

# Biomedical ethics philosophy assignment

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In discussing the difficult subject of biomedical ethics, there are different scenarios that play out differently because of people's views about morality. Consider the scenario of an eighty year-old man whom we will call Mr.. Simpson. Years of getting the flu with complications has left Mr.. Simpson lungs very weak and unable to take another year of the flu. In fact another year of the flu will likely kill him. He does not want the flu shot because he sincerely believes that the actual flu shot will give him the flu.

With further research, the doctor and the family find that Mr.. Simpson will accept an immune boosting shot only. If the physician lies to Mr.. Simpson about the injection then he will accept it. What it all boils down to is, if the physician tells the truth, then Mr.. Simpson will refuse the flu shot, likely contract the flu, and possibly die. On the other hand, if the physician lies to Mr.. Simpson, then he will accept the flu shot and potentially be okay for the next flu season. The dilemma lies In what the physician should do; lie to the patient or be truthful.

When It comes to Mr.. Simpson and the flu shot, the physician should tell the truth, plain and impel. If Mr.. Simpson refuses the flu shot, then he just refuses the flu shot and therefore he must deal with the consequences brought on by his actions and decisions. In this situation, the probability of death is not 100%, but it is known to be likely. This uncertainty must be weighed out and clearly defined. Taking a deeper look Into this situation, one must consider moral ethics, more specifically what It means to act morally. Acting morally Is always a difficult and unclear task.

We must also consider our obligations and duties, things that are done purely out of goodness and kindness, and not for recognition and reward; considerations of which actions are right and which actions are completely impermissible. We must also consider and evaluate the effectiveness and consequences of our actions. We must take into consideration laws, ordinances, and legal policies before making a decision to ensure that there are not any violations. In every aspect of society there are laws and policies put into effect for protection, health and safety. There is no lack of policies in the medical world.

Everyone must follow these laws and policies at all times and no one is exempt. We must also consider our reputations. Our reputations go before us. Even before a person actually meets you, they are able to make conclusions and generalizations based on what they have heard about you. Word of mouth travels faster than any other source of information. All you have to do is tell at least one person about a bad experience and the news will spread rapidly. When making a decision we should always consider the golden rule, which basically states that we should only treat others the way that we ourselves want to be treated.

For example if you do not want to be lied to, then do not lie to anyone else. This rule applies to nearly all aspects of life as it relates to our moral self. In many instances of the medical world, the average person lacks the knowledge involved in technical enterprises..... That are expressed in special vocabulary and unfamiliar concepts” (p. 9). For this reason, physicians must always ensure that patients know exactly what it is that

they are agreeing to or disagreeing with. All patients must be informed about the things that affect their immediate health and wellness.

Munson also adds that “ Patients without the proper scientific background, they argue, simply onto know what to make of the information”, (p. 9) that they are given. Along with this important information, physicians must ensure that patients are competent enough to make their own decisions. If not, then there must be someone appointed as a representative to make decisions on behalf of the patient. Here is another topic of consideration. Mr.. Simpson is eighty years old; but is he sane? Does he have the exact mental capacity to knowingly and safely make his own decisions about his health?

We also have to consider if he is mentally able to cook and dress himself and drive. These factors come into play when deciding on his treatment. It has been documented in Mr.. Simpson charts that his lungs have been weakened because he catches the flu year after year, and along with the flu he also develops bronchitis. After careful explanation, the physician and the family must determine and conclude if Mr.. Simpson fully understands what everything means. The doctors also need to accurately show Mr..

Simpson that the flu shot does not give people the flu, since this is what he strongly believes. When you are deceived by someone, you are unable to govern yourself in the appropriate manner. Meaning that, your decisions and actions are altered because of the lack of truth involved. When someone lies, they are explicitly confirming something that is false. Placebos, which are inactive ingredients, are given to patient when physicians believe that the

source of illness is not actually physical, but it is mental. Placebos violate both Mill and Kant ethical principles.

Although the family has requested that the doctor lie to the patient and tell him they are giving him a shot to “boost his immune system”, the doctor is held to a Geiger standard and is therefore responsible for any negative consequences caused by the deceitful actions. Even after all unsuccessful attempts at persuading Mr.. Simpson to get the flu shot have failed and he has explicitly been informed that if he gets the flu again that he will most likely die, Mr.. Simpson should be required to sign a consent form stating all the necessary information.

