

COMMUNICATION BRIEF

Ethics and bioethics: a comprehensive view from the teaching, assistance and research in healthcare

La Ética y bioética: una mirada integral desde la docencia, asistencia e investigación en salud

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: in a world where technology and medicine are advancing rapidly, health professionals maintain an ethical approach in the teaching-assistance and research areas.

Objective: to analyze ethics and bioethics with an integral view from teaching, assistance and research in health.

Method: a bibliographic review of recent studies on ethics and bioethics in health was carried out. Academic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, Elsevier, Scielo were consulted.

Development: the inclusion of bioethics in the curricula of health sciences careers promotes a healthier doctor-patient relationship, benefits the quality of health care processes, favors an interdisciplinary vision in the face of the growing complexity of the problems related to medical practice, it improves study programs, reorienting curricula and incorporating a system of values, it applies the ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy and responsibility, health ethics implies informed decision making and respect for patient privacy and confidentiality.

Conclusions: health ethics and bioethics are essential to ensure the quality and integrity of health care. Ethical principles should be integrated in the area of teaching, research and medical care, the effective implementation of ethics in health care can improve the relationship between health professionals and patients, and contribute to a fairer and more equitable care.

Keywords: Ethics; Bioethics; Teaching; Health Care and Research.

RESUMEN

Introducción: en un mundo donde la tecnología y la medicina avanzan rápidamente, los profesionales de la salud mantienen un enfoque ético en el área docente-asistencial e investigativa.

Objetivo: analizar la ética y bioética con una mirada integral desde la docencia, asistencia e investigación en salud.

Método: se realizó una revisión bibliográfica de estudios recientes sobre la ética y bioética en la salud. Se consultaron bases de datos académicas como PubMed, Scopus, Google Académico, Elsevier, SciELO.

Desarrollo: la inclusión de la bioética en los currículos de las carreras de las ciencias de la salud, promueve

una relación médico-paciente más saludable, beneficia la calidad de los procesos de atención a la salud, favorece una visión interdisciplinaria ante la complejidad creciente de los problemas vinculados al ejercicio médico, se perfeccionan los programas de estudio, reorientando los currículos e incorporando un sistema de valores, se aplican los principios éticos de beneficencia, la no maleficencia, autonomía y responsabilidad, la ética en la salud implica la toma de decisiones informadas y el respeto por la privacidad y la confidencialidad del paciente.

Conclusiones: la ética y bioética en la salud es esencial para garantizar la calidad y la integridad de la atención médica. Los principios éticos deben ser integrados en el área de docencia investigación y asistencia médica, la implementación efectiva de la ética en la salud puede mejorar la relación entre los profesionales de la salud y los pacientes, y contribuir a una atención más justa y equitativa.

Palabras clave: Ética; Bioética; Docencia; Asistencia e Investigación en Salud.

INTRODUCTION

The scientific progress of the second half of the 20th century transformed biology and medicine from descriptive and curative sciences, respectively, into powerful tools for controlling the vital environment and manipulating human life. This reality and the inability of traditional ethics to respond gave way to bioethics, a bridge between science and humanity to understand, finally, that not everything that can be done should be done.⁽¹⁾

Bioethics is of great value in teacher training; its main lines of thought revolutionize the educational system.⁽²⁾ health is a fundamental field that addresses the moral principles and values that guide professional practice in the field of health. In a world where technology and medicine are advancing rapidly, health professionals must maintain a sound ethical approach to ensure patients' well-being and the profession's integrity.⁽³⁾

The need for bioethics in education is evident in the face of processes related to managing life, the environment, human dignity, and human rights.^(3,4)

Bioethics as a discipline seeks to apply moral principles to issues related to life, health, and disease, integrating biomedical and environmental ethics to address contemporary challenges.⁽⁵⁾ It also promotes exchange between health professionals and disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology, law, and researchers, facilitating decision-making, whether complex or everyday, in collaboration with society in general.^(6,7)

Bioethics education aims to develop critical and reflective thinking that enables the professional and human improvement of health workers.^(8,9)

There are various theoretical schools of bioethics, as in any field of philosophy, which are based on different principles and values. This explains why people with different philosophical attitudes can reach different conclusions on the same ethical problem, even with the same philosophical attitude. The theoretical schools are not mutually exclusive and are often used in combination to make complex moral decisions.⁽⁶⁾

The schools that coincide with modern bioethics are:⁽¹⁰⁾

- Utilitarianism, which advocates making ethical decisions that maximize well-being for the most significant number of people.
- Universalism holds that ethical decisions should be based on universally accepted principles.
- Personalism, which centers ethical decisions on the person's well-being as the supreme value.
- Principals propose that ethical decisions be based on beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice principles.
- Positivism, which suggests that ethical decisions should be based on scientific evidence rather than on personal opinions or beliefs.
- Realism, which upholds the independent existence of the world and objects.

