Ethics in Long Term Care

This presentation explores the ethical considerations and best practices for providing comprehensive care in long-term care settings, addressing topics such as patient autonomy, end-of-life decisions, and the role of healthcare professionals.

The word Ethics is derived from the Greek word "Ethos" which means Character.

- Character is the key to living a life of ethical excellence.

- Character is more than talk.
- Character is a Choice!
- Character brings success with people.
- We cannot rise above the <u>limitations of our character.</u>

Welcome To Ethics!

Imagine you found a wallet on the street in front of the Nursing Home with $1000 cash inside.

What would you do?

What is an ethical dilemma you have been a part of or a witness to in LTC? What did you do or not do (or that you wish you would have done in hindsight)?

Are you content with your actions or your inaction?

The Basics of Ethics

- Ethics is the study of moral principles that govern behavior.

- An ethical decision is one that fits within our standards of behavior, our sense of right and wrong.

- TWO key aspects of ethics:
  - The ability to discern right from wrong, good from evil.

- The commitment to do what is right, good and proper.

Ethics requires action, it's not just a topic for debate or an idea.

Values and Ethics

Questions and Answers

1. What is the role of ethics in a nursing home setting?

Answer: In a nursing home setting, ethics play a crucial role in ensuring that residents receive compassionate, respectful, and fair treatment. Ethical principles guide decision-making processes, maintaining dignity and promoting the well-being of residents, staff, and families. They help in resolving dilemmas and conflicts by providing a framework for evaluating different courses of action.

2. Can you provide an example of an ethical dilemma that might arise in a nursing home?

Answer: One common ethical dilemma in nursing homes is balancing residents' autonomy with their safety. For instance, a resident with dementia may want to walk around unsupervised, but there's a risk of falling or wandering off. The ethical question here is how to respect the resident's independence while ensuring their safety.

3. Why is it important for frontline staff to be aware of and adhere to ethical standards?

Answer: Frontline staff are directly involved in day-to-day care and interactions with residents. By adhering to ethical standards, staff can build trust, create a positive environment, and provide high-quality care. Ethical awareness also helps in recognizing and addressing potential issues before they escalate, ensuring that residents' rights and well-being are protected.

4. How can we ensure that ethical considerations are integrated into our daily practices?

Answer: To integrate ethical considerations into daily practices, it's important to provide continuous training and education on ethics, create an open environment where staff feel comfortable discussing ethical concerns, and establish clear policies and procedures. Regularly reviewing and updating these policies, as well as involving staff in ethical decision-making, can also help embed ethics into the organizational culture.

5. What should a staff member do if they witness unethical behavior?
Answer: If a staff member witnesses unethical behavior, they should report it immediately to a supervisor or use any established reporting mechanisms. It's important to document the incident accurately and provide as much detail as possible. Organizations should have a clear and confidential process for handling complaints to protect both the reporter and the person involved.

6. How can empathy play a role in ethical decision-making in a nursing home?
Answer: Empathy allows staff to understand and share the feelings of residents, which is crucial for making ethical decisions. By seeing situations from the residents' perspectives, staff can make more compassionate and appropriate choices, ensuring that residents feel understood and valued. Empathetic decision-making often leads to better care outcomes and stronger relationships between staff and residents.

John Maxwell's Ethical Framework

- Is it legal?

- Is it balanced? (fairness)

- How will it make me feel about myself?

- How will it affect others?

Introduction to Ethics in Long Term Care

Promoting patient autonomy and dignity

Ensuring long-term care residents have a voice in their treatment and can make informed decisions about their care.

Addressing ethical dilemmas in care decisions

Navigating complex situations where patient needs and institutional policies may conflict, requiring careful ethical consideration.

Maintaining confidentiality and privacy

Protecting the sensitive personal information of long-term care residents and ensuring their right to privacy is upheld.

Fostering an ethical organizational culture

Promoting ethical behavior and decision-making at all levels of the long-term care facility, from management to frontline staff.

Ethical principles are essential in the long-term care setting, as they help guide decision-making, protect patient rights, and foster a culture of compassionate, patient-centered care.

Ethical Principles in Long Term Care

- Respect for Autonomy
  - Honoring the right of individuals to make their own decisions about their care, living arrangements, and end-of-life preferences, while balancing the need to protect vulnerable individuals.

- Beneficence
  - Promoting the well-being of residents by providing high-quality care, addressing their physical, emotional, and social needs, and acting in their best interests.

- Non-maleficence
  - Avoiding or minimizing harm to residents, such as preventing neglect, abuse, and unnecessary suffering.

- Justice

  Ensuring fair and equitable access to resources and services, and treating all residents with dignity and respect, regardless of their personal characteristics or financial status.

- Informed Consent

  Obtaining informed consent from residents or their legal representatives before providing care or implementing significant changes to their treatment plan.

Challenges Faced in Long Term Care

Balancing Autonomy and Safety

Ensuring residents' right to autonomy and self-determination while also protecting their safety and well-being, especially for those with cognitive impairments.

