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**Right Thing To Do**

**Nursing Situation:**

**Directions:** Read the following situation and make notes about how you would respond based on your own beliefs of the *right thing to do*. Then read the Code of Ethics governing the action of the selected health occupation and find the section in the code that speaks to the issue. Will your response be the same? Be prepared to discuss the situations in small groups in class.

**Situation:** Connie is a 24-year old Asian American woman who was brought to the emergency room by paramedics following a drive-by shooting that caused an automobile accident in which her husband was killed and two year old was seriously injured. Connie suffered head injuries in the accident and was unconscious for a period of three days, but is now responding appropriately with intermittent periods of agitation and is expected to fully recover. Her child was discharged after 24 hours observation to her parents who arrived from another part of the state when they heard of the accident. They are both professional people, very knowledgeable and involved in her care and the care of her child. They are very cooperative, and are actually the only ones who can calm Connie down when she becomes agitated. They have insisted that she not be told of her husband's death. The physicians, nurses and social workers have tried to discuss the ethical and psychological implications of this decision with them, but they are insistent that this knowledge would hinder their daughter's progress significantly and insist that they will tell her when the time is right.

<u>Right thing to do</u>	Related Element of ICN Code of Ethics

What would you do if Connie asks about her husband? What factors did you consider when making your decision? List the positive and negative factors in the situation and the implications of your decision on the relationship with Connie and with her parents.

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**Right Thing To Do**

**Radiology Technologist Situation:**

**Directions:** Read the following situation and make notes about how you would respond based on your own beliefs of the *right thing to do*. Then read the Code of Ethics governing the action of the selected health occupation and find the section in the code that speaks to the issue. Will your response be the same? Be prepared to discuss the situations in small groups in class.

**Situation:** You are working in a community clinic with a Radiology Department. A 24 year-old man is brought in to the clinic by his girlfriend for a chief complaint of lower abdominal pain. An abdominal series is ordered. As you position the patient for the examination, you notice blood on the back of his gown. When you ask him about it, he burst into tears and says that he was assaulted on his way home from a bar and begs you not to tell anyone. How will you respond? What is the basis for your response?

<u>Right thing to do</u>	Related Element of ASRT Code of Ethics

When you check his chart, you note that this information was not revealed to the physician or the nurse taking the initial assessment. What factors may have contributed to the patient's act of withholding this significant information? What is your legal duty at this point?

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**Right Thing To Do**

**Dental Hygiene Situation:**

**Directions:** Read the following situation and make notes about how you would respond based on your own beliefs of the *right thing to do*. Then read the Code of Ethics governing the action of the selected health occupation and find the section in the code that speaks to the issue. Will your response be the same? Be prepared to discuss the situations in small groups in class.

**Situation:** You are a newly employed dental hygienist in a busy dental practice and are treating a patient for the first time who has been seeing the previous hygienist every three months for scaling procedures as she is a heavy calculus former. She mentions to you that her mouth is so sore after the previous procedures that she is always reluctant to come back.

Identify the various perspectives to consider in this situation and rate their relative value in making a decision about how to proceed?

You decide to discuss the situation with the patient, telling her that there are two options that you can consider with her. The first is to follow the same procedure as the previous hygienist, being especially gentle. The second would be to perform a partial scaling on this visit and prescribe a home care program and a return visit for a deeper scaling. The patient chose the second option, scheduled a return visit, and requested a review of home care instructions. The patient left the office praising your teaching and your thorough and gentle treatment.

The dentist reprimanded you in front of the staff for taking too much time with the patient and scheduling a return visit, stating that home care instructions were a waste of time as patient's rarely followed them.

Justify both options on the following chart and identify the related element in the Code of Ethics.

<u>Right thing to do</u>	Related Element of ADHA Code of Ethics

How, when and where would you respond to the dentist? What are the issues in the situation that you need to address? Why? What factors will you consider in communicating with the dentist?

