



Evaluate your knowledge of the College of Nurses of Ontario's (CNO's) *Ethics* practice document with the following test questions. At the end is the Reflective Questions section in which you can explore an ethical situation that you've personally encountered.

Use the questions in the section to work through your actions and determine if you would do anything differently next time.

Participation in this quiz is self-directed and anonymous. CNO does not collect individual quiz scores or answers. (Answers are on page 5)

Practice scenario 1

Abigail explains to her client, Teresa, the benefits of taking her prescribed medication. Teresa understands the benefits as well as the risks of medication, and refuses to take it. She says the side effects of the medication outweigh the benefits.

Which two values are at conflict in this situation?

- A. Client well-being
- B. Client choice
- C. Privacy and confidentiality
- D. Respect for life
- E. Maintaining commitments
- F. Truthfulness
- G. Fairness

What is the first step Abigail should take to resolve the situation?

1. Speak with Teresa's physician about the situation.
2. Document Theresa's refusal to take the medication.
3. Make a note in Teresa's chart to inform the staff on the next shift.
4. Explain to Teresa that she feels that Teresa's refusal to take the medication could prolong her hospital stay and that she needs to take the medication.

Practice scenario 2

Maria, a client, has been diagnosed with cancer. Her daughter, Nellie, provides all the translation as Maria doesn't speak English. Nellie has informed the nurse that the family is telling Maria that she is in the hospital for an infection and not cancer. The family has decided not to reveal to Maria the severity of her illness and assures the staff this is part of their cultural belief and what Maria would want. The nursing staff has concerns about their approach.

Which two values are at conflict in this situation?

- A. Client well-being
- B. Client choice
- C. Privacy and confidentiality
- D. Respect for life
- E. Maintaining commitments
- F. Truthfulness
- G. Fairness

What is the best course of action for the nursing staff in this situation?

1. Inform Maria of her condition, as it is their professional and legal obligation to disclose health information to a client.
2. Speak with a nurse manager and ask her to assign only casual staff to Maria.
3. Request a meeting with the nurse manager to discuss the situation.

Practice scenario 3

Margaret, a 72-year old client admitted to a surgical floor, is pulling out her NG-tube. The health care aide informed the nurse, Keith, that Margaret has pulled out her tube again, and offers to help restrain her so that Keith can reinsert the tube.

Which three values are at conflict in this situation?

- A. Client well-being
- B. Client choice
- C. Privacy and confidentiality
- D. Respect for life
- E. Maintaining commitments
- F. Truthfulness
- G. Fairness

What is the first step Keith should take before reinserting the NG-tube?

1. Obtain an order for a restraint.
2. Determine client capacity for making health care decisions.
3. Consider that Margaret doesn't want the NG-tube and document in her chart that she refused the treatment.
4. Leave a note for the evening shift to contact Margaret's physician before the next round of medication is due.

Practice scenario 4

Dorothy, a community care nurse, is conducting a home visit in Robert's apartment. His home is contaminated with animal feces, there is no food in the kitchen, Robert looks dishevelled and he admits to Dorothy that he's having hallucinations.

Robert reassures Dorothy that he is getting better, and says he does not want her to inform his physician of his current condition. Dorothy explains the importance of sharing health information with his physician, but Robert tells her, "I know you're not allowed to share the information if I tell you not to."

Which three values are at conflict in this situation ?

- A. Client well-being
- B. Client choice
- C. Privacy and confidentiality
- D. Respect for life
- E. Maintaining commitments
- F. Truthfulness
- G. Fairness

What actions should Dorothy take?

1. Implement the "lockbox" provision and arrange for a visit the next day.
2. Determine the risk of harm to Robert and breach confidentiality if a risk exists.
3. Offer to take Robert grocery shopping and arrange to have his apartment cleaned with his permission.
4. Inform Robert of her obligation to disclose the information to his physician.

Test yourself

Ethics

Answers with rationale

Reflective Questions

Nurses enhance their skills in identifying ethical values and how best to manage an ethical dilemma when they reflect on previous situations. Consider a recent situation in your practice and answer the following questions.

Assess

Describe the situation.

What are the facts?

Who was the client?

Who else was involved?

Identify

Identify the ethical values in the situation.

What are the competing or conflicting issues?

Identify resources available to assist in the decision-making process.

- Legislation
- CNO practice documents
- Faculty policies
- Other staff members or individuals with necessary expertise
- Relevant evidence, such as literature or research

Plan

What was the initial plan?

Who was involved in developing the plan?

Did people have different opinions?

Did you modify the plan based on opinions?

Implement

Describe the communication you had with those involved in implementing the plan, such as the client, the client's family and other staff members.

Evaluate

How was the situation resolved?

Would you do anything differently next time?

Scenario 1

Option 1 is correct.

Speaking with Teresa's physician about the situation, is the best answer.

The first step in managing an ethical dilemma is to assess the situation. Abigail has already explored the meaning behind Teresa's refusal of the medication. Speaking with Teresa's physician will help the health care team develop a plan that is reasonable to both Theresa's well-being and her choice to refuse the treatment. One solution could be the health care team managing the side effects of the medication, or offering Teresa an alternative medication.

