

Ethics Overview

Last Updated: 27 April 2020

Summary

This module introduces ethical considerations for clinical security work. Our look at ethics builds from the Markkula Center's work towards some agreement around norms specific to our Clinic (see Citizen Clinic Code of Conduct).

Learning Objectives

- Identify ethically significant harms in cybersecurity (and the Clinic)
- Identify ethical challenges in cybersecurity (and the Clinic)
- Understand best practices for cybersecurity ethics including the three components of informed consent
- Understand one's mandate to regularly consider the ethics of their position and work

Pre-Readings

- Shannon Vallor, The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, "An Introduction to Cybersecurity Ethics" pages 7 - 21 & 48 - 52. [<https://www.scu.edu/media/ethics-center/technology-ethics/IntroToCybersecurityEthics.pdf>]

Resources

- [Citizen Clinic Code of Conduct](#)

Activities

Read pages 7 - 21 & 48 - 52 of "An Introduction to Cybersecurity Ethics" (Shannon Vallor, The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics) [<https://www.scu.edu/>]

[media/ethics-center/technology-ethics/IntroToCybersecurityEthics.pdf](#)] Prepare answers to questions on pages 15 - 17 and page 53 for discussion.

Question 1.1: What risks of ethically significant harm, as defined in Part One, are involved in this case? Who could be harmed if Leslie makes poor choices in this situation, and how? What potential benefits to others should she consider in thinking about BioHack's proposal?

Question 1.2: Beyond the specific harms noted in your answer to 1.1, what are some ethical concerns that Leslie should have about the proposed arrangement with BioHack? Are there any ethical 'red flags' she should notice?

Question 5.1: Of these twelve best practices for cybersecurity ethics, which two do you think are the most challenging to carry out? What do you think could be done (by an individual, a team, or an organization) to make those practices easier?

Discussion

What ethically significant harms should we consider?

What ethical challenges (Vallor pg 15 - 20) might we encounter?

Input

Consider "First, do no harm"...

...but discuss the limitations of that guiding principle.

We should be intentional about the decisions we make and intervene in ways that will not make the situation worse. Ultimately, the organization and its well-being should be your primary concern. However, you also have a duty to yourself, your family, and your team members that may play a factor.

Sometimes there may seem like there are no good answers (for instance, doing nothing because there might be risk is not a resolution). If we view our interventions as already raising the risks for our partners and ourselves, what can we actively do to mitigate that?

Informed Consent

- Discuss and define disclosure, comprehension, and voluntary participation.
- Understand the effect of your institutional affiliation and positioning.

Tools and methods for good (ethical) can be used for bad (unethical).

Important questions to regularly ask:

- Are you, your team, or your partner able to do this?
- Are you, your team, or your partner willing to do this?
- Do you, your team, or your partner have any conflicts of interest?

Deepening

What should our Code of Ethics look like? (Vallor pg 48)

Synthesis

Review the Citizen Clinic Code of Conduct. Highlights:

- Harassment and Discrimination
- Operational Security
- Confidentiality
- Professionalism
- Reporting

Assignments

Review and submit signed Code of Conduct.

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