Bibliography of Nursing Ethics With Selected Annotations

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The books listed below were identified from bibliographies of nursing and medical ethics books found in an internet search on “nursing ethics” and via a search of Amazon.com for books regarding “nursing ethics,” “medical ethics” and “health care ethics” in order to identify the best and most current books regarding nursing and health care ethics. These books have been purchased with the Department of Education grant to the University of Dubuque’s Nursing Program in an effort to establish a Nursing and Health Care Ethics Collection at the University’s Charles C. Meyers Library.

Annotations are provided for selected texts, while others are just listed. Annotations were developed from a preliminary examination of the book rather than a full reading of the text due to time limitations.

Nursing Ethics Bibliography With Selected Annotations


This book is a collection of fourteen essays discussing ethical issues in public health. Many of the essays included discuss the rights of the individual versus communities or society and principles of justice in the allocation of health resources. Essay topics include the risks versus benefits of addressing obesity from the individual or societal level; justice in the allocation of advances in biotechnology; justice in the allocation of public health resources in governmental responses to terrorism and biological warfare; individual versus family and community rights regarding decision-making about genetic information; public versus personal rights regarding maternal fetal surgical procedures; gun control; interpersonal violence; the impact of corporate decision-making regarding the work-place hazards and product development on premature death and the public’s health; and the right to die versus the right to health care.


Purposes of the book include:

1) “to provide a nursing ethics book that includes and exploration of a wide array of nursing moral issues (p. viii);”
2) to provide an across the curriculum focus so that the book could be used in each nursing course;
3) to facilitate the integration of “ethical principles, theories, and decision-making skills” into nursing practice (p. viii).

Reflective of its across the curriculum focus the first two chapters focus on introducing ethics—defining ethical theories and principles, identifying a framework for ethical analysis, and discusses values, and the ethical issues in the care-giving relationships that the nurse is a member nurse-nurse, nurse-physician, nurse-patient-family. The first chapter also discusses “internet ethics”—the ethical issues encountered by all users—especially focusing on ethical issues with student use of the internet and ethical issues related to internet-based health care information. The remaining chapters of the book focus on ethical issues found in specific curricular areas of nursing: “Adult Health,” “Reproductive Health,” “The Care Of Infants And Children,” “Adolescent,” “Psychiatric and Mental Health,” “Geriatrics And Chronic Illness,” “Community and Public Health,” and “End of Life.” The book includes pedagogical features to stimulate critical thinking including critical thinking exercises, web ethics (links to websites for specific topics), case studies, and critical thinking questions. Instructor resources may be obtained and include “chapter overviews and objectives, student activities, and chapter test questions (p. xv).”


This book is designed to be used as a text in a medical ethics course without the need for any supplementary materials. It includes readings and critical thinking tools for each unit. It is comprised of 5 units, 2 chapters per unit with readings pertinent to each chapter included in that chapter as well as a “critical thinking tool.” The focus of the Unit I, “Introduction to Ethics and Critical Thinking,” is divided into an “Introduction to Ethical Theory” chapter which discusses the types of ethical questions and then discusses, in turn, the ethical perspectives of ethical relativism, divine command theory, ethical egoism, utilitarianism, Kantian and rights-based ethics, virtue ethics and Rawl’s theory of social justice. In chapter two, the author identifies “Critical Thinking Tools” necessary for ethical analysis including the differences between assumptions, facts, opinions and ideas;
deductive and inductive arguments, and some logical fallacies. Unit II focuses on the reproductive ethical issues of surrogacy contracts and abortion. The first chapter in Unit III focuses on “Life, Death and Medical Technology” issues including the end of life issues of active and passive euthanasia, assisted suicide, and death with dignity. The second chapter in Unit II discusses “Genetics and Morality”–related ethical issues including the right to life, prenatal diagnosis and sex selection, cloning, genetic information and health insurance, and gene patenting. The two chapters within Unit IV focuses on ethical issues relative to “HIV/AIDS and the Provider-Patient Relationship” including confidentiality, the right to know, the duty to treat, informed consent, coercion, telling patients the truth, forced transfusion of Jehovah witness children, and confidentiality. The fifth unit, “Medical Research, Allocation, and Justice,” focuses on ethical issues relative to human subjects research and the allocation of medical resources including organ transplantation, cost containment, the doctor as a double agent, aging, and truth telling in risk management.


