

Case Study 2: Confidentiality to Colleague and Friend

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Preamble

In light of honesty, nurses are the forefront of being responsible for administering and ensuring every ill patient is in stable condition. As nurses, it is required that they hold paramount the health and safety of every patient and able body. In this case, nurse Sarah Goldman fell short of the responsibilities required by nurses to adhere to patient needs through a series of neglect and deception. As further explained, co-worker Rebecca Fein was placed in an uncomfortable situation challenging her ethical values vs her role as a best friend to Goldman who was at fault for incorrectly administering a high dosage of insulin to a six-year-old diabetic patient. It is the question of what is actually ethical and required from Fein in this situation that will be further looked at.

As the case states, it is important to observe the facts based on the actions taken before and after the incident. Its important to know that every human makes mistakes, but what matters most is how we deal with those mistakes. In the case of Goldman, her duty as a nurse was to administer to a young boy who was recovering from a minor surgery. The facts of the case are as following: Rebecca Fein, who was the co-worker, found the young man pale and perspiring, the young man was unconscious, taking blood samples proved true for extreme hypoglycemic blood pressure, the child recovered, Goldman did not admit to fault at first, gave an overdose of insulin and lastly Goldman never returned to check the child's condition after the dosage. Remember, this incident occurred at a night shift where the variables that could of cause such neglecton could have been long day stress, lack of sleep, busy workday, multitasking etc. Its easy to fill the page with possible situations that led to Goldman from falling short of her duties as a nurse. As mentioned in the preamble, its what follows the incident that matters.

Analyzing the facts and ethical issues of the actions Goldman took after discovering from her best friend/co-worker Rebecca Fein, Goldman did not say anything at first or admitted fault until Fein began to further investigate on the incident, Goldman did not submit an incident report due to conflict of interest, lastly Goldman in a way forced Fein to keep the secret between them when such case had to be reported due to the potential outcome and severity if not found.

As stated in the American Medical Association code of ethics, Goldman violated four of the cannons required by the medical association. One states that "A physician shall be dedicated to providing competent medical care, with compassion and respect for human dignity and rights". Goldman fell short by violating the "...dedicated to providing competent medical care..." portion of the canon by overdosing and not double checking that the amount of insulin was appropriate to the child's body mass. Goldman also violated the second cannon through her initial intent to hide her error and not admitting to fault right away to her boss or her friend. If Fein never began to investigate, Goldman

would have never said anything. Her interaction with her best friend is considered professional since they are both in the workplace and her friend is also a professional. In that same second cannon, Goldman also fell short of striving to report "...physician deficiency in competence.." by not admitting her fault and instead choose to walk in deception. Interestingly enough she also acted in deception by not reporting the incident and maintaining her image as a good nurse to her society and employer as she was being considered for promotion. By not reporting her mistake she is falsely promoting herself as an error free professional. Goldman violated cannon four by not respecting the rights of her friend/professional co-worker by saying "And I hope you're not going to report it , either..." such words place Fein in a hard situation where she is threatened to violate her ethical values in place of her relationship with Goldman. Lastly, Goldman did not hold the child's life paramount as stated in cannon eight.

Such actions are just not ethical in a critical professional business such as medicine. Looking at Fein who is the true key stakeholder in this entire case, Fein has the ultimate decision to report the incident. Being in the shoes of Fein, she has two options, report it or not. Keeping in mind that the internal good and telos of Nursing is honesty and holding patient's health paramount and providing the best health and quality possible. I believe sacrificing her relationship with Goldman although hard should not keep her from being ethical. Mainly if we look at it from a Rule utilitarian viewpoint in which would put the choice of not reporting it as leading to a slippery slope where everyone will not report important issues because they held a friendship more paramount than the life of somebody. I believe losing a friendship is worth more than loosing a life. Although an Act Utilitarian would argue against by saying that Goldman just made a mistake and should be given mercy by being better next time and it would cause better good for her since the patient did not die.

A virtue theorist will argue that honesty is the most important key in the workplace and that every nurse should hold themselves to a high standard by taking pride in their profession and their role

in society. Interesting enough a care and empathetic professional would favor in Goldman and tell Fein to have empathy as it was an honest mistake. Take empathy in the fact that Goldman has been working hard towards her promotion and she just happened to slip once after a long day at work. It justifies no reason to potentially ruin her reputation at work in which can cost her the financial benefit. Although true, the only thing that gets forgotten is that the child would have died if Fein did not check on the patient. Such weight cannot be ignored and simply passed as the outcome or consequence would have been one of a human life.