

Discussion – Initial Post

In clinical practice, nurses are frequently confronted with situations requiring ethical decision-making and demonstrating professional integrity. Healthcare professionals working in clinical practice, education, research, and administration often encounter ethical dilemmas and unethical behavior that can jeopardize patient safety and the integrity of the healthcare system. These issues are particularly prominent in the teaching and supervision of students or new practitioners. This is exemplified in the hypothetical scenario of a nurse educator (Abby) witnessing unethical behavior by a physician (Dr. Harris), who permits a nursing student (Emily) to perform clinical tasks beyond her competency, risking patient safety.

Nurses are bound by a code of ethics and professional guidelines that emphasize patient safety, quality of care, and the professional development of students in clinical settings. The American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics for Nurses outlines that nurses must promote and advocate for safe and effective patient care, including ensuring that students are taught within their competence and supervised appropriately (American Nurses Association, 2021). In Abby's case, her role as a nurse educator places her in a position to uphold these ethical standards. Her concerns about Dr. Harris's permissive teaching style align with the principles of advocacy and accountability in nursing practice, which are emphasized in the ANA Code. Abby is ethically obligated to protect her students and the patients under their care.

The conflict in this scenario also highlights the importance of interprofessional collaboration and teamwork. Healthcare professionals from various disciplines, such as nurses, physicians, and educators, must work together to ensure that students receive appropriate supervision and that patients are not exposed to harm. Studies have shown that strong interprofessional collaboration is critical for improving patient outcomes and fostering a culture

of safety in healthcare environments (Reeves et al., 2021). The entire healthcare team may suffer when there is a breakdown in this collaboration, as seen with Dr. Harris's actions. The trust between nurse educators and physicians is essential for maintaining high educational standards and promoting patient safety.

In addressing the conflict, Abby demonstrates moral courage by confronting Dr. Harris about his actions. McKenna et al. (2023) describe moral courage as the ability to stand up for what is ethically correct, even when it is difficult or uncomfortable. In this case, Abby challenges Dr. Harris's teaching approach because it compromises patient safety and undermines professional standards. However, Abby's attempt to resolve the situation may require escalation to higher authorities, such as the nurse administrator, especially since Dr. Harris is resistant to change and dismisses Abby's concerns. According to nursing ethics literature, when conflict arises between healthcare professionals, it is essential to address the issue promptly to prevent further harm to patients or students (Munn et al., 2022).

In conclusion, the scenario illustrates a complex ethical dilemma a nurse educator face. Professional standards, patient safety, and moral courage guide Abby's decision to address Dr. Harris's unethical behavior. Conflict resolution in interprofessional settings, particularly in clinical education, is crucial for fostering an environment where students can learn safely and effectively while ensuring high-quality care for patients. Ethical leadership and the willingness to speak up against unethical practices are vital components of professionalism in nursing.

References

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