Allocation of Limited Resources

Deciding how to fairly allocate limited resources, such as staff time, equipment, and funding, among residents with varying needs and preferences.

End-of-Life Decision Making

Navigating complex end-of-life decisions, including advance directives, palliative care, and determining when to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining treatments.

Resident-Centered Care vs. Family Involvement

Balancing the needs and preferences of residents with the concerns and involvement of their family members, especially when there are disagreements.

Abuse and Neglect Prevention

Implementing effective policies and procedures to prevent, identify, and respond to instances of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of residents.

Case Study: Resident Autonomy vs. Safety

Mrs. Wilson has moved into ABC Nursing Center. She is adamant about walking every night between 7-8pm. However, the Nursing Center provides her nighttime medications for sleep at 6pm. Her family has stated to staff that she doesn't need to walk in the evenings and the facility staff needs to just give her the medication and encourage her to go to bed. The family stated they are fearful she will fall while ambulating.

- What do you do?

Ethical Decision-Making Framework

Clearly define the ethical dilemma or problem at hand, considering the potential impacts on residents, staff, and the organization.

Collect all necessary facts, data, and perspectives from various stakeholders, including residents, family members, healthcare providers, and ethicists.

Analyze the situation through the lens of ethical principles such as autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and dignity.

Brainstorm and evaluate multiple possible solutions, considering the potential consequences and trade-offs of each option.

Identify the Ethical Issue

Gather Relevant Information

Consider Ethical Principles

Explore Potential Courses of Action

Involve Stakeholders

Make a Decision

Implement and Monitor

Engage with relevant stakeholders, including residents, family members, and the interdisciplinary care team, to gather input and build consensus.

Carefully weigh the available information and ethical considerations, then make a decision that prioritizes the well-being and best interests of the residents.

Implement the chosen course of action, continuously monitor the outcomes, and be prepared to adjust the decision if necessary.

Ethical Leadership in Long Term Care

Fostering a Culture of Integrity

Transparency in Decision-Making

Accountability for Ethical Conduct

Promoting Resident-Centered Care

Ethical Training and Education

- Develop a Code of Conduct
  - Establish clear guidelines on ethical behavior, decision-making, and professional conduct for all employees.

- Provide Ethics Training
  - Offer regular training sessions and workshops to educate staff on ethical principles, dilemmas, and best practices.

- Foster Open Dialogue
  - Encourage open discussions and feedback channels where employees can openly discuss ethical concerns or issues.

- Implement Ethics Audits
  - Regularly review and assess the organization's ethical practices, policies, and compliance to identify areas for improvement.

- Recognize Ethical Behavior
  - Implement a system to acknowledge and reward employees who demonstrate exemplary ethical conduct.
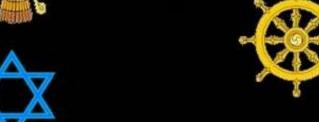
The Golden Rule

That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for it's own self.

Blessed is he who prefers his brother before himself.

What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. That is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary.

Hurt not others with that which pains yourself.

This is the sum of duty: do naught to others that which if done to thee would cause pain.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother what he desires for himself.

It's easy to understand
It's accepted by most people
It's a win-win philosophy
It's a compass when you need direction

Nearly all people want:

To be valued
To be appreciated
To be trusted
To be respected
To be understood
To not be taken advantage of

Ethical Oversight and Accountability

Ethical Compliance Mechanism	Accountability Measures
Regular audits and inspections by regulatory bodies	Publicly available reports on compliance
Mandatory staff training on ethical practices	Whistleblower hotlines for reporting concerns

*Based on information from the National Center for Assisted Living's report on 'Ethical Considerations in Long-Term Care'

Promoting a Culture of Ethics

Tone from the Top

Ensure leadership models and promotes ethical behavior, setting the right tone from the top down.

Comprehensive Ethics Training

Provide regular, comprehensive ethics training for all staff, covering ethical decision-making, code of conduct, and whistleblower policies.

Empowering Ethics Committees

Establish a robust ethics committee that is empowered to review ethical issues, provide guidance, and drive ethical initiatives throughout the organization.

Transparent Incident Reporting

Implement a transparent incident reporting system that encourages staff to report ethical concerns without fear of retaliation.

Continuous Improvement

Regularly review and update ethics policies, training, and initiatives to ensure they remain relevant and effective in promoting a culture of ethics.

Conclusion: Embracing Ethics in Long Term Care

Promote Person-Centered Care
Prioritize the unique needs, preferences, and well-being of each individual resident in long-term care facilities.

Foster Ethical Leadership
Develop a culture of ethical decision-making and accountability among long-term care administrators and staff.

Ensure Resident Autonomy
Respect the right of residents to make informed decisions about their own care and support their independence.

Strengthen Transparency and Accountability
Implement robust policies and procedures to promote transparency and accountability in long-term care operations.

By embracing ethical practices, long-term care facilities can create a compassionate and dignified environment that truly serves the best interests of residents and their families.