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What Is Everyday Ethics? A Review and a Proposal for an Integrative Concept Natalie Zizzo, Emily Bell, and Eric Racine, *The Journal of Clinical Ethics*, 2016¹

Everyday ethics refer to the day-to-day ethical issues faced by health care providers in dealing with patients. According to the authors, everyday ethics is not well considered or addressed within the context of bioethics, which has the tendency to focus primarily on dramatic ethics, i.e. ethical questions relating to acute care or technological advances. Based on a review of the term and its use in current academic literature, the authors identify the characteristic features of the term and its use. The authors propose a model of everyday ethics that builds on different ethical theories, and serves to detect shortcomings in bioethics – i.e. areas that are left unaddressed – and helps mobilize moral agents to address these shortcomings.

Characteristics of everyday ethics:

- Everyday ethics is frequently used in reference to nurses' encounters with patients, families or with other health care professionals in the health care setting.
- Everyday ethics is associated with multi-perspective studies looking at different groups' ethical experiences – e.g. health care professional, family, and patient perspectives on a specific issue.
- Everyday ethics is associated with practical clinical issues and reflecting 'real-life' problems encountered by health care professionals and patients. It is often used to describe ethical issues that differ from dramatic ethics.
- Many individual stakeholders are faced with everyday ethics issues, and these may be experienced differently by various stakeholders. The term is used in multiple contexts and is often associated with professionalism.
- Everyday ethics often refers to issues encountered by individuals on daily basis. The issues associated with the term are not always identified as ethical in nature and the ethical dimension of the issues may therefore not always be apparent to the individual stakeholder facing them.

Main arguments

¹ Zizzo, N.; Bell, E.; Racine, E. (2016): What Is Everyday Ethics? A Review and a Proposal for an Integrative Concept. *The Journal of Clinical Ethics*, 27: 2, 117-128.

Zizzo et al. argue for the importance of flagging everyday ethics as a concept in order to draw attention to values that may otherwise be overlooked and that may help in resolving issues regularly encountered in health care settings by various stakeholders. They propose an integrative model of everyday ethics that can help identify values, principles and theories necessary for considering ethical issues in daily practice.

Integrative everyday ethics is described as a model that uses different ethical theories as 'lenses', and the authors suggest that using more than one theory at a time can yield novel perspectives and solutions to ethical problems. Each theory (narrative ethics, virtue ethics, care ethics, clinical ethics, pragmatist ethics and feminist ethics) can bring in different perspectives on everyday ethical issues and thus reveal 'blind spots' of other theoretical approaches. In doing so, this integrative model has the potential to 'de-bias' bioethics.

Implications of an integrative model of everyday ethics:

Theoretical implications. The normative function of the concept is to play the role as detector of 'blind spots' in bioethics. A rigidly defined concept may limit the conceptual scope of everyday ethics.

Methodological implications. This model emphasizes the need for empirical investigation of stakeholder perspectives and experiences.

Practical implications. Drawing on different theories, the model has the potential to highlight various relevant practical contributions, such as different relational and contextual factors that need to be addressed.

Pedagogical implications. The everyday ethics model ties in with a wider range of teaching methods, such as role playing and patients' presentations, and may help to more fully convey experiential and personal perceptions of ethical situations.

Conclusion

The normative importance of everyday ethics lies in its potential to identify blind spots created as a result of bioethics' tendency to focus on dramatic ethics issues. Using different ethical theories as 'lenses' is useful for debiasing bioethics and for redirecting focus to everyday ethical issues that may otherwise be left unaddressed.