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Understanding and Applying Ethical Standards in Decision-Making



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Objectives

1. Recognize the importance of ethical approaches towards physical therapy provision.
2. Understand ethical competencies and physical therapy treatment and planning.
3. Identify steps to integrate patients into relative decision-making pertaining to their treatment plan, priorities, and implementation.

Goals

- Recognize the importance of ethical approaches towards physical therapy provision
- Understand ethical competencies and physical therapy treatment and planning
- Identify steps to integrate patients into relative decision-making pertaining to their treatment plan, priorities, and implementation

The American Physical Therapy Association provides oversight and credentialing to physical therapy professionals

- **Provides training and credentials**
- **Establishes core values and ethical standards**

The American Physical Therapy Association provides oversight and credentialing to physical therapy professionals

- **Code of ethics includes the following:**
 - **physical therapists shall provide the information necessary to allow patients or their surrogates to make informed decisions about physical therapist care or participation in clinical research**
 - **physical therapists shall collaborate with patients and clients to empower them in decisions about their healthcare**

Physical Therapy

- **The Institute for Health and Care Excellence, Canadian Pain Task Force, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommend that physical therapists should consider (Gervais-Hupe et al., 2023):**
 - **patients' needs should be addressed through patient-centered care**

Physical Therapy

- **The Institute for Health and Care Excellence, Canadian Pain Task Force, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommend that physical therapists should consider (Gervais-Hupe et al., 2023):**
 - **patients and therapists, respectively, should collaborate on individualized care plans**

Physical Therapy

- **The Institute for Health and Care Excellence, Canadian Pain Task Force, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recommend that physical therapists should consider (Gervais-Hupe et al., 2023):**
 - **clinicians often provide care based on their preferences rather than on the respective patient (Gervais-Hupe)**

Physical Therapy

- **a lack of consideration presents ethical issues when ignoring “patients’ perceived needs could lead to poor clinical outcomes and low satisfaction”**
 - **lack of patient autonomy**
 - **lack of patient self-determination**

Ethical Issues and Physical Therapy

- **Addressing ethical issues is a considerable component of the role of the physical therapist (Naamanka et al., 2023)**
 - **PT must be ethically competent**
 - **PT must recognize that ethics are as integral to the profession as applied clinical knowledge and skills**

Ethical Issues and Physical Therapy

- **The World Confederation of Physical Therapy has proposed that ethical competency is a core PT competency (Naamanka)**
 - **key element of best solutions**
 - **reduce at-work stress**
 - **improve community**

Ethical Issues and Physical Therapy

- **Relative to physical therapy, ethical competence refers to (Naamanka et al., 2023):**
 - **strength of character**: courage to act ethically
 - **ethical awareness**: attention, intuition, reaction to situations
 - **moral judgment**: ability to determine “ethically correct or wrong” (Naamanka); value-driven

Ethical Issues and Physical Therapy

- **Relative to physical therapy, ethical competence refers to (Naamanka et al., 2023):**
 - **desire to do good**: establishing priorities; willingness to prioritize and act in consideration of values and morals
 - **decision-making**: evaluating principles, needs, and beliefs in each situation; critical thinking

Ethical Issues and Decision-Making

- **For a physical therapist to engage in decision-making rooted in ethical standards there must be support from management/leadership within the organization (Naamanka et al., 2023)**
 - **create support for ethical issues**
 - **promote discussion and exchange of ideas**

Ethical Issues and Decision-Making

- **For a physical therapist to engage in decision-making rooted in ethical standards there must be support from management/leadership within the organization (Naamanka et al., 2023)**
 - **experience and knowledge should be shared**
 - **environment should include empathy for staff and patient**

Ethical Issues and Decision-Making

- **For a physical therapist to engage in decision-making rooted in ethical standards there must be support from management/leadership within the organization (Naamanka et al., 2023)**
 - **staff must remember that patient perspective matters**

Ethical Issues and Decision-Making

- **PT must recognize that the workday includes ongoing decisions driven by ethical standards and moral values are a part of the work**
 - **according to Naamanka et al. (2023), “most physical therapists encounter ethical problems...but the ability to recognize ethical problems varies”**

