

Ethics in Midwifery & Women's Health

Ethics is quickly moving from the abstract to the immediate for all health care professionals. The capacity to articulate an ethical dilemma and apply ethical principles to clinical practice is an increasingly important skill in the provision of health care in areas such as client rights, genetics, informed consent, and end-of-life decisions. The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) recently addressed contemporary ethical issues affecting women and midwifery practice.

ACNM Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics of the American College of Nurse-Midwives, updated in December 2004, sets forth “values, ethical principles, and standards to which professionals aspire and by which their actions can be judged.” The purpose of this code is to identify the moral obligations of all certified-nurse midwives (CNMs) and certified midwives (CMs) in their professional roles. The new statement is available on the ACNM Web site at: <http://www.midwife.org/display.cfm?id=483>. In addition, The International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) has published the ICM International Code of Ethics for Midwives, which is available at: <http://www.internationalmidwives.org> under “ICM Core Documents.”

Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health Home Study Program

The May/June 2004 issue of the *Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health* is devoted to ethics in midwifery and women's health. This home study program (HSP) focuses on everyday ethical concerns of the clinician surrounding the health of women and services provided for and with women – to reflect the central tenets of ACNM philosophy and shared decision-making based on client autonomy and accountability of the midwife working with women. Articles include: a human rights framework for midwifery care, the interface between legal and ethical issues in reproductive health, teaching ethics in midwifery practice, ethical considerations related to the inclusion of women in clinical trials, issues in patient education, genetic testing for breast and ovarian cancer, options counseling, techniques for caring for women with unintended pregnancies and other relevant topics. This HSP (#2004/004) has been approved by ACNM for 2.0 CEUs (20 contact hours). All evaluation forms must be received by May 30, 2006 to receive CEU credit. More information is found on p. 274 of the May/June issue or at <http://www.jmwh.org/ceus.cfm>.

Other Resources

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Bioethics Resources on the Web are found at: <http://www.nih.gov/sigs/bioethics/index.html>. This Web site contains a broad and comprehensive collection of related links. Highlights of the site include:

- NIH ethics documents and programs: <http://www.nih.gov/sigs/bioethics/>.
- Links to bioethics related organizations, reports, regulations and educational resources produced by federal government agencies other than NIH: <http://www.nih.gov/sigs/bioethics/outsidenih.html>
- Organizations related to ethics issues: <http://www.nih.gov/sigs/bioethics/organizations.html>.
- Specific Topics: <http://www.nih.gov/sigs/bioethics/specific.html> provides resources and other links to information in three main areas in biomedical ethics: Research Ethics, Genetics and Medicine and Health Care. This site lists links to key organizations,

documents, and educational opportunities related to each area. Resources from the NIH and the rest of the federal government have been cross referenced under each subcategory.

Ethics in Research: World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki.

The World Medical Association has developed the Declaration of Helsinki as a statement of ethical principles to provide guidance to physicians and other participants in medical research involving human subjects. The Declaration includes the statement that “It is the duty of the physician in medical research to protect the life, health, privacy, and dignity of the human subject.” Available at: <http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm>.

eHealth Code of Ethics

The Internet has become a common source of health information for providers and clients. The International Code of Ethics for health care sites was published in 2000 by the Internet Healthcare Coalition, which is composed of members from the health care products industry, health care providers, and policy and law experts. <http://www.ihealthcoalition.org/ethics/ethics.html>.

National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature (NRCBL)

The Ethics Library was established at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University in 1973 to support research projects at the Institute, such as the first edition of the Encyclopedia of Bioethics and the compilation of the Bibliography of Bioethics and its counterpart database, BIOETHICSLINE®. In 1985 this growing information resource was awarded a grant by the National Library of Medicine (NLM) to become the National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature (NRCBL), dedicated to collecting and organizing the burgeoning bioethics literature, and providing reference services. *The library holdings represent the world's largest collection related to ethical issues in medicine and biomedical research.* Further information, including links to related organizations, can be found at www.georgetown.edu/research/nrcbl/nrc/aboutNRCBL.htm.

Ethics in Medicine, University of Washington School of Medicine

Provides extensive information and discussion as well as referrals to additional links on bioethics: <http://eduserv.hscer.washington.edu/bioethics/resource/related.html>

American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG)

ACOG has published a 2004 edition of *Ethics in Obstetrics and Gynecology*. Topics include: informed consent, patient testing, human immunodeficiency virus, sex selection, multifetal pregnancy reduction, adoption, surrogate motherhood and end-of-life decision making. Available online at: http://www.acog.org/from_home/publications/ethics/ethicsIII.cfm. Copies can also be ordered through the ACOG Distribution Center by calling toll free 800-762-2264.

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The ACNM “*QuickInfo*” series was developed by the Department of Professional Services to respond to common inquiries, summarizing ACNM resources regarding a particular topic, as well as listing selected literature and a variety of other resources. Your feedback is welcomed; contact Professional Services at 240-485-1800 or info@acnm.org.
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