

Ethics After Hours



Emergency NYC, ep. 5: No Guts No Glory Documentary

Summary

In this episode of Emergency: NYC, surgeons at Cohen Children's Medical Center collaborate with Dr. Langer as he performs a dangerous procedure on a young toddler who has a tumour in his brain that causes severe seizures. At Lenox Hill, Dr. Boockvar performs surgery on a 23-year-old medical student with hydrocephalus who has opted to have a shunt placed to drain the spinal fluid building up in his brain. The episode also follows several other patients, including two young men are treated in hospital after being shot, and first responder Vicky's 94-year uncle, who is taken to hospital after having fallen out of bed.

Duration: 41 mins. 21 sec.

Developed by: Ruthie Shatz and Adi Barash

Series editor: Ruthie Shatz

Released:

Available on Netflix (Original Netflix Production)

Ethical Issues

Informed Consent

Surrogate decision-making

Questions for discussion:

- What stood out the most to you in this episode and why?
- Dr. John Boockvar is reflecting on benefits and burdens associated with having more in-depth medical knowledge about surgical procedures and the risks they may involve. He argues that for the medical student under his care, the in-depth knowledge is likely an advantage because he is making a very informed decision. However, he also thinks that most of the time it is bliss to not know or fully comprehend the risk of a procedure.
 - Do you agree with Boockvar's evaluation of the situation? Why/why not?
- As surrogate decision-makers, the toddlers parents opt to have their son undergo high risk brain surgery. Dr. Langer, who performs the surgery, emphasizes that it is a dangerous procedure but says about his own willingness to perform it that, "Sometimes, to save people's lives, you have to take a risk."
 - Do you think it is possible (with or without in-depth medical knowledge) to fully comprehend the risks involved with dangerous medical procedures such as brain surgery?
 - What are some of the factors that may affect patients' and/or surrogate decision-makers' understanding of and willingness to take on the risks involved with procedures such as brain surgery?
 - What are some of limits of informed consent?