

Nursing Ethics Curriculum Development: Trans-curricular, Inter-professional, Multi-modal

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Abstract

- The AACN's *“Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice”* affirms that “The generalist nurse also is prepared for the ethical dilemmas that arise in practice and will be able to make and assist others in making decisions within a professional ethical framework.” There nevertheless remains no unambiguous or unified approach to the best way to introduce ethics into the baccalaureate curriculum. There is therefore an opportunity to propose an ethics curriculum that includes both standalone courses and themes or threads throughout the baccalaureate career; collaboration with other health professionals; and the innovative use of learning technology for pedagogy, simulation and evaluation.

Ethical “Dilemmas”...?

Better:

- Conflict
- Challenge
- Problem
- Puzzle

Make and Assist in Decisions

- Education and experience
- PBL and direct exposure
- Signal genuine capacity

Stand-alone Courses

- Traditional; guided reading still matters
- Provide foundations, theory, some opportunity for discussion
- Can be coupled with PBL tools
- Too often decoupled from practice
- Difficult to include other professions

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Threads in the Curriculum

- Signal recognition of plenary importance of ethics
- Make clear an institutional commitment
- Risk too much heterogeneity
- Risk devaluing foundations, theory
- Even if well-embedded, still need intro course(s)

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Learning Technology

- Fosters consistency
- Inspires hypertext-mediated inquiry, discovery
- Renders simulation hospitals exciting
- But can provide solace for slackers
- Might demote importance of human interaction

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Ethics as Inter-professional

Nurses practice with other health professionals; hence an opportunity for:

- Joint nursing-medicine, social work, science, etc. courses and experiences
- Expanding role of ethics committees, IRBs, privacy committees, etc.
- Opportunity for creative simulation tools

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Ethics Committees

- Education, policy creation and review, consultation
- Special challenges and opportunities for nurses
- Inherently inter-professional
- Consider mock and virtual ethics committees

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