

What is the purpose of having/following a "Code of Ethics"? Codes of ethics serve several vital purposes in guiding professional conduct. They outline a profession's core moral duties, responsibilities, and ethical obligations. Following an established code helps uphold integrity standards, regulates behavior, and builds public trust by demonstrating a commitment to ethics. For engineers, the IEEE Code of Ethics guides on issues from honesty to privacy to conflicts of interest. Having clear ethical codes helps engineers navigate murky situations. When faced with an ethical dilemma, I go through several steps to guide my decision-making:

1. Identify the ethical issues and conflicts involved. This requires considering the perspectives of various stakeholders.
2. Consult relevant professional codes of ethics and regulations related to the issues. This guides professional standards and expectations.
3. Carefully weigh the rights, responsibilities, interests, and potential welfare of all parties who may be impacted. This involves ethical reasoning to prioritize moral duties.
4. Consider reasonable alternative actions and analyze their potential consequences. This includes both intended and unintended outcomes.
5. Make an informed judgment to determine the most ethical course of action after systematic analysis. The decision should uphold moral duties while mitigating harm.

Throughout this process, I reference ethical frameworks and theories like utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics to evaluate complex scenarios critically. The goal is to balance multiple ethical obligations.

Our case study discussion centered on ethical issues related to using sensitive personal data for research purposes without consent, conflicting obligations between patient privacy and public benefit, and resolving disagreements between personal ethics and employer/authority demands.

Specifically, we examined questions around proper protocols for accessing protected health information, data minimization and purpose limitation principles, and the need for transparency and restricted access even when data is anonymized. There were disagreements over whether individual privacy should be compromised to advance medical research, even if legal technicalities are followed.

My view tends to prioritize patient privacy and informed consent. Medical data usage without consent should only occur in extreme cases with tight regulation, while others argue for more flexibility if identities are protected. We agreed on following strict data access rules and ethical codes but differed on interpretations and scope of exceptions.

There were also differences arising from group members approaching the discussion from varied roles and duties - for example, siding with administration goals versus patients' rights. Consensus was not reached on one universally "most ethical" decision given these underlying frameworks and role conflicts. However, we found common ground on fundamental principles, even if applying them to this complex situation yielded different conclusions.

Honesty is highly relevant, as being transparent about intended data usage and limitations of anonymization technology upholds ethical duty. Courage also applies regarding voicing moral

opposition to questionable practices like mission creep despite institutional pressure and employment uncertainty. Honesty following established privacy protection rules and protocols for accessing sensitive data demonstrates a commitment to ethics.

While virtues like accountability and humility relate more broadly, I focused on those most centrally relevant to the core areas of ethical tension. The other virtues speak more to self-improvement mindsets than resolving the tensions between competing interests.

Another virtue is prudence, carefully judging specific situations rather than mindlessly following generalized rules. As ethical issues are often complex, prudent analysis should inform the application of principles to unique cases. Absolute regulations fail to address contexts where moral flexibility may be warranted if implemented conscientiously.

In summary, codes of ethics provide invaluable guidance on moral duties and responsible conduct for professionals facing ethical dilemmas. When confronted with such complex situations personally, I carefully weigh the rights and welfare of all stakeholders, the potential consequences of various actions, and the relevance of ethical standards before making judicious decisions. In the case study our class examined, tensions arose between patient privacy, public benefits of research data, and conflicts between personal ethics and institutional pressures. We found common ground on principles of honesty, courage, and careful adherence to established protections around accessing sensitive personal information. As emerging technologies expand possibilities and risks surrounding the usage of protected data, virtuous analysis and application of ethical codes will remain vital to conscientious navigation of this delicate balance. Professionals across fields can justify public trust in their continued moral leadership by maintaining firm ethical foundations while prudently adapting them to evolving scenarios.