Options 2 and 3 are incorrect.

Documenting Teresa's refusal to take the medication, or making a note in her chart to inform the staff on the next shift, does not help resolve the situation.

It is, however, a nurse's professional responsibility to document a clients informed refusal in the clients record. Abigail should also document Teresa's refusal in the medication administration record.

Option 4 is incorrect.

Explaining to Teresa that her refusal to take the medication could prolong her hospital stay and that she needs to take the medication, is not the correct answer.

These comments do not support Teresa in finding the best possible solution to the situation, and they do not demonstrate respect for her choice. Abigail should not impose her values and beliefs onto Teresa. Instead, Abigail, following consultation with the health care team, should communicate some possible solutions to the situation, in a non-judgemental manner.

Scenario 2

Option 3 is correct.

Requesting a meeting with the nurse manager to discuss the situation, is the best answer.

In this situation, the nursing staff needs guidance in exploring their personal beliefs and values, and the conflict between Maria's beliefs and what they think is best for her. The resolution to this problem may not be satisfying to the nurses, but the goal should be to develop a plan of care that includes the family and supports Maria's well-being.

Option 1 is incorrect.

Informing Maria of her condition, as it is their professional and legal obligation to disclose health information to a client, is incorrect.

The only nurses who have the legislative authority to communicate a diagnosis are Nurse Practitioners.

The conflicting values and beliefs of her family and the health care team need to be explored and resolved prior to making a decision about informing Maria about her diagnosis. If it is decided to communicate that diagnosis to Maria, then it must be done by the appropriate health care provider. In this situation, it would be her physician.

Option 2 is incorrect.

Speaking with the nurse manager and asking her to assign only casual staff to Maria, is not the best answer.

Assigning casual staff will not resolve the conflict between the personal beliefs of the nursing staff and the client's personal belief. The nurse manager, however, should support her staff in exploring their values and resolving this ethical situation.

Scenario 3

Option 2 is correct.

Determining client capacity for making health care decisions, is the best answer.

Before Keith reinserts the NG-tube, he should determine Margaret's capacity and explore the reasons behind her actions. Is Margaret's resistance related to confusion or a direct refusal of the treatment? Once Keith has determined capacity, he will need to obtain consent from Margaret or her substitute decision-maker before he reinserts the NG-tube.

For more information read the [Consent](#) practice document.

Option 1 is incorrect.

Obtaining an order for restraint, is not the correct answer.

Before Keith obtains a physician's order, he needs to explore the reasons behind Margaret's actions and obtain informed consent from her or a substitute decision-maker for re-inserting the NG-tube.

Option 3 is incorrect.

Considering that Margaret doesn't want the NG-tube and documenting in the client chart that she has refused the treatment, is not correct.

Keith needs to explore the reasons behind Margaret's actions into determine capacity.

Option 4 is incorrect.

Leaving a note for the evening shift to contact the physician before the next round of medication is due, is incorrect.

This action doesn't address the immediate issue of Margaret and her NG-tube. Nor does it show Keith maintaining commitments to his nursing colleagues and other members of the health care team.

Scenario 4

Option 2 is correct.

Determining the risk of harm to Robert and breaching confidentiality if a risk exist, is the best answer.

Under the *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004*, a health care professional can't disclose personal health information if there is an identified risk to a client or others. In this situation, it is not clear if Robert or others are at risk. Dorothy should complete a more detailed assessment to determine if there is a risk before disclosing the information to members of the health care team. Following the assessment, Dorothy should inform Robert of her obligation to report her concerns.

Option 1 is incorrect.

Implementing the "lockbox" provision and arranging for a visit the next day, would not be the first course of action.

The *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004*, states that personal health information belongs to clients and that clients have the right to give, refuse or withdraw their consent to the collection, use and disclosure of their personal health information. Clients also have the right to instruct that a part of their personal health information not being shared with other health care providers; this is referred to as the "lockbox" provision.

However, there are provisions in the legislation to allow the disclosure of personal health information without the consent of the client if there is an identified risk to the client or others. Dorothy must complete her assessment to determine if there is a risk to Robert or others before accepting to "lockbox" the information.

For more information read the [Confidentiality and Privacy - Personal Health Information](#) practice document.

Option 3 is incorrect.

Offering to take Robert grocery shopping and arranging to have his apartment cleared with his permission, is not the best answer.

After completing an assessment of any potential risk to Robert or others, Dorothy must receive consent from Robert for further interventions. Once she has consent, Dorothy can provide him with a number of options and referrals to community agencies that can support him with grocery shopping and the maintenance of his apartment.

Option 4 is incorrect.

Informing Robert of her obligation to disclose the information, is not the first course of action.

Dorothy should determine if there is a risk to Robert or others before deciding to breach confidentiality. She should seek advice from her supervisor and other members of the health care team without providing client-specific information. Following an assessment, Dorothy should inform Robert of her obligation to report her concerns.