Ethical Issues and Decision-Making

- PT must develop ethical consciousness to recognize ethical standards and situations including:
 - incompatibility of patient needs and available resources
 - unethical behavior of healthcare professionals
 - realization of patients' autonomy (or lack of autonomy)
 - issues about competency
 - decisions and determination challenges
 - “asymmetrical power between the therapist and patient”

Best Practices and Physical Therapy

- Maintaining ethical standards applies to decision-making in all professional interactions (Stenmark et al., 2020)
 - improves health outcomes
 - develops patient retention and loyalty
 - improves job satisfaction

Best Practices and Physical Therapy

- **Maintaining ethical standards applies to decision-making in all professional interactions (Stenmark et al., 2020)**
 - **provides clarity with well-defined expectations for both healthcare professional and patient**

Best Practices and Physical Therapy

- **Ethical standards are imperative for best practices and delivery of patient-centered care**

Ethical Issues and Decision-Making

- **Ethical decision-making can mitigate unethical behavior**
 - **staff should be able to make decisions based on ethical standing**
 - **unethical behavior “resulting from unethical decisions can cost organizations billions of dollars each year” (Stenmark et al., 2020)**

Ethical Issues and Decision-Making

- **Ethical decision-making can mitigate unethical behavior**
 - **in healthcare unethical decisions can impact morbidity and mortality**

Ethical Issues and Decision-Making

- **Shared decision-making is a beneficial, collective process between the PT and patient, to determine treatment plan ethically, in consideration of clinical perspective and patient desires and inputs**

Ethical Issues and Decision-Making

- **According to Moore and Kaplan (2018), shared decision-making is underutilized in physical therapy**
 - **patients often report “minimal involvement in their care decisions”**
 - **patients have asked for “clinician and patient shared decision-making education”**

Ethical Issues and Decision-Making

- **According to Moore and Kaplan (2018), shared decision-making is underutilized in physical therapy**
 - **post-stroke rehab patients and patients with chronic low back pain felt disempowered by their lack of involvement**

Decision-Making and Patient Care

- **Integrating shared decision-making techniques into PT practice can help further (Moore and Kaplan 2018):**
 - **best practice**
 - **patient-centered care practice**
 - **identify priorities**

Decision-Making and Patient Care

- **Integrating shared decision-making techniques into PT practice can help further (Moore and Kaplan 2018):**
 - **unveil uncertainties**
 - **engage patients with multiple chronic conditions**
 - **sustainable improvement and behavior change**

Decision-Making and Patient Care

- **According to Moore and Kaplan, patients with three or more chronic conditions:**
 - **spend average of 50-71 hours/month on health-related activities to try to remain compliant**
 - **consider holistic approach to addressing disease burden**
 - **comprehensive goal-setting**
 - **full-spectrum treatment planning**

Physical Therapy and Decision-Making Approaches

- **Physical therapists can integrate decision-making approaches that are quality, collaborative, and “integrated with patients’ values and preferences for managing their health problems” (Moore and Kaplan 2018)**

Physical Therapy and Decision-Making Approaches

- **Patients with co-occurring illnesses may experience the following when engaged in this ethical care delivery method:**
 - **enhanced patient-centered care**
 - **increased patient satisfaction**
 - **increased engagement from the PT and patient**

Physical Therapy and Decision-Making Approaches

- **Patients with co-occurring illnesses may experience the following when engaged in this ethical care delivery method:**
 - **increased adherence to protocol**
 - **improved ability to self-manage illness**
 - **improved quality of life and life satisfaction**

Decision-Making and Patient-Centered Care

- **Patient-centered care includes increased patient involvement with all health decisions**
 - **provides patients with insight into all options**
 - **patients do not feel rushed or pressured**
 - **patients are more informed**

Decision-Making and Patient-Centered Care

- **Patient-centered care includes increased patient involvement with all health decisions**
 - **PT must be prepared for input**
 - **consider importance and validity of patient perspective**
 - **understand limitations and interests**