Source: Ethical Questions in Dentistry. <http://www.cpmcnet.columbia.edu>

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**Right Thing To Do**

**EMT Situation:**

**Directions:** Read the following situation and make notes about how you would respond based on your own beliefs of the *right thing to do*. Then read the Code of Ethics governing the action of the selected health occupation and find the section in the code that speaks to the issue. Will your response be the same? Be prepared to discuss the situations in small groups in class.

**Situation:** You are working the 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. shift as a paramedic on a two-person team in a busy metropolitan area. Even though your partner is scheduled to supervise a paramedic intern on her third shift, he has asked you to take over as he is feeling “under the weather”. You notice that he appears very sleepy, his speech is slurred and his gait is unsteady. As you are deciding how to handle the situation, you get a call and he gets into the driver’s seat.

What are the possible options in this situation?

Does the fact that you have a paramedic intern with you enter into the decision making in this situation? Can the intern take over for the impaired paramedic, while you drive the ambulance?

What are possible causes for his behavior?

What is your primary responsibility?

Are you legally or ethically bound to report this situation? When? To whom?

<u>Right thing to do</u>	Related Element of EMT Code of Ethics

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**Right Thing To Do**

**Respiratory Care Situation:**

**Directions:** Read the following situation and make notes about how you would respond based on your own beliefs of the *right thing to do*. Then read the Code of Ethics governing the action of the selected health occupation and find the section in the code that speaks to the issue. Will your response be the same? Be prepared to discuss the situations in small groups in class.

**Situation:** You are working the night shift in a small community hospital. The respiratory therapist on the previous shift is working full time, in addition to taking a full time class load and parenting a two year old. He appears disheveled when you arrive for your shift and seems to have just awakened. You have noticed that immediately after report, you receive calls from several nurses to give early treatments to the patients requiring respiratory therapy. You check the charting and see that the prescribed assessments and treatments were charted as given at the appropriate times. However, your assessment clearly demonstrates that the patients have worsened as if they have not been receiving treatments. One of the patients remarks that he has not had a treatment since 4:00 p.m. The treatment was charted at 4:00 and 8:00 p.m.

Right thing to do	Related Element of Resp. Care Code of Ethics

What are the possible causes of the patient's worsening respiratory assessments?

Do you suspect that the respiratory therapist is charting, but not giving the treatments?

What is the most appropriate action and why?

**Right Thing To Do**

**Nursing Situation:**

**Directions:** Read the following situation and make notes about how you would respond based on your own beliefs of the *right thing to do*. Then read the Code of Ethics governing the action of the selected health occupation and find the section in the code that speaks to the issue. Will your response be the same? Be prepared to discuss the situations in small groups in class.

**Situation:** Connie is a 24-year old Asian American woman who was brought to the emergency room by paramedics following a drive-by shooting that caused an automobile accident in which her husband was killed and 2 year old was seriously injured. Connie suffered head injuries in the accident and was unconscious for a period of 3 days, but is now responding appropriately with intermittent periods of agitation and is expected to fully recover. Her child was discharged after 24 hours observation to her parents who arrived from another part of the state when they heard of the accident. They are both professional people, very knowledgeable and involved in her care and the care of her child. They are very cooperative, and are actually the only ones who can calm her down when she becomes agitated. They have insisted that she not be told of her husband’s death. The physicians, nurses and social workers have tried to discuss the ethical and psychological implications of this decision with them, but they are insistent that this knowledge would hinder their daughter’s progress significantly and insist that they will tell her when the time is right.

<u>Right thing to do</u>	Related Element of ICN Code of Ethics
<p><i>There is no one right answer to this section. As the instructor you are looking for diverse responses based on cultural and religious belief systems, as well as personally developed value systems. An advantage of this type of discussion is openness and awareness of diverse beliefs and an awareness of one’s own bias.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nurse’s primary responsibility is to the people requiring nursing care.</li> <li>2. In providing care, the nurse promotes an environment in which human rights, values, customs and spiritual beliefs of the individual, family and community are respected.</li> </ol> <p>Discussion will center which ethical standard takes precedence in the two seemingly conflicting elements in this situation. An important factor in making this decision is that the patient is now coherent and as such, is your primary concern.</p>

What would you do if Connie asks about her husband? What factors did you consider when making your decision? List the positive and negative factors in the situation and the implications of your decision on the relationship with Connie and with her parents.

