

Ethics after Hours



Savage Care Essay

Summary:¹ In this essay Dr. Ronald W. Dworkin question the need for bioethics and the use of bioethical principles. According to Dworkin, bioethics has little to offer doctors in terms of providing answers to help determine if specific actions are unethical or to resolve moral dilemmas in medicine. The field of bioethics focuses on theory and principles and is as such detached from the reality of medicine. Dworkin argues that doctors mainly draw on their own code of ethics, and when finding themselves in moral dilemmas it is often technological solutions and workarounds that provides the answer - not bioethics. While the field of bioethics recently has given more attention to healthcare providers experience of moral distress, Dworkin argues that bioethics does not pay attention to the specific experience of moral distress that doctors face daily in their interaction with patients. He concludes that bioethicists and clinical ethicists, have nothing to offer physicians in terms of alleviating moral distress, due to their lack of understanding of the visceral reality of medical practice and patient care.

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Available here: [Why bioethics cannot help doctors in actual medical practice | Aeon Essays](#)

Ethics Themes:

End-of-life decision-making

Beneficence

Uncertainty

Do no harm

Moral Distress

Questions for discussion:

- What was your initial reaction to this article?
 - What do you think of his perception of bioethics and clinical ethics?
- The author seems to be searching for binding rules or clear-cut answers to what is the right thing to do, but ethics doesn't necessarily offer that. How might talking through the clinical ethics issues help doctors and other clinicians in clinical decision-making?
- Discuss how medical uncertainty impact decision-making?

¹ This summary is

- How does clinical ethics, including bioethical principles come into play and how might it be helpful in this context?
- Discuss the following quote from the article: “Bioethicists say ethics is ‘central to a physician’s identity’, and that ethics is about compassion, empathy and virtue. But most doctors think quite differently. They think being a doctor is first and foremost a burden because the doctor’s moral sense and civilised sentiments are always playing defence against the savagery of physical existence.”