Decision-Making and Patient-Centered Care

- **At times healthcare professionals “are driven to achieve positive medical outcomes that might be inconsistent with patient preferences” (Moore and Kaplan 2018) which can present an ethical dilemma**

Decision-Making and Patient-Centered Care

- **Involving the patient into the decision-making process pertaining to their health and wellbeing is an ethical presentation that relies on evidence-based practice, shared information, and consideration of patient needs, expectations, and priorities**

Decision-Making and Patient-Centered Care

- **Engaging the patient into the decision-making plan considers ethical aspects of healthcare (Moore and Kaplan 2018):**
 - **informed consent**
 - **autonomy**
 - **patient rights**
 - **improved clinical care**

Decision-Making and Patient-Centered Care

- **Engaging the patient into the decision-making plan considers ethical aspects of healthcare (Moore and Kaplan 2018):**
 - **improved outcomes and disease management**
 - **treatment plan**
 - **reducing health disparities**
 - **medication management**
 - **reducing cost**

PT and Shared Decision-Making

- **In PT practice shared decision-making has been integrated (Moore and Kaplan 2018):**
 - **home healthcare**
 - **outpatient settings**
 - **inpatient**
 - **long-term care**
 - **emergency department**

PT and Shared Decision-Making

- **PT patients with chronic conditions have benefited:**
 - stroke
 - cancer
 - diabetes
 - sciatica/low back pain
 - rheumatoid arthritis
 - osteoarthritis
 - osteoporosis
 - obesity
 - dementia
 - autism

Steps Toward Collaborative Decision-Making

- **PT communicates decisions to be made pertaining to patients' needs and trajectory of condition**
 - options
 - patient participation
 - determine priorities

Steps Toward Collaborative Decision-Making

- **PT and patient discuss condition(s), goals, and treatment options**
 - **present evidence-based information**
 - **discuss pros/cons**
 - **recognize that situation can change**

Steps Toward Collaborative Decision-Making

- **Make, affirm, and implement decision**
 - **summarize plan**
 - **confirm mutual understanding**
 - **recognize priorities and goals**
 - **confirm insight into condition and consequences**

Steps Toward Collaborative Decision-Making

- Make, affirm, and implement decision
 - determine expected outcomes
 - the plan
 - compliance
 - outcomes
 - risk management
 - coordination of care

Ethical Decision-Making Components/Outcomes

Attributes (Moore and Kaplan 2018)	Ethical application for decision-making in physical therapy
Knowledge	Patient increased their understanding of their condition and the impact of their choices on their wellbeing
Skills	Patient became competent to adjust their self-care for diabetes; medication management; interpersonal skills improved, shared information pertinent to wellbeing and disease management
Social/Professional role and identity	Patient appreciated a method of acting when receiving treatment; more engaged with PT when receiving treatment
Beliefs about capabilities	Self-confidence and self-efficacy developed; patient discovered they could take better care of themselves; sense of independence
Optimism	Patient began to believe they could improve, heal, recover, and contribute to society when they participated in their wellness
Beliefs about consequence	Accepted truth and validity; learned to trust PT; changed behaviors when they realized things improved

Ethical Decision-Making Components/Outcomes

Attributes (Moore and Kaplan 2018)	Ethical application for decision-making in physical therapy
Reinforcement	Increased individual probability of favorable response; behavior modification
Intentions	Patient made concerted, meaningful choice to change behavior to achieve a specific outcome; found hope and inspiration
Goals	Patient set action plan to achieve their “mental representation of change;” experienced buy-in that inspired change and motivation, accomplishment
Memory and attention processes	Learned to integrate information in a meaningful manner; maintained focus and learned to modify and adjust if necessary
Environmental context	Became aware of things that could impact their behavior and adjusted accordingly; found strength, hope, and learned to plan
Behavioral regulation	Learned about themselves; self-monitored and self-regulated, gained strength planning and overcoming

Code of Ethics: American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)

Fundamental to the Code of Ethics is the special obligation of physical therapists to empower, educate, and enable those with impairments, activity limitations, participation restrictions, and disabilities to facilitate greater independence, health, wellness, and enhanced quality of life

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