**MEDICAL ETHICS**

**Introduction**

1. Ethics is concerned with moral principles, values and standards of conduct.(WHO)
2. Ethics is the study of morality – careful and systematic reflection on and analysis of moral decisions and behavior.
3. Morality is the value dimension of human decision-making and behavior.

**Medical Etiquettes**

1. The conventional laws, customs of courtesy and the code of conduct governing the relationship of the physician with his professional colleagues.
2. Physicians frequently have to deal with medical problems resulting from violations of human rights, such as forced migration and torture.
3. Medical ethics is also closely related to law.

**Importance of Medical Ethics**

1. Ethical principles such as respect for persons, informed consent and confidentiality are basic to the physician-patient relationship.
2. Application of these principles in specific situations is often problematic, since physicians, patients, their family members and other healthcare personnel may disagree about what is the right way to act in a situation.
3. The study of ethics prepares medical professionals to recognize difficult situations and to deal with them in a rational and principled manner.

**Principles of Medical Ethics**

**Autonomy**

Patient has freedom of thought, intention and action when making decisions regarding health care procedures.

**Beneficence**

The practitioner should act in “the best interest” of the patient - the procedure be provided with the intent of doing good to the patient.

**Confidentiality**

Information to be revealed for the benefit of the patient and when ethically and legally required.

**Do no harm/ Non-maleficence**

“Above all, do no harm." Make sure that the procedure does not harm the patient or others in society.

**Equity or Justice**

The burdens and benefits of new or experimental treatments must be distributed equally among all groups in society.

**Ethical Codes**

1. Hippocratic Oath – 5th century BC
2. Nuremberg Code –1948
3. Declaration of Geneva - 1948
4. Universal Declaration of Human Rights-1948
5. Helsinki Declaration –1964
6. International Code of Medical ethics
7. Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquettes and Ethics) Regulations, 2002

**Hippocratic Oath**

1. One of the earliest document in medical ethics – 5th century BC.
2. Traditionally all doctors recite this oath at swearing in. It is considered sacred for its religious foundation and sanctity.

**Duties and responsibilities of physician in general**

**Character of Physician**

1. Uphold dignity and honor of his profession.
2. Render service to humanity.
3. Person with recognized qualification can only practice modern system of medicine.

**Maintaining good medical practice.**

1. Render service to humanity with full respect for the dignity of profession and man.

**Maintenance of Medical records**

1. Maintain the medical records pertaining to his indoor patients for a period of 3 years.
2. Records to be given within 72 hrs (if requested by patients/legal authorities).
3. Maintain a Register of Medical Certificates giving full details of certificates issued.

***Some other responsibilities and disciplines are following -***

1. Highest Quality Assurance in patient care
2. Exposure of Unethical Conduct
3. Payment of Professional Services
4. Evasion of Legal Restrictions
5. Patience, delicacy & secrecy
6. Do not neglect the patient.
7. Consultation for patient benefit.
8. Punctuality in consultation.
9. Statement to patient after consultation.
10. Treatment after consultation.

**Responsibilities to each other**

1. Dependence of Physicians on each other. It should consider it as a pleasure and privilege to render gratuitous service to all physicians and their immediate family dependants.
2. Conduct in consultation, which means, respect should be observed towards the physician in-charge of the case and no statement or remark be made.
3. Consultant not to take the charge of the case.
4. Physicians as citizens. As it means, physicians should particularly co-operate with the authorities in the administration of sanitary/public health laws and regulations.
5. Public and community health, which means, it should enlighten the public concerning quarantine regulations and measures for the prevention of epidemic and communicable diseases.

**Unethical Acts**

1. Advertising
2. Patent and copyrights.
3. Running an open shop (Dispensing of Drugs and Appliances by Physicians)
4. Rebates and Commission
5. Secret Remedies.

**Misconduct**

1. Violation of regulations
2. Adultery or improper conduct
3. Conviction in court of law
4. Sex determination test
5. Signing false professional certificates, reports & other documents

**Punishment & Disciplinary Action**

1. Complaint is first heard by appropriate medical council .
2. During the enquiry the full opportunity is given to registered medical practitioner to be heard in person or by pleader.
3. The decision has to be taken within 6 months.
4. Appropriate medical council gives decision according to the case.
5. During the pendency of the complaint the appropriate council may restrain the physician from performing the procedure or practice which is under scrutiny.

**Public health ethics**

**Key issues in public health ethics**

1. Disparities in health status, access to health care and to the benefits of medical research.
2. Responding to the threat of infectious diseases
3. International cooperation in health monitoring and surveillance.
4. Participation, transparency, and accountability
5. Exploitation of individuals in low-income countries and health promotion.

**General Moral Considerations**

1. Providing Benefits.
2. Avoiding, preventing, and removing harms.
3. Producing maximal balance of benefits over harms and other costs.
4. Respecting autonomous choices and actions, including liberty of action.
5. Protecting privacy and confidentiality.
6. Keeping promises and commitments.
7. Disclosing information as well as speaking honestly and truthfully.
8. Distributing benefits and burdens fairly and ensuring public participation.
9. Producing maximal balance of benefits over harms and other costs.
10. Building and maintaining trust.