This beginning ethics in nursing book introduces specific ethical dilemmas in nursing after a cursory discussion of ethical principals and professional codes of ethics in the nursing and other health professions. A brief history of ethics in nursing, and brief discussions of values clarification, ethical theories, and ethical concepts are also discussed. Specific ethical dilemmas discussed after these preliminary chapters include informed consent; abortion; the end of life issues of euthanasia, advanced directives, do not resuscitate orders, and suicide and assisted suicide; the behavior control issues of coercion and freedom, psychotherapy, psychosurgery, and psychopharmacology; mental retardation; and genetics. Case studies and discussion questions are included at the end of each chapter.


The primary audience for this book is medical students and residents. It was developed to improve end-of-life care --an imperative from the Institute of Medicine’s evidence-based reports on the current status of medical care at end-of-life that “healthcare professionals’ lack of knowledge and education ...(is) a serious barrier to humane compassionate care for patient and families (p. xii).” The text is divided into two parts. Part I, “Death and Dying in Context,” discusses the history of the palliative movement, legal issues regarding death and dying, the current status of end of life care in the hospital and the need for improvement. Part II, “Goal Setting” as a “Strategy for Effective Palliative Care, discusses goal setting at end of life regarding specific issues such as do not resuscitate orders, advance care planning, withdrawals of care, hospice referral, the use of life-sustaining therapies, opioid use, symptom management; how to
gather information for goal setting; and how to formulate goals of care. The book includes a concise tool for goal assessment at end of life, the Goals of Care Assessment Tool or GCAT.


The book was an outgrowth of the development of an international code of nursing ethics, the ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses (2000). The ICN code was developed in response to the increasing influence of “cultural, religious and political values endemic to the particular situation (p. ix)” on nurses’ decision making and supports the revised ICN Code of Ethics. The book has thirteen chapters divided into three parts. The five chapters in Part 1 focus on “Preparation For Ethical Decision-Making.” Chapter 1 discusses value formation and value conflict including cultural, religious and personal and professional values and value conflicts. Chapter 2 discusses traditional ethics including theories and principles and then discusses going “beyond traditional ethics and principalism” focusing on ethics and the law and bioethics. Chapter 3 discusses ethical concepts in nursing practice with advocacy identified as the primary concept followed by discussions of accountability, cooperation, and caring. Chapter 4 discusses the development of standards for ethical behavior for nurses identifying functions, common themes, and the application and enforcement of nursing codes of ethics. Part 2 of the book consists of four chapters discussing each of the “Ethical Responsibilities Of The Nurse” – promoting health, preventing illness, restoring health, and alleviating suffering. Part 3 discusses “Applying Ethics to Nursing Practices” from the perspective of nurses’ relationships to “people,” “practice and the profession,” and “co-workers” and includes topics such as “individual versus collective good;” “delegating nursing care and authority to others;” “participating in research involving human subjects;” and cooperating with physicians, nurses and other co-workers; and “reporting incompetent nursing care.” Case examples and discussion questions are provided in each chapter.


This book looks at the “influence of that the law, legal issues and the field of ethics have on the professional practice of nursing (p. vii) and is intended for practicing nurses and nursing students. “The primary purpose …is to familiarize the nursing students and professional nurses with current legal concepts (p. vii).” Additional purposes include to: 1) “educate nurses about legal issues, the functions of laws and ethical applications of legal principles;” 2) “serve as a
resource for practicing nurses;” and 3) “assist nurses in providing the most
competent care possible (p. vii).” The book is divided into 5 parts: Part I
introduces ethics, distinguishing between the law and ethics; defines ethical
theories and principles; defines an ethical decision-making framework; discusses
advocacy as a nursing role; and describes the models and functions of hospital
ethics committees. There is a “you be the ethicist” in Part I, Chapter 1, and a
“you be the judge” section at the end of the legally focused Parts II – V which
primarily focus on legal issues. The titles of the 4 sections, containing the
remaining 20 chapters --devoted to legal issues in nursing, focus sequentially on
The Professional Practice Of Nursing;” And “The Impact Of Law On Nursing In
Selected Practice Settings” including acute, managed, ambulatory, and long-term
care. The book contains exercises throughout each chapter and end of chapter
review questions.

Husted, G.L., & Husted, J.H. (2001). Ethical decision-making in nursing and healthcare:
The symphonological approach. (3rd ed.). New York: Springer Publishing
Company.

