Ethical Dilemma in Health Care

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A friend of mine who is also a physician works in an intensive care unit in a referral hospital in the United States of America. One day, he received a patient and he was supposed to put the patient in the life support machine but when he looked at the patient, there was no hope of the patient's recovery as his profession dictates, he had to put the patient in the life support machine. After some time, he discovered that the health status of the patient was deteriorating, so he decided to withdraw the life support and let nature take its course, but the family of the patient insisted that the physician should do everything possible to make sure that the patient survives. The physician was left on an unclear basis, not knowing what to do to solve the problem (Rubin et al., 2023). He is not sure whether to withdraw the life support machine and let nature take its course or do everything possible as the family insists, which might cause pain and discomfort to the patient without offering any benefit.

Analysis Of The Dilemma

The ethics triangle is a decision-making model that is used during the analysis of ethical dilemmas in situations when there is no clear sense of right or wrong. The three points of a triangle indicate three approaches to an ethical dilemma that include consequences, principles, and virtues (Strand et al., 2022). When analyzing an ethical dilemma, the consequences approach helps an individual evaluate whether the result of the decision will lead to the utilitarian notion whereby the greatest good happens to the greatest number. The principles approach enables the person analyzing the dilemma to evaluate whether the decision made is fair, just, and equitable to all the involved parties. Finally, the virtue approach examines whether the decision of the person involved supports the integrity of his character. In this case, the physician is supposed to evaluate the consequences, virtues, and principles of the available decisions in order to come up with the solution that produces the greatest benefits than harm, upholds the integrity of his profession, and ensures that the decision is fair on both sides (Strand et al., 2022).

If the physician decides to withdraw the life support machine from the patient and let nature take its course should look at the consequences that the decision may have on his profession, the patient, and the patient's family. Additionally, if he decides to do everything possible as the family insists, knowing that it will yield no benefits to the patient, he should look at how the family of the patient will see the integrity of the physician (Choi et al., 2023).

Possible Solutions

Withdrawal of Life Support Machine

The physician may opt to withdraw the life support machine from the patient and leave nature to take its course. In this solution, consequences, virtues, and principles points of the ethical triangle are relevant (Choi et al., 2023). The consequences of the decision to withdraw the life support machine should yield more benefits than harm, whereby if the physician decides to withdraw the life support, he should ensure that the results that follow are of great benefit to the patient and the family. On the principle approach, the physician should ensure that withdrawing the life support machine is in accordance with the rules of a physician that demonstrate that all patients are equal and should be treated equally regardless of social status, economic status, or health status. Finally, the physician should evaluate his actions of withdrawing the life support machine from the patient and whether they uphold his integrity as a medical practitioner.

Utilitarian, deontological, and virtue ethics are important theories that the physician should consider before making the decision to withdraw the life support machine from the patient. On the utilitarian theory, the physician should ensure that the decision yields the greatest benefits than harm. In addition, he should also consider the moral action of his decision based on physicians' rules in deontological theory (Lissak & Young, 2024). Lastly, on virtue ethics, the physician should consider the values attached to his profession. In case withdrawing the life support machine will save the life of the patient, his integrity will not be in question, and if the decision is in line with the rules, then the physician should withdraw the life support machine.

Do Everything Possible to Save the Patient

The three points of an ethics triangle are relevant in the decision to do everything possible to save the patient, knowing that it has no benefits (Lissak & Young, 2024). The consequences bit of the decision should yield the greatest benefits whereby it should ensure that the life of the patient is saved. On the virtue approach, the physician should make sure that his integrity and professional values are not in question when he decides to do everything possible. The other is the principle approach where the physician should choose the decision that follows the rules outlined in the profession of physicians. By doing everything possible to save the life of the patient, the physician should do everything that is in line with the rules that govern his profession.

Personal Response

In my opinion, I will do everything possible to save the life of the patient. Despite the fact that leaving the patient on life support will not have any benefits, the family of the patient will trust in me that I

can help the patient even if the patient does not survive. This will uphold my integrity and values as a physician as well as I will be doing what is provided in the rules of the profession (Choi et al., 2023).

Withdrawing the life support machine from the patient is not the best decision in such a case because it will cause harm to the patient and his family since the life of the patient will be lost, and the family will be affected by the loss. Additionally, if the family discovers that the life of their relative was lost as a result of the physician withdrawing the life support machine, they will question the integrity of the physician. Also, the physician will have violated the rules of the profession as he will not have treated all patients equally.

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