

Part I: Managerial Ethics

Article Review

This review is about an article written by Kurt Darr titled “Health Services Management Ethics: A Primer”. It begins with a description of the background of health services management as it relates to ethics. The author explains that managers must incorporate ethics “as they plan, organize, control, direct, and staff HSOs and lead, coordinate, and integrate their activities...” (Darr 1) This application of ethics must happen in hospitals and carry over to homes and clinics as well as other centers of health care.

The article then relays a brief history of the industry and the efforts made at incorporating ethical values. As a decades-old profession, health services management has had to develop codes of ethics in a much shorter period of time than other medical branches. These codes include beneficence and respect for persons among others. In addition to the code, federal law now dictates that nursing home administrators be licensed to perform their work.

Further on, the author discusses the impact of health services executives’ personal ethics on the organizations. In addition, the organizational values and culture become shaped by those individual ethics. As part of the formal education that health services executives receive, managerial and clinical ethical issues are important components. Invariably, executives will incorporate their values into the ethics of health services organizations. Without consistent

application of these values, staff may be hired that does not match the ethical goals of the organization.

Darr identifies various key issues in managerial ethics as they relate specifically to health services management. The possibility of conflict of interest may arise among executives that are tasked with managing health services organizations. Unethical executives might see an opportunity to create business for medical suppliers in which they maintain ownership. An even more critical issue is the ethical concern of getting a patient's consent to administer treatment. Resource allocations and constraints and costs all pose considerable ethical issues to health services personnel. Managers must decide where and in what capacity the available resources can be applied to serve customers without compromising ethics. As medical costs continue to dramatically rise, managers face constraints on the available resources. Without abandoning ethics, managers must effectively provide resources that are within the respective budgets. Other key issues facing health services managers are maintaining an acceptable number of physicians in addition to improving quality. To assist executives, ethics committees exist to address clinical issues to which executives' participation is requested.

Finally, the article identifies future aspects that will challenge the ethics to which health service organizations subscribe. Like many industries, health services will experience the effects of changing values and technologies in the future. As the article points out, health services professionals must exhibit strong ethical values, as people's lives are in their hands. Among the challenges these professionals will encounter are terminal illness, corporate compliance, multiculturalism, and helping the underserved. Ethics will require health service organizations to appropriately deal with these difficult situations.

Personal Thoughts and Opinions

Kurt Darr's article about the ethics of health services organizations is really a summary of the vast issues that confront these organizations on a daily basis. Brief in nature, the article highlights concerns for the industry as well as efforts that have been taken to improve matters. Having never worked in the medical field or for a health services organization, the breadth of the article is appropriate for someone like me to get the gist of ethical concerns.

What might have helped this article is if Darr had included a few more vivid examples in addition to the points he makes. What particular instances in medical history have pushed these organizations to become more ethical? Such examples would have reinforced Darr's summary of the issues. Considering the relative youth of the industry, Darr could have discussed how health services organizations have benefitted from the experiences of other medical branches. Medical knowledge has grown tremendously in the past couple of centuries. What poor ethical standards have hospitals shed that health services organizations have been able to avoid altogether?

Readers of this article who are actually in the health services industry are probably already aware of many of the ideas that the author presents. However, if there is anything that these readers are unaware of, they could use this article as a guide to examine their work environments to determine if they are working ethically every day. If a health services professional improves upon their practices, then this article has done more than just serve as a summary. Additionally, health services customers can use this article as a guide to identify anything they may find unethical at a health care facility.

Part II: Ethics

Website Review

This review is about the content presented by the Ethics Resource Center (ERC) website (<http://www.ethics.org>). The home page of ERC presents visitors with the opportunity to sign up for *Ethics Today*, a free electronic newsletter that discusses numerous ethics and character development issues present in organizations. In addition, the home page contains ERC news, a link to obtain a report on the ethics of United Kingdom defense contractor BAE, and a workplace ethics survey. The home page also presents methods to contribute money to the ERC. Of course the home page contains links to other areas of the website, such as the online store, resources about ethics, publications about ethics, and ethics program evaluation.

One area provides information on ERC, including contact details, policies, and background of the organization. An ERC Partners Program exists to help businesses improve ethical standards as well as to build collective knowledge about ethics. Information about the management of ERC is available via a “Board of Directors” link. For financial information, visitors can click on the “Annual Reports” link to be presented with a page that contains hyperlinks of several ERC annual reports.

Another section of the ERC website includes research information. Here, visitors can find surveys and benchmarking about ethics. In addition, sample research projects are available. This section also promotes the online ERCommunity, which is group of organizations joined together to consult about ethics. The research projects Web page describes two projects: Leaders on Ethics and the National Conference of State Legislatures Ethics Survey.

Reference Section

Darr, Kurt. Health Services Management Ethics: A Primer. *Hospital Topics*, 80(3). Retrieved July 15, 2008, from the EBSCO database.

Ethics Resource Center. <http://www.ethics.org>. Visited on July 16, 2008.

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Paul, you have done another fine job.