The ethical issues that I have encountered as an RN was telling truth to a patent who is terminally ill. Disclosing the diagnosis of terminal illness like cancer is devastating for patient. Health care personal are the ones who are responsible for breaking the bad news for providing the information about the disease and the prognosis. It becomes very difficult if the family insist to conceal the diagnosis from patient.

I had a 46 years old patient who came with the chief complain of nausea, vomiting and seizure and was admitted with the diagnosis of brain tumor. During her last visit to her doctor she was diagnosed with inoperable brain tumor. Since that visit her condition worsened because of malignancy and was nauseous, vomiting and having multiple episode of seizures. When she came to our hospital she was refusing treatments such as NG tube insertion, medications and Foley insertion. She was also very stubborn. During her stay in hospital the medical team established a terminal diagnosis and informed her proxy as well as family about her condition. The family request the consultant not to keep the information away from the patient and the consultant agreed. I told the consultant as well as the family that It is not right to hide the truth from the patient. According to the nursing code of ethics I should tell truth to my patient I should not leave my patient in the dark by not telling the truth. I explain to the family that informing about the patient diagnosis and prognosis may let the patient to complete her unfinished task and spend quality time with her children and family. It may help in gaining peace of mind and lessen her worries. Patient also expressed desire to let her know if she don’t have more time to live because she has to complete her unfinished task and want to spend her last days with her loved ones. Not telling the truth will also create uncomfortable situation for me as her primary nurse and other health care professions who are involved in her care. Later the family decided to tell the truth to the patient. Patient was able to complete her unfinished task and was able to spend time with her family.

If my patient was not told about her terminal condition she would have been in the hospital with the trust that she had a tumor that can be cured and she would have been died without knowing that she had inoperable tumor. She also won’t be able to complete her unfinished task and spend time with her loved ones.

I had to do it again I would do the same thing again because nurses are always at the forefront in the hospital for patient care, so we must be committed to provide true information and support patient and their families when truth has been said, but in some case where telling truth may cause psychological harm to my patient I would agree with the family as well as doctor’s decision of not telling the truth to my patient.