died in the 2002 Moscow theater rescue due to inhalation of aerosolized fentanyl and wonder if this new aerosol will harm those inside. You also expect that EMS and hospital personal will be better prepared to provide supportive care if forewarned. What do you do?

Recommendations

- Ethics should be within a stand-alone course early in the curriculum to provide a fundamental basis of ethical decision-making that can be applied throughout the remaining courses
- Use case-based learning as it has proven to have clear benefits for individuals facing ill-defined, high-risk problem scenarios



Discussion

Questions?
Comments?

Contact Information

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