*It is clear that Connie will ask about her husband. Family should be supported in the belief that her periods of agitation may be in part aggravated by the fact that she does not know, or that her questions are going unanswered. Social service, chaplain services and nursing should work together to let the family know that if she does ask in a lucid period, that they must tell her.*

**Right Thing To Do**

**Radiology Technologist Situation:**

**Directions:** Read the following situation and make notes about how you would respond based on your own beliefs of the *right thing to do*. Then read the Code of Ethics governing the action of the selected health occupation and find the section in the code that speaks to the issue. Will your response be the same? Be prepared to discuss the situations in small groups in class.

**Situation:** You are working in a community clinic with a Radiology Department. A 24 year-old man is brought in to the clinic by his girlfriend for a chief complaint of lower abdominal pain. An abdominal series is ordered. As you position the patient for the examination, you notice blood on the back of his gown. When you ask him about it, he burst into tears and says that he was assaulted on his way home from a bar and begs you not to tell anyone. How will you respond?

*You will need to tell him that his privacy will be respected, but that you must report the assault to the police for investigation. His confidential information will not be reported by the health care facility to his girlfriend.*

What is the basis for your response?

*Basis for the response is the ASRT Code of Ethics specified below.*

Right thing to do	Related Element of ASRT Code of Ethics
<p>See Nursing Ethics-App.II-7f</p> <p><i>You are also opening discussion about legal implications of the situation, as well as biases related to sexuality.</i></p>	<p><i>Respects confidences entrusted in the course of professional practice, respects the patient's right to privacy and reveals confidential information only as required by law or to protect the welfare of the individual or the community.</i></p>

When you check his chart, you note that this information was not revealed to the physician or the nurse taking the initial assessment.

What factors may have contributed to the patient's act of withholding this significant information?

*Several factors may have been involved in withholding the information.*

- *His girlfriend may have been in the room.*
- *He may have been embarrassed.*
- *He may have been under the influence.*

What is your legal duty at this point?

*Your legal duty at this point is to tell the patient that you must report this information to the physician, as the assault is significant and could have caused damage which is causing his abdominal pain. He needs further, more extensive examination and protection from STD's*

## Right Thing To Do

### Dental Hygiene Situation:

**Directions:** Read the following situation and make notes about how you would respond based on your own beliefs of the *right thing to do*. Then read the Code of Ethics governing the action of the selected health occupation and find the section in the code that speaks to the issue. Will your response be the same? Be prepared to discuss the situations in small groups in class.

**Situation:** You are a newly employed dental hygienist in a busy dental practice and are treating a patient for the first time who has been seeing the previous hygienist every 3 months for scaling procedures as she is a heavy calculus former. She mentions to you that her mouth is so sore after the previous procedures that she is always reluctant to come back.

*Identify the various perspectives to consider in this situation and rate their relative value in making a decision about how to proceed?*

1. *Patient complains of soreness following previous procedures*
2. *Potential of losing patient to follow up*
3. *Consideration that you are new to the practice and unfamiliar with the climate of the office*
4. *Need to support other hygienists reputation*
5. *Knowledge that there are other options for her care that are more comfortable*

You decide to discuss the situation with the patient, telling her that there are two options that you can consider with her. The first is to follow the same procedure as the previous hygienist, being especially gentle. The second would be to perform a partial scaling on this visit and prescribe a home care program and a return visit for a deeper scaling. The patient chose the second option, scheduled a return visit, and requested a review of home care instructions. The patient left the office praising your teaching and your thorough and gentle treatment.

The dentist reprimanded you in front of the staff for taking too much time with the patient and scheduling a return visit, stating that home care instructions were a waste of time as patient's rarely followed them.

