Master in Healthcare Admin 6020-W1B, Fall 2022   ✉ 💬 🔔   MK

Print Ethics Unwrapped

Master in Healthcare Admin 6020-W1B, Fall 2022 Ethics Unwrapped Discussions Healthcare obligations

Ethics Unwrapped

Created by Ryan Beckett on Nov 3, 2022 6:01 AM

This should be a good discussion.

So, I have been getting a flu shot every year for the past 20-something years but not because that was my choice. It was more of the Bounded rationality thinking in that I had to do it because I have been working in healthcare organizations directly with patients. 8 of those years were with Geriatric patients and it was required unless I wanted to risk termination or at the very least go have a nice discussion with the CEO. My younger self did not want to rock the boat, so I went along with it and got it. The rest of those years have been in mental health hospitals and it has also been required. I never had any ill effects from the vaccine, but I didn't do any research to see that it was only 23% effective. I don't think that would have mattered for me because I think the bigger picture for me was that I was working with the elderly and others who were more immunocompromised and in my head, I was doing my part to help protect them.

Fast Forward to covid, I also was an early adopter of the vaccine because I work in healthcare and felt it was my duty to get it to help protect those that are immunocompromised. I got Covid in August 2020 before the vaccines, then I got the vaccine and then the booster and then in May of 2022 I got Covid again. The doctor I went to when I tested positive for the 2nd time told me not to get another booster...was that ethical? My Oncologist is on the complete opposite side of the fence and does recommend I stay current with my boosters. I currently have not got another booster and am on the fence. Is it worse than other things I have put in my body? Probably not. It's not about me not getting sick. I want to protect those patients and other staff that I work with, but does it really help protect them or it that a fallacy I tell myself and/or others try to influence us that it helps?

During Covid (even now), there was a clear night and day difference from TN to other states. I have friends in Oregon who are on a whole other level of extreme, friends in Colorado, and family up north in New England. All of those states really pushed vaccines and masking. If we wanted to go visit, we had to test negative and then quarantine before going to see them. In the case of the New England family, they had a lot of family die as a result of Covid so they are still very leery and cautious. In TN (and my parents live in GA), the masks were not on long (if at all) and were almost a joke. The vaccines were not encouraged. I felt like the odd man out if I had a mask on in public, it's been a weird road.

For this case example, I don't think the doctor in the example should give her personal advice. I think she should present straight facts. To me, the key phrase is "if the patient possesses enough information to enable an informed choice." So she can provide that information to allow the patient to make an informed decision. Also, as part of becoming a doctor, part of the Hippocratic oath straight up says "first, do no harm." In the research, this case discusses the correlation between certain blood types and adverse events. Having this knowledge makes her decision even tougher without doing blood tests to determine if the patient will be more susceptible to adverse events. If she morally opposes giving the vaccine, she could always find another job where she doesn't have to give flu shots. That doesn't seem like the best option but sometimes in healthcare, our own ethics, morals, and values don't line up with the organization's so we have to part ways. I have a friend in PA that is dealing with unethical pressures from her organization currently and is now looking for a new job.

I do think the AMA should promote open discussions to allow for more free choice and informed decisions to be made rather than scare tactics or coercing people to get the flu shot or other vaccines.

Ratings: 0 ☆☆☆☆☆

Kaci Kojundic
Posted Nov 5, 2022 3:53 PM

Ratings: 0 ☆☆☆☆☆

Hey Ryan!

I really enjoyed your own personal side of how this ethically "sits" with you! I also have not received any boosters since the first two shots, the reason behind this being both a combination of the personal research I have done/getting COVID even after being fully vaccinated and the effects I had when getting the first two (fever of 102+, tingling/numbness in my face, and multiple day headaches/borderline migraine). I understand the "bounded ethics" that is pushed but really appreciate how you brought up the Hippocratic oath. I stated in my post how Dr. Jones has a duty to her patients as *individuals* while the AMA and vaccination committees have a duty to the *masses.* I agree that the AMA should promote open discussions and communication about vaccines and the possible negative outcomes from them, I also agree that a clinician's personal opinions about medical procedures should never impact the information they offer their patients.

I also enjoyed the fact that you pointed out how sometimes a job change is needed so that the patient's rights are not impacted but the clinician also does not have to compromise their own moral standings (this can also be seen with clinicians moving to states that have laws supporting their own standings on abortion) the patients come first and sometimes moving or changing jobs is something the clinicians need to do so they do not change that.

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Antonese James
Posted Nov 6, 2022 9:13 AM

Ratings: 0 ☆☆☆☆☆

Thanks for sharing. I, too, have been getting the flu shots for years. Although I have not gotten the flu, I felt different when it come to the COVID vaccine. I did not feel comfortable about taking the vaccine as I felt I did not have enough information about it. However, little did I know that my current employer has been working with healthcare agencies for year on COVID protocols and testing. I took the vaccination when it became mandatory to keep my job. To say the least, the side effects from the vaccine has caused several issues with my health and then I still got COVID. I agree with you in that Dr. Jones should refrain from offering her personal advice due to the liability that comes with that. If someone makes a decision solely on her personal opinion it leaves the door open for potential risks of being sued or losing her medical license. Again, thanks for sharing.

