

MEDICAL ETHICS

INTRODUCTION AND DEFINATIONS

The magic of the profession of medicine is that it has been able to maintain its honor and respect for more than 5000 years. This is the reason why practicing medicine is both exciting and satisfying.

The whole secret is simple, it is the ethical standards of this noble profession which have been raised and respected by physicians all through ages.

- Western medical ethics may be traced to guidelines on the duty of physicians in ancient past, such as **Hippocratic Oath**, and Christian teachings, in the early modern period, the field is owed to Islamic Physicians such as [Ishaq bin Ali Rahawi](#) (who wrote the conduct of physician, the first book dedicated to medical ethics) and **Al-Razi**(known as Rhazes in the west), Jewish thinkers such as Maimonides and also Roman Catholic Scholastic thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas.
- **Ethics:** That branch of philosophy that studies how and why people make decisions regarding what is right and what is wrong. It is the science of conduct.

Ethics (another definition): is a code of values which guide our choices and actions and determine the purpose and course of our lives.

- **Values:** are our own ethical principles which one acts to gain and/or to keep. It is a quality held to be desirable, important, or of worth like Freedom, Justice, Honor, Duty, Mercy, Hope, honesty, Love, Charity, Faith, Courage and Wisdom.

A value represents a subjective assessment and may be measured by what a person is willing to sacrifice for it.

- **Moral:** wrong and right behavior, allowed and disallowed, what is wanted and unwanted within a culture.
- **Norm (standard, principle):** a term describing the expected pattern of behavior in given situation, it's a rule that is socially enforced.
- **Tradition (custom):** repeated action that is passed from generation to generation.
- **Attitude:** is a learned tendency to respond consistently toward a given object.
- **Justice:** concerns the distribution of health resources, and the decision of who gets what treatment.
- **Culture:** distinctive way of life of group of people and their complete design for living.
- **Autonomy:** (respecting the patient's wishes) the duty to protect and foster a patient's free, unforced choices. From the principle of respect for autonomy are derived the rules for informed consent, confidentiality, truth-telling

- **Nonmaleficence:** To do no harm. To not act when action would cause harm because of ignorance, unsuitable environment, scientifically not valid.
- **Beneficence:** the duty to promote good and act in the best interest of the patient and the health of society.
- **Altruism:** An emphasis on doing good for others rather than in self-interest.
- **Confidentiality:** Patients information are kept private. No third party is allowed to know.
- **Cultural Concerns:**

Culture differences can create difficult medical ethics problems. Some cultures have spiritual or magic theories about the origins of disease.

- **Medical Ethics:** is a practical discipline that provides a structured approach to the analysis of ethical issues in clinical medicine & research.
- **Ethics in medical practice** refers to a group of guidelines about the physicians ideal relationship to their peers and to their patients.

References of lectures:

- 1- Biomedical Ethics book (Olinda Timms) 2016
- 2- Internet medical ethics web sites
- 3- Iraqi Medical Association – Medical Ethics