

Principle of autonomy essay example

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Principle of autonomy

The principle of autonomy refers to an individual's right to make a choice and the capacity to take action on that choice. The individuality of every person would be respected if autonomy is sustained. Daniels 2004 states that nurses should show respect to a client's right to decide and protect those clients who cannot decide on their own. The ethical principle of autonomy states that each competent individual has a right to establish his or her own course of action. Therefore the freedom to make choices depends on the client's to decide (Daniels, 2004).

Furthermore, informed consent is based on the client's right to decide for on their own accord. Respecting the principle of autonomy means that the nurse must accept the client's choices even when the nurse knows or believes that those choices are not in the client's best benefits (Daniels, 2004). The Patient Self-Determination act of 1990 obliges that a person admitted to a health care facility be informed of their mandate to self-determination. The client's directives need to be recognized, communicated, documented and executed (Daniels, 2004).

Even when it may be obvious that professionals in the health sector should full inform the patient about his or her diagnosis, discuss the forms of treatment available and obtain agreement to the treatment suggested but this may not always be the case if applied practically especially if the suggested means cause harmful either to the patient or others (Fletcher & Holt, 1995). (Fletcher & Holt, 1995) continue to state that respect for patient may not be an absolute principle. A patient may for example be engaged in such habits as smoking or alcohol and the health practitioner may try to

forcefully stop such a habit because it is not to the patient's benefit. If the patient is not willing to stop smoking or drinking then the health practitioner is guilty of violating the principle of autonomy. This is not ethically right according to the principle (Fletcher & Holt, 1995). Conclusively, the principle of autonomy may be directly harmful to oneself or indirectly a disadvantage to others and therefore perhaps is ethically incorrect in some cases.

References

- Daniels, R. (2004). *Nursing Fundamentals: Caring & Clinical Decision Making*. New York: Cengage Learning.
- Fletcher, N. & Holt, J. (1995). *Ethics, Law and Nursing*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.