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Miranda Morgan
Posted Nov 6, 2022 9:25 AM

Ratings: 0 ☆☆☆☆☆

Hi Ryan,

Great post! First, I think it is important to point out that medical providers inserting their personal opinion is not likely ethical but also confusing, like in your case. I have been exposed to so many different views, and even though I strongly sway to one side, I remain as open as possible to other congruent or opposing views. I have checked the box three times with contracting COVID, two times prior to vaccination and one time after. I was not fully convinced about the COVID vaccine when I received it, but I believe in modern medicine and the underlying motive of attempting to prevent further drastically escalating death tolls. Even if I were not in the medical field, I believe that I would have felt morally obligated as a human to receive the vaccine. Even with my hesitations, I also wish the vaccine would have been available to me when I first contacted COVID almost 2.5 years ago. If I had been vaccinated and then contracted COVID this first time, would I have my full taste and smell back post recovery? This will always remain an unknown, but I would have been thankful for the opportunity to at least try to prevent that from happening. Modern medicine is science based. There is never a fully confident answer because most of the research done leaves just as many questions as there were answers found. Most importantly that same science and research is what has gotten us so far in modern medicine. Although there may still be unknowns, it is ethically correct for medical professionals to provide all information to patients while excluding their own opinion.

Your mention about physicians taking an oath to "first, do no harm" made me focus largely on the flu vaccine topic of this case study. I found the article that was mentioned and read over it. The process seems more in depth than a simple blood test, and the study reported that the efficacy seemed to diminish in people begining around the age of 35. However, what if this research and this test do not evolve like the ever-changing strain of the flu that comes every season? What are the costs of this supposed benefit especially if it must be done yearly? It could take an extended amount of time for most insurances to deem this test necessary for coverage. Would they consider covering it when the flu vaccine already has proven benefits with highly unlikely adverse effects? Would this test then be considered a commodity for only those that could afford it? Would a physician really not be doing any harm and making an ethical decision if they protect the patient from the possibility of an adverse event but drastically decrease the patient's available funds in doing so? Like you, I still believe that Dr. Jones and other medical professional are ethically obligated to mention the pros and cons for all medical decisions while leaving their personal bias out. However, along with the results of this study, I feel like it is important to mention that patient risk screenings are done before receiving vaccinations. Chances of adverse events are also so low that this blood assay testing could be considered a frivolous thing that only those who can afford it bother to do one and its necessity is highly debatable.

Ryan Beckett
Posted Nov 6, 2022 7:22 PM

Ratings: 0 ☆☆☆☆☆

Miranda! Thank you for the response. Great response! Thanks for sharing about your covid journey. I got it in August of 2020 before any available vaccines as well and then just this past May. I think I felt worse this past May than I did in August of 2020 prior to the vaccine and booster. I have no issue with the boosters but I do think it is adversely affecting some folks. I know numerous people that were not sick or did not have health issues prior to the vaccine but now they do. My wife got crushed by the booster we got and continues to have health issues. That is neither here nor there though. I love your response. I am not surprised you went and found that article. I was more playing devil's advocate on the "first do no harm" but you raise some really good points and your questions are spot on. I don't have good answers to those questions but I do see your point. Thanks for looking into that and thanks for sharing a different perspective.

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Nicole Unch
Posted Nov 6, 2022 12:42 PM

Ratings: 0 ★★★★★

Hey Ryan,

Great post! I agree with you about your vaccination stance. I have been getting vaccinated for as long as I can remember; however, I never considered the low effectiveness of the flu vaccine? I think I felt it more of an obligation throughout my healthcare career. I worked in a pharmacy for quite some time, so getting the flu vaccine when it would come out each season, just felt normal to me; even now, it still feels normal. I also agree about your standpoint on Tennessee's COVID regulations. Half of my family lives in CA, and the other half in NY. They got the COVID vaccine as soon as it came out; they were wearing masks much longer than us and were even on public restrictions up until a couple of months ago. It is crazy to see the differences in states and how things are forced upon us.

Patrick Cajolin
Posted Nov 6, 2022 5:57 PM

Ratings: 0 ★★★★★

I appreciate you sharing,

I concur with you that given the potential for litigation, Dr. Jones should avoid from giving her personal counsel. Someone runs the danger of being sued or losing her medical license if she bases her choice purely on her own opinion. I've also been receiving flu vaccines for a long time. Despite not having the flu, I had an unusual reaction to the COVID vaccination. I didn't feel confident getting the vaccination since I thought I didn't know enough about it. I was unaware that my current employer has been collaborating with healthcare organizations on COVID guidelines and testing for a year. When it became necessary to get the shot in order to retain my work, I did. To put it mildly, the vaccine's negative effects have led to a number of health problems for me, and I later contracted COVID.