

# Nursing Ethics

Porterville College



PCC



# Nursing Ethics:

- A system of principles governing the conduct of a nurse. It deals with the relationship of the nurse to the patient, the patient's family, associates and fellow nurses, and society at large.

# Nursing Standards:

- The criteria established by professional nursing organizations that describe peer expectations for safe, competent, ethical performance of professional responsibilities.
- Documents such as American Nurses' Association (ANA) Standards of Professional Performance describe general behaviors expected of all nurses.

# Ethics:

- A systematic study of what you ought to do in a given situation.
- An ethical system is a system of ‘**moral standards and values**’ that guide right and wrong.
- These are standards that govern human conduct. Ethics do not give clear cut answers, only guidelines of possible behavior.

# Terms...

- **Morals**: lessons of an experience
- **Values**: estimate of worth.
- **Prejudices**: preconceived opinion without adequate basis.
- **Individual differences**: influence our perceptions and decisions.

Throughout time, philosophers have wrangled with the concepts of ethical human behavior.

There are two basic schools of thought:

- **Idealism**
- **Realism**

# Idealism:

- 1<sup>st</sup> proposed by Plato 427?-347? B.C.

Belief that truth can be known by reasoning alone.

Example: Rene Descartes (1596-1650), spent his life trying to prove/disprove the existence of God. All he could really prove is that God existed based on the fact that he (Rene) was capable of thought. His most widely known statement, “*I think, therefore I am.*” Idealist query: If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it, does it make noise?

# Realism:

- Attributed to Aristotle 384-322 B.C.
- Opposite of Idealism. It is the doctrine that material objects exist in themselves, apart from the mind's consciousness of them. To Aristotle, if the tree falls, it makes a noise, period. No one needs to be there to hear it. Sartre's and Camus' Existentialism falls under the general heading of realism. These philosophers would say: "*I am, therefore I think.*"

# Code for Nurses

- The American Nurse's Association has developed a Code for Nurses. This document is sometimes referred to as the Ethical Code for Nurses.

# A.N.A. Code of ethics: highlights

- The nurse provides services with respect for human dignity and the uniqueness of the client unrestricted by consideration of social or economic status; personal attributes, or the nature of the health problems.

# Point 2

- The nurse safeguards the client's right to privacy by judiciously protecting information of a confidential matter.

# Point 3

- The nurse acts to safeguard the client and the public when health care and safety are affected by incompetent, unethical, or illegal practices of any person.

# Point 4

- The nurse assumes responsibility and accountability for individual nursing judgments and actions.

# Point 5

- The nurse maintains competence in nursing.

# Point 6

- The nurse exercises informed judgment and uses individual competence and qualifications as criteria in seeking consultation, accepting responsibilities, and delegating nursing activities to others.

# Point 7

- The nurse participates in activities that contribute to the ongoing development of the profession's body of knowledge.

# Point 8

- The nurse participates in the profession's efforts to implement and improve standards of nursing.

# Point 9

- The nurse participates in the profession's efforts to establish and maintain conditions of employment conducive to high quality nursing care.

# Point 10

- The nurse participates in the profession's effort to protect the public from misinformation and misrepresentation and to maintain the integrity of nursing.

# Point 11

- The nurse collaborates with members of health professions and other citizens in promoting community and national efforts to meet the health needs of the public.

# Patient Advocacy and Rights

- Advocate: represents the therapeutic needs of the patient. The advocate may serve as a Mediator between the doctor and patient relationship, ensuring best individualized treatment.

# Confidentiality

- Information the health care team obtains from or about a pt. That is considered to be privileged and cannot be disclosed to a third party without the pt.'s consent. In some instances when the information is important to public health, it may be illegal not to disclose the data.

# Patient Bill of Rights

- Mandates that the pt. Has a right to considerate and respectful care and to receive information prior to start of any procedure and or treatment.