Livingstone.

This text is designed as a nursing ethics textbook. The book’s author is from
Australia and some of the situations discussed are Australia –based. The essence
of the book from the author’s perspective is “the lived realities of nurses and
nursing practice (xi).” There are 13 chapters which focus on the following topics:
“professional standards and the requirement to be ethical;” ethics definitions; a
thorough discussion of the ethical theories and the problems inherent in each
identified; transcultural ethics; moral decision-making; patient health care rights;
rights of the mentally ill; child abuse; abortion; suicide; end of life; and ethics
committees. The discussion of ethics theories was the most in-depth of the books
reviewed. Another feature that distinguishes the book is the discussion of the
conscientious objection and whistleblowing and the potential risks to the nurse
inherent in both of the actions bringing to the forefront that ethics in nursing
entails not just discussion but actions—actions that impact the patient and the
nurse. Each chapter also includes a case scenario and discussion questions.


“The perspective advanced by this book is that living with and caring for persons
with dementia in an institutional setting can be seen as an exercise in everyday
ethics (xi).” The book was written for those practicing in nursing homes and for
gerontological nursing educators and students. The author views the book as supplemental to *The 36-hour day* a guide for lay persons caring for patients with dementia at home and *Practical dementia care* and believes that her book provides a fifth perspective, different from the four perspectives of caring for persons with dementia identified in *Practical dementia care* (1999)—“the disease perspective,” the “dimensional characteristics of people with dementia,” the behavioral perspective, and the “life story” perspective (p. xii). The author defines her book’s focus as a “fifth perspective that involves careful consideration of the ethical implications of human relationships in everyday action within the specific context of nursing home culture (p xii).” Chapter 1 “describes what living with dementia can be like” interweaving facts regarding the disease with personal experiences of family members. Chapter 2 discusses “the nursing home experience through the eyes of nursing home residents and their families.” Chapter 3 discusses “ethics in action as a practical approach to understanding everyday issues affecting nursing home residents with dementia.” In this chapter universal moral concerns in caring for the patient with dementia are identified and frameworks for assessing resident-focused issues are discussed. A taxonomy of everyday ethical issues is defined including individual versus social values, and positive (“to do as one wishes”) versus negative (“not to be forced, restrained, confined”) rights. Chapter 4 contains hypothetical case studies with questions and possible actions with commentary. Even though possible actions are provided, the author’s hope is to prevent “closure” on ethical issues to encourage dialogue.


The book, the eleventh in the *Basic Bioethics Series*, presents the author’s “embedded instrumentalist” theory of health—the Richman-Budman embedded instrumentalist theory of health. This type of theory “holds that health is a match between one’s goal’s and one’s ability to reach those goals” (book jacket), with goals varying by individual. It is postulated within the book that a theory of health—defining what health is-- is a prerequisite to making decisions about the health of individuals or societies. Defining health is necessary for decisions varying from informed consent for medical treatment to assessments of health care policies and programs. The author postulates that health is a good (economic definition) and discusses the health care provider’s duties of beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice relative to the patient regarding that good. Ideas discussed include that health care providers must discuss patient goals prior to obtaining informed consent and that beneficence is the “duty of health care providers to improve the health of an individual.” After the initial definition and discussion of the Richman-Budman theory of health, the author discusses “Autonomy and Parentalism,” “Advance Directives,” and “Talking To Patients, Training Physicians” via the perspective of that theory.


The book is divided into three parts. In Part I a presentation of results of a survey of geneticists from 36 countries and discussion of ethics from the –“preliminary to a global discussion of ethics is to put everybody’s views on the table so that they can be examined openly.” Part II focuses on reports on genetics and ethics from the authors’ colleagues in different nations including, Germany, India, China, Peru, and Japan. Interestingly, the China perspective on ethics and genetics was divided into 2 distinct chapters—“views of a bioethicist” and “views of a geneticist,” while the ethics and genetics views of the other countries were presented in one chapter. Part III contains a discussion of the need for an international code of ethics for geneticists and a discussion of moral priorities in medical genetics. The moral priorities include autonomy relative to abortion, sex selection, and parenthood for people with “transmissible mental disabilities;” family relationships and disclosure of genetic risks; and privacy of genetic information. The book also contains the “Proposed International Guidelines on Ethical Issues in Medical Genetics” report developed at a World Health Organization meeting in December of 1997.