

UNIT TERMINAL OBJECTIVE

- 1-5 At the completion of this unit, the paramedic student will understand the role that ethics plays in decision making in the out-of-hospital environment.

COGNITIVE OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this unit, the paramedic student will be able to:

- 1-5.1 Define ethics. (C-1)
- 1-5.2 Distinguish between ethical and moral decisions. (C-3)
- 1-5.3 Identify the premise that should underlie the paramedic's ethical decisions in out-of hospital care. (C-1)
- 1-5.4 Analyze the relationship between the law and ethics in EMS. (C-3)
- 1-5.5 Compare and contrast the criteria that may be used in allocating scarce EMS resources. (C-3)
- 1-5.6 Identify the issues surrounding the use of advance directives, in making a prehospital resuscitation decision. (C-1)
- 1-5.7 Describe the criteria necessary to honor an advance directive in your state. (C-1)

AFFECTIVE OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this unit, the paramedic student will be able to:

- 1-5.8 Value the patient's autonomy in the decision-making process. (A-2)
- 1-5.9 Defend the following ethical positions: (A-3)
 - a. The paramedic is accountable to the patient.
 - b. The paramedic is accountable to the medical director.
 - c. The paramedic is accountable to the EMS system.
 - d. The paramedic is accountable for fulfilling the standard of care.
- 1-5.10 Given a scenario, defend or challenge a paramedic's actions concerning a patient who is treated against his/ her wishes. (A-3)
- 1-5.11 Given a scenario, defend a paramedic's actions in a situation where a physician orders therapy the paramedic feels to be detrimental to the patient's best interests. (A-3)

PSYCHOMOTOR OBJECTIVES

None identified for this unit.

DECLARATIVE

- I. Introduction
 - A. Ethical dilemmas are present in out-of-hospital care
 - B. Ethical dilemma today may be decided by law tomorrow

- II. Ethics overview
 - A. Ethics defined
 - 1. Socrates: "How should one live?"
 - 2. Larger issue than paramedic practice
 - 3. Morals relate to social standards
 - 4. Ethics relate to personal standards
 - B. Answering ethical questions
 - 1. Emotion should not be a factor
 - 2. The question should be answered with reason
 - 3. Answer must not be based on what people think is wrong or right
 - a) The individual must answer the question for him/ her self
 - 4. Never do what is morally wrong
 - C. The need for an out-of-hospital ethical code
 - D. How ethics impact individual practice
 - 1. A personal code
 - 2. The importance of reflecting on one's own practice.
 - a) "An unexamined life is not worth living"
 - E. How ethics impact institutional practice

- III. Ethical tests in healthcare
 - A. Fundamental question
 - 1. What is in the patient's best interest?
 - 2. Determining what the patient wants
 - a) Patient statement
 - b) Written statement
 - c) Family input
 - 3. The role of "good faith" in making ethical decisions
 - B. Global concepts
 - 1. Provide patient benefit
 - 2. Avoid harm
 - 3. Recognize patient autonomy
 - C. Resolving ethical dilemmas when global concepts are in conflict
 - 1. Within healthcare community
 - a) Establishment of norms (standards of care)
 - b) Research and treatment protocols
 - c) Prospective and retrospective reviews of decisions
 - 2. Within the public
 - a) Creation of laws protecting patient rights
 - b) Use of advance directives, etc. to make patient wishes known

- IV. Ethical issues in contemporary paramedic practice
 - A. Allocation of resources
 - 1. True parity

- 2. Need
- 3. Earned
- B. Decisions surrounding resuscitation
 - 1. What the patient really wants
 - 2. When in doubt, resuscitate
 - 3. Resuscitation after an advance directive is found
- C. Confidentiality
 - 1. A fundamental right
 - 2. Ethics and confidential information
 - a) Legally required
 - (1) Does this supersede ethical considerations?
 - (2) What if the public health would benefit?
- D. Consent
 - 1. Patient right to make decisions regarding health care
 - a) "Fundamental element of the patient-physician relationship"
 - b) AMA code of medical ethics
 - 2. Ethics of implied consent
 - a) Does the patient understand the issues at hand?
 - b) Can the patient make an informed decision in his/ her best interest
- E. Applications of ethical principles to patient care situations
 - 1. Care in futile situations
 - a) Defining futile
 - b) Who makes the decision?
 - 2. Obligation to provide care
 - a) Good Samaritan
 - b) Inability to pay
 - c) Isn't in the "health plan"
 - d) Patient "dumping"
 - e) Economic triage
 - 3. Advocacy
 - 4. Paramedic accountability
 - a) Patient
 - b) Physician medical director
 - c) System/ HMO protocols
 - 5. Role as physician extender
 - a) The physician orders something which
 - (1) The paramedic believes is contraindicated
 - (2) The paramedic believes is medically acceptable but not in the patient's best interests
 - (3) The paramedic believes is medically acceptable but morally wrong