The doctor will sign along with the family member requesting that the doctor lie. Since physicians should always tell the truth, anything out of the ordinary should be documented. Although Mr.. Simpson wants to continue living he must know that refusing the flu shot may kill him. Mr.. Simpson has shown to everyone, both family and doctors that he is an autonomous human being capable of making wise and rational decisions. Lies are morally impermissible. Lies in the medical settings are even more morally impermissible, because peoples’ lives are at stake.

One should never lie because you always have to tell another lie to cover up the first one; then another and another. Suppose that Mr.. Simpson asks the doctor for the name of the so-called “immune boosting shot” so that he can recommend it to everyone he knows. Since there was no such shot given, the doctor must then come up with another lie to cover up the first lie, or

ultimately reveal the truth. Honesty in the beginning brings honesty in the get the flu shot because he never got it and he is fine (unknowingly).

When it comes to lying, it is extremely difficult for anyone, physicians included, to precisely know that telling a lie will cause a more favorable outcome than the truth. Many times the person telling the lies unsuccessfully predicts the consequences of his or her actions. Often lies go a lot further than their intended purpose, so it comes extremely difficult and nearly impossible for a person to be impartial in determining and weighing out the good versus the harm that his or her lie will bring.

Physicians often take a great interest in the lies that they tell and an even bigger interest in making their patients and the world believe that everyone will be better off with the lie that was told. The intention is not malicious, but is beneficent. Some critics then argue the moral impressibility of lying and credit it to the unsuccessful of accurately measuring the benefit over the harm of a lie. In every enervation lying has always been a huge issue worth researching. There have been numerous books and articles devoted to lying, its history, its purpose and its consequences.

According to one Time Magazine article “ lies flourish in social uncertainty, when people no longer understand or agree on the rules governing their behavior toward one another (Time Magazine). It has been reported that nearly all doctors contemplate about whether to tell their patients devastating news directly or with a bit of falsehood attached. The American Medical Association states “ A physician shall be honest in all professional

interactions and strive to report physicians engaging in fraud or deceptions to appropriate entities”.

This is the motto that physicians and all other medical personnel shall live by. In defense of the physician and the family of Mr.. Simpson, there are times when a lie may be the best alternative. Lies may be the best option when autonomy and beneficence conflict, or plainly when a truth will do more harm than good. Although autonomy is self governing by which human beings lives, beneficence is doing what is right that brings good consequences. Some doctors dig deeper into their patient’s riveter lives than others. If the physician knows Mr..

Simpson on a more personal level, he may be more inclined to keep Mr.. Simpson healthy and active to the best of his abilities. According to the Utilitarian principle, “ if a physician believes that she can protect her patient from unnecessary suffering or relieve his pain by keeping him in ignorance, by lying to him or giving him placebos, or by otherwise deceiving him, these actions are morally legitimate, (Munson 114). Often times a lie, an untrue statement with direct and deliberate intentions for deception may seem to be the best response in some situations.

For example, supposed that a brother lies about where his sister is so that her drunken husband cannot physically abuse her. Yes, it would be permissible to lie. This situation is clear cut. In a more related context, suppose a physician informs his severely depressed patient the he or she has only a 50-50 chance of fully recovering from a chronic illness, when the physician knows that the patient will like only live for 6 months or so. When

attempting to do the right thing in a challenging situation, being completely honest may come second after intrinsic values such as respect, compassion, humanity and Justice.

Many philosophical and religious scholars live by the notion One great philosopher named Emmanuel Kant stated that lying was always morally wrong and unacceptable, no matter what the consequences may be (Munson 752). He argued “ that all people are born with an intrinsic worth that he called human dignity’ (Munson 753). He concluded that the dignity comes from the fact that humans, with the exception of babies and mentally handicapped, are unique in our ability to rationalize situation based on different criteria. We are capable of making our own decisions freely establishing or own goals in life and governing ourselves by way of reason.

Kant also states that “ to be human is to have the rational power of free choice; to be ethical is to respect that power in oneself and in others, (Munson 751). We must take into account if the doctor does not lie then the patient will likely die. If the doctor lies, then the patient will live. The doctor is happy because the patient is alive and well. The patient is happy because he is alive and healthy. The patient’s family is happy because the patient is alive and healthy. All of these consequences re achieved if the doctor lies to the patient and the patient never finds out about the deception.

In regards to not lying, lying to a patient disregards their autonomy, feelings, decisions, and wishes. It treats a competent patient like a child or someone incapable of making their own rational decisions. Plus, if the physician is found to be deceitful, it could really damage his reputation. Some doctors



may not want to take this risk while others don't even consider it. So if the physician does not respect the patient's original wish, the physician is acting unethically. The action of lying is morally wrong.