Justify both options on the following chart and identify the related element in the Code of Ethics.

Right thing to do	Related Element of ADHA Code of Ethics
<p>Option 1: Follow the same procedure as the previous hygienist, taking care to be especially gentle. Validation: This procedure is within the Standard of Practice and does not require a return visit.</p>	<p>As both options follow the standard of practice/care, both are appropriate. The only factor that has not been addressed is the additional cost of dividing the visits and potential out of pocket expenses not covered by insurance.</p>
<p>Option 2: Perform a partial scaling, prescribe a structured home care program and schedule a return visit for deeper scaling Validation: This procedure is also within the standard of practice and totally involves the patient in her care. It is also the choice of the patient.</p>	<p>The primary element in the ADHA Code of Ethics is found in #7. Standards of Professional Responsibility to clients: "Provide clients with the information necessary to make informed decisions about their oral health and encourage their full participation in treatment decisions and goals.</p> <p>The second element that applies here is found in the same section, bullet 1-"Provide oral healthcare utilizing high levels of professional knowledge, judgment, and skill.</p>

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## Right Thing To Do

### Dental Hygiene Situation (*continued*):

The dentist reprimanded you in front of the staff for taking too much time with the patient and scheduling a return visit, stating that home care instructions were a waste of time as patient's rarely followed them.

How, when and where would you respond to the dentist?

*The key word in the above sentence is "respond". Clearly, several emotions will cloud the issue when reprimanded in the manner stated. It is wise to defer a response until these emotions abate. Any response, either verbal or non-verbal, at this point, would be a reaction rather than a response. It is essential for the calm of the office and the comfort of the patients not to confront the dentist openly, even though you were not shown the same respect. The best thing to do at this point is to acknowledge the dentist's communication and leave to go about your duties.*

*At the end of the day, ask to speak with the dentist in a private place for the purpose of discussing the event and your role as hygienist. If he/she is unavailable at that point, schedule a time to meet later in the week. This action is consistent with the Code of Ethics relating to Standards of Professional Responsibility ... to employees and employers. (...develop relationships in ways that are honest, responsible, open and candid and manage conflicts constructively.).*

What are the issues in the situation that you need to address? Why?

*The primary issue to address in the situation is your scope of practice as a dental hygienist. You have the responsibility to the client to "provide the highest level of oral healthcare utilizing high levels of professional knowledge, judgment and skill". In addition, you have the responsibility to "provide clients with the information necessary to make informed decisions about their oral health and encourage full participation in treatment decisions and goals."*

*The secondary issue to address in the situation is the fact that you wish to be treated as the professional that you are and request that further complaints about your practice be shared with you in private. It is best to state this as assertively as possible and not label the dentist's behavior as unprofessional or uncivilized.*

What factors will you consider in communicating with the dentist?

*Unfortunately, you do need to consider that you are the "new kid on the block". Confronting the issue, even in a constructive way as indicated above, may lead to more difficulties. However, you also need to consider whether you want to work in such an environment if the situation is not resolved.*

**Right Thing To Do**

**EMT Situation:**

**Directions:** Read the following situation and make notes about how you would respond based on your own beliefs of the *right thing to do*. Then read the Code of Ethics governing the action of the selected health occupation and find the section in the code that speaks to the issue. Will your response be the same? Be prepared to discuss the situations in small groups in class.

**Situation:** You are working the 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. shift as a paramedic on a 2-person team in a busy metropolitan area. Even though your partner is scheduled to supervise a paramedic intern on her third shift, he has asked you to take over as he is feeling “under the weather”. You notice that he appears very sleepy, his speech is slurred and his gait is unsteady. As you are deciding how to handle the situation, you get a call and he gets into the driver’s seat.

What are the possible options in this situation?

- #1 *He cannot drive, nor can he care for the patient on the call, no matter what the cause of the above behaviors.*
- #2 *You need to contact your supervisor immediately to report that you need another paramedic before you can take the call.*
- #3 *Notify dispatch that you cannot take the call.*

Does the fact that you have a paramedic intern with you enter into the decision making in this situation? Can the intern take over for the impaired paramedic, while you drive the ambulance?

