

Article - Ethics In Nursing Research

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ABSTRACT: *Ethics are the rules for correct behavior. Professional ethics for nurses will state the ideal ways in which a nurse should behave in all relationships including those with the patient, patient's relatives, co-workers, members of other professions and the public. The discussion of the professional adjustment is complete only when ethics are included. Research involving human subjects in the medical, social and behavioral sciences poses complex ethical issues which requires careful thought and consideration on the part of both researchers and research participants. Ethics in research are very important when we are going to conduct an experiment.*

KEY WORDS: *Ethics, Nursing, Research, Profession*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Ethics in nursing research can be defined as the act of moral principles that the researcher has to follow while conducting nursing research to ensure the rights and welfare of individuals, groups, or community under study.

- Basic assumptions about how research should be conducted:
- Subjects should be protected from harm.
- Subjects should have their identity protected
- Subjects should be fully informed about the research study
- Participation is voluntary.
- Study procedures should show respect for cultural values and beliefs.

2. DEFINITION:

Ethics is defined as “laws of human conduct and duties”.

--- **Haven, 1870**

Ethics is concerned with doing well and avoiding harm.

--- **Bandman L. Elsie, 1995.**

IMPORTANCE OF ETHICS IN NURSING RESEARCH:

Nursing research usually deals with the human being, where implications of the ethics become very essential. Following are some of the important reasons to support importance of ethics in nursing research:

- ❖ Protect the vulnerable group and other study participants from harmful effects of the experimental interventions.
- ❖ Safeguard the participants from exploitation by researchers.
- ❖ Establish the risk- benefit ratio for the study subjects.
- ❖ Ensure the fullest respect, dignity, privacy, disclose of information, and fair treatment for study subjects.
- ❖ Build the capability of subjects to accept or reject participation in study and to have access to informed or written consent for participation in research study.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Human experimentation has been conducted even before 18th century. However, the ethical attitudes of researchers drawn the interest of society only after 1940's, because of human exploitation in several cases.

- The Nazi medical experiments of the 1930s and 1940s are the most famous examples of recent disregard for ethical conduct. The Nazi program of research involved using prisoners of war and racial "enemies" in experiments designed to test humans endurance and reactions to untested drugs. The studies were unethical not only because they exposed people to harm and even death, but because subjects could not refuse participation. Similar wartime experiments that raise ethical concerns were conducted in Japan and Australia.
- Another well known case of unethical research involved is the injection of liver cancer cells into elderly patients at the Jewish chronic diseases hospital in Brooklyn, without the consent of those patients.
- In 1993, the US federal agencies, such as the atomic energy commission, have sponsored radiation experiments since the 1940s on hundreds of people, many of them were prisoners or elderly hospital patients.
- In los angels, California, between 1989 and 1991 approximately 900 children who were mostly black of Hispanic, were given an experimental measles vaccines called EZ(Edmonston Zagreb). The researchers never told the parents about the experiments because the vaccines were unlicensed.
- In 2005 it was revealed that the government funded researchers tested experimental AIDS drug on hundreds of foster children without providing these children with an independent advocate (Solomon 2005). These children were mostly poor or from minority group. In some case their lives were extended. However, many children experienced side effects such as rashes, vomiting and sharp dropsin infection fighting blood cells. They had no advocate the weigh the advantages and disadvantages of their participation n research.

CODES OF ETHICS IN NURSING RESEARCH:

In response to human rights violations, various codes of ethics have been developed in of the first international set of ethical standards was the *Nurenberg Code*, developed in 1949 in response to the Nazi atrocities. Several other international standards have subsequently been developed.

Nurenberg code is concerned with several criteria for research including the following:

- ✚ Research must inform the subjects.
- ✚ Research must be good for the society.
- ✚ Research must be based on animal experiments, if possible.
- ✚ Research must try to avoid injury to Research subjects.
- ✚ Research must be qualified to conduct Research.
- ✚ Subjects or the Researchers can stop the study if problem occurs.

In 1968, the American Nurses Association developed a set of guidelines for nursing research. These guidelines, titled as *Human Rights Guidelines For Nurses And Other Research*, were revised in 1975 and 1985. The American Nurses Association published another set of guidelines in 1995, *Ethical Guidelines in the Conduct, Dissemination and Implementation of nursing research*.

ANA(2001) also published a revised *Code Of Ethics For Nurses With Interpretive Statements*, a document that covers ethical issues for practicing nurses primarily but also includes principles that apply to nurse researchers.

In Canada, the Canadian nurses association published its ethical research guidelines for registered nurse in 2002. And, the international council for nurses (ICN) has developed the *ICN Code Of Ethics For Nurses*, Which was most recently updated in 2006.

The major ethical principles that should be considered in designing or reviewing the research studies are beneficence, justice, and respect of human dignity.

The ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses has following principal elements that outline the standards of ethical conduct.

3. ELEMENTS OF THE CODE ARE:

1.NURSES AND PEOPLE

- ▶ The nurse's primary professional responsibility is to people requiring nursing care.
- ▶ In providing care, the nurse promotes an environment in which the human rights, values, customs and spiritual beliefs of the individual, family and community are respected.
- ▶ The nurse ensures that the individual receives sufficient information on which to base consent for care and related treatment.
- ▶ The nurse holds in confidence personal information and uses judgment in sharing this information.
- ▶ The nurse shares with society the responsibility for initiating and supporting action to meet the health and social needs of the public, in particular those of vulnerable populations.
- ▶ The nurse also shares responsibility to sustain and protect the natural environment from depletion, pollution, degradation and destruction

2. NURSES AND PRACTICE:

- ▶ The nurse carries personal responsibility and accountability for nursing practice, and for maintaining competence by continual learning.
- ▶ The nurse maintains a standard of personal health such that the ability to provide care is not compromised.
- ▶ The nurse uses judgment regarding individual competence when accepting and delegating responsibility.
- ▶ The nurse at all times maintains standards of personal conduct which reflect well on the profession and enhance public confidence.
- ▶ The nurse, in providing care, ensures that use of technology and scientific advances are compatible with the safety, dignity and rights of people

3. NURSES AND THE PROFESSION:

- ▶ The nurse assumes the major role in determining and implementing acceptable standards of clinical nursing practice, management, research and education.
- ▶ The nurse is active in developing a core of research- based professional knowledge.
- ▶ The nurse, acting through the professional organization, participates in creating and maintaining safe, equitable social and economic working conditions in nursing.

4. NURSES AND CO-WORKERS:

- ▶ The nurse takes appropriate action to safeguard individuals, families and communities when their health is endangered by a co- worker or any other person. 'The nurse sustains a co-operative relationship with co-workers in nursing and other fields.

5. NURSES AND SOCIETY:

- ▶ Participate and share responsibility with other citizens' & Aware of laws and regulations which affect the practice of medicine and nursing.

APPLYING THE ELEMENTS OF THE ICN CODE OF ETHICS FOR NURSES

The four elements of the *ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses*: nurses and people, nurses and practice, nurses and coworkers, and nurses and the profession, give a framework for the standards of conduct. The following chart will assist nurses to translate the standards into action. Nurses and nursing students can therefore:

- Study the standards under each element of the *Code*.

- Reflect on what each standard means to you. Think about how you can apply ethics in your nursing domain: practice, education, research or management.
- Discuss the *Code* with co-workers and others.
- Use a specific example from experience to identify ethical dilemmas and standards of conduct as outlined in the *Code*. Identify how you would resolve the dilemma.
- Work in groups to clarify ethical decision making and reach a consensus on standards of ethical conduct.
- Collaborate with your national nurses' association, co-workers, and others in the continuous application of ethical standards in nursing practice, education, management and research..

Suggestions for use of the ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses

The *ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses* is a guide for action based on social values and needs. It will have meaning only as a living document if applied to the realities of nursing and health care in a changing society.

To achieve its purpose the *Code* must be understood, internalised and used by nurses in all aspects of their work. It must be available to students and nurses throughout their study and work lives.

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR NURSES IN INDIA

1. Professional Responsibility and accountability –

- ✚ Nurse Appreciates sense of self-worth and nurtures it.
- ✚ Maintains standards of personal conduct reflecting credit upon the profession
- ✚ Carries out responsibilities within the framework of the professional boundaries
- ✚ Is accountable for maintaining practice standards set by Indian Nursing Council
- ✚ Is accountable for own decisions and actions
- ✚ Is compassionate
- ✚ Is responsible for continuous improvement of current practices
- ✚ Provides adequate information to individuals that allows them informed choices
- ✚ Practices healthful behaviour

2. Nursing Practice:

- ✚ Nurse Provides care in accordance with set standards of practice
- ✚ Treats all individuals and families with human dignity in providing physical, psychological, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of care
- ✚ Respects individuals and families in the context of traditional and cultural practices, promoting healthy practices and discouraging harmful practices
- ✚ Presents realistic picture truthfully in all situations for facilitating autonomous decision-making by individuals and families
- ✚ Promotes participation of individuals and significant others in the care
- ✚ Ensures safe practice

✚ Consults, coordinates, collaborates and follows up appropriately when individuals' care needs exceed the nurse's competence

3. **Communication and Interpersonal Relationships :**

✚ Nurse Establishes and maintains effective interpersonal relationships with individuals, families and communities

✚ Upholds the dignity of team members and maintains effective interpersonal relationship with them

✚ Appreciates and nurtures professional role of team members

✚ Cooperates with other health professional to meet the needs of the individuals, families and communities

4. **Valuing Human Being :**

✚ Nurse Takes appropriate action to protect individuals from harmful unethical practice

✚ Considers relevant facts while taking conscience decisions in the best interest of individuals

✚ Encourages and supports individuals in their right to speak for themselves on issues affecting their health and welfare

✚ Respects and supports choices made by individuals

5. **Management:**

✚ Nurse Ensures appropriate allocation and utilization of available resources

✚ Participates in supervision and education of students and other formal care providers

✚ Uses judgment in relation to individual competence while accepting and delegating responsibility

✚ Facilitates conducive work culture in order to achieve institutional objectives

✚ Communicates effectively following appropriate channels of communication
Participates in performance appraisal

✚ Participates in evaluation of nursing services

✚ Participates in policy decisions, following the principle of equity and accessibility of services

✚ Works with individuals to identify their needs and sensitizes policy makers and funding agencies for resource allocation

6. **Professional Advancement**

✚ Nurse Ensures the protection of the human rights while pursuing the advancement of knowledge

✚ Contributes to the development of nursing practice

✚ Participates in determining and implementing quality care

✚ Takes responsibility for updating own knowledge and competencies

✚ Contributes to core of professional knowledge by conducting and participating in research

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