*The fact that you have a paramedic intern with you has no bearing on the decision. The intern cannot take over for the impaired paramedic. See Related Element of EMT Code of Ethics listed below.(#2)*

What are possible causes for his behavior?

*The impaired paramedic could be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.  
 The impaired paramedic could have a medical problem: migraine headache, flu, diabetic reaction, etc.*

What is your primary responsibility?

*Your primary responsibility is the protection of the patient. (Code of Ethics – “A fundamental responsibility of the EMT is to conserve life, to alleviate suffering, to promote health, to do no harm, and to encourage the quality and equal availability of emergency medical care.”)*

Are you legally or ethically bound to report this situation? When? To whom?

*Yes, you are legally and ethically bound to report the situation immediately to your supervisor.*

Right thing to do	Related Element of EMT Code of Ethics
<p><i>As you are asking the students for their opinion on the right thing to do, all answers are open for discussion. You are looking for answers that promote patient safety over those that protect the partner. However, reporting is in the long run, protecting the partner, no matter what the cause of the impairment.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The EMT shall maintain professional competence and demonstrate concern for the competence of other members of the EMS health care team.</i></li> <li>2. <i>The EMT has an obligation to protect the public by not delegating to a person less qualified, any service which requires the professional competence of an EMT.</i></li> <li>3. <i>The EMT refuses to participate in unethical procedures, and assumes the responsibility to expose incompetence or unethical conduct of others to the appropriate authority in a proper and professional manner.</i></li> </ol>

**Right Thing To Do**

**Respiratory Care Situation:**

**Directions:** Read the following situation and make notes about how you would respond based on your own beliefs of the *right thing to do*. Then read the Code of Ethics governing the action of the selected health occupation and find the section in the code that speaks to the issue. Will your response be the same? Be prepared to discuss the situations in small groups in class.

**Situation:** You are working the night shift in a small community hospital. The RT on the previous shift is working full time, in addition to taking a full time class load and parenting a 2 year old. He appears disheveled when you arrive for your shift and seems to have just awakened. You have noticed that immediately after report, you receive calls from several nurses to give early treatments to the patients requiring RT. You check the charting and see that the prescribed assessments and treatments were charted as given at the appropriate times. However, your assessment clearly demonstrates that the patients have worsened as if they have not been receiving treatments. One of the patients remarks that he has not had a treatment since 4:00 p.m. The treatment was charted at 4:00 and 8:00 p.m.

<u>Right thing to do</u>	Related Element of Resp. Care Code of Ethics
As a starting point, you are looking for answers that support the actions of : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Treating the patient’s symptoms appropriately</li> <li>2. Professional communication with the RT on the previous shift</li> <li>3. Report to supervisor your suspicions</li> </ol>	<i>Refuse to participate in illegal or unethical acts, and refuse to conceal illegal, unethical or incompetent acts of others.</i>

What are the possible causes of the patient’s worsening respiratory assessments?

1. *Patient’s have not received the prescribed treatments.*
2. *Patient’s conditions could have worsened, although it is unlikely that all the patient’s would have worsened at the same time.*
3. *Perhaps the medications were administered incorrectly.*

Do you suspect that the RT is charting, but not giving the treatments?

1. *The situation is suspicious, but I would need more information.*
2. *I wonder why the nurses on the previous shift have not reported a worsening status or a lack of treatments. The patient’s would have probably asked if they were alert, as one obviously was.*

What is the most appropriate action and why?

1. *The most appropriate action is to treat the patients and reassess after treatment for improvement.*
2. *A quick review of the nursing, RT and physician progress notes on each patient would give further information about the progress and pattern of each patient.*
3. *Discuss the situation with the RT in question to give him the chance to respond to the allegations as charting treatments that were not performed is falsifying records.*
4. *Discuss the situation with the RT supervisor.*
5. *Prepare an Report of Unusual Occurrence according to hospital protocol.*