Bioethics and clinical ethics have become essential in training health professionals and cultivating empathy, ethical sensitivity, and moral reasoning skills.⁽⁶⁾

The emergence of new problems linked to scientific and technological development conditions bioethical thinking related to the changing place of science in terms of the application of its results and the changes they cause in people's lives, the increasingly noticeable differences present in contemporary societies, the awareness of the real scope of global environmental problems, which determines the appearance of moral issues that exceed the limits of usual ethics. The ethical discussion caused by these new situations demands answers that transcend the boundaries of specific disciplinary fields and require the reformulation and restructuring of behavioral evaluation models based on considering a new relationship between man and nature.^(11,12)

Bioethics training in medical schools through proposals that consider virtual environments weighs up the advantages offered by information and communication technologies by providing spaces for interactivity,

communication, deliberation, and debate, which enhance the collaborative learning required in the teaching of bioethics.^(3,4)

A peer-reviewed article points out that the medical perspective of bioethics in Cuba exalts the practice of charity with responsibility and implies the consideration of the right to autonomy of the users of health services within the general respect for their biological, psychological, and social integrity. Acting responsibly requires, from this position, the acceptance of individual values and, at the same time, the duty to educate individuals and groups in recognizing their needs and in the culture of deliberative dialogue. However, the understanding of principles from this perspective is not restricted to medical bioethics; it is presented as a more global reference for analyzing more general problems.⁽¹⁰⁾

This article analyzes bioethical principles from a comprehensive teaching, healthcare, and health research perspective.

METHOD

To develop this article, a bibliographic review of recent studies on ethics and bioethics in health was conducted. Academic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, Elsevier, and SciELO were consulted, and articles published in recent years were selected. In addition, reports of practical experiences in health institutions were analyzed.

DEVELOPMENT

The inclusion of bioethics in the curriculum of health science degrees is credited with promoting appropriate changes in behavior and attitudes and a healthier doctor-patient relationship, which benefits the quality of healthcare processes. It also encourages an interdisciplinary approach to the growing complexity of problems related to medical practice.⁽³⁾

Bioethics training in medical schools through proposals that take into account virtual environments and the advantages offered by information and communication technologies are considered when promoting spaces for interactivity, communication, deliberation, and debate, which enhance the collaborative learning required in the teaching of bioethics.⁽¹³⁾

The curriculum needs to be redesigned to consider bioethics training with a systemic and cross-disciplinary character. Education is regarded as a broad process that involves the development of culture, values, and individual and collective relationships according to the needs of society.⁽³⁾

The family, the fundamental unit of society, plays a vital role in promoting health and preventing disease and other harm to the health of the individual, the family, and the community; therefore, it is essential to strengthen it as an institution.⁽¹⁴⁾

Education faces the challenge of ensuring that the objectives are gradually achieved as part of the training in principles, virtues, and values, as well as respect for life, human dignity, and care for the environment; it must be a cross-cutting protagonist of all priorities.⁽¹⁴⁾

Equity and transparency must be pillars for the construction of public health, where political or other ideologies must be kept at bay, prioritizing the good of the individual and society.⁽¹⁴⁾

The Universities of Medical Sciences in Cuba have perfected their study programs, reorienting the curricula and incorporating values that include dignity, patriotism, solidarity, humanism, responsibility, hard work, honesty, integrity, and justice. They implement curricular strategies projected towards the professional's modes of action, with an economic and health-oriented mindset, an environmentalist approach, and adequate medical-legal action in their professional performance.

The purposes and challenges of bioethics in the field of health flow through the complexities that come from the health-disease binomial, conditioned by social and individual components that affect the frequency of risk factors to which human beings are exposed, issues that require carefully conceived bioethics that brings it closer to the remaining social problems.⁽³⁾

Ethics and bioethics are applied in health research. Depending on the type of study being conducted, ethics committees evaluate research projects using a One Health approach.

Based on their knowledge of bioethics, the doctor is called upon to be the primary generator of measures that protect the environment. It is necessary to advocate for an ecological culture for society, involving other sectors and safeguarding health.⁽¹⁵⁾

Research into risk factors for cervical cancer shows that there is a change in the age of onset of cancer, which is related to socio-environmental factors such as early onset of first sexual relations, promiscuity, and other obstetric factors, the solution to this health problem is not exclusively focused on the doctor-patient relationship, it is related to the application of organizational measures, knowledge and modification of risk factors, prevention with the application of the HPV vaccine,⁽¹⁶⁾ incorporated into the national vaccination schedule in Cuba, is analyzed from the research perspective as well as the application of the ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy and responsibility, ethics in health implies informed decision-

making and respect for patient privacy and confidentiality.

In the field of medical care, an example is given of protecting the population from products that are dangerous to human health: the irresponsible use of nuclear energy, waste from various sources, the use of tobacco, the use of mercury, asbestos, etc.⁽¹⁴⁾ Protecting the population from all of them, or at least from those that most affect the vulnerable population, demands a significant commitment from industrialized countries, companies, institutions, and governments, supported by ethical principles.

Implementing ethics in professional practice requires continuous training and the creation of a work environment that encourages ethical reflection. Health professionals must be trained to identify and resolve ethical dilemmas and must be committed to continuously improving their ethical practices. There is a pressing need to train and prepare future bioethics professionals, academics, researchers, and decision-makers to promote teaching and research in the biomedical sciences and contribute to solving the bioethical challenges of the present century.⁽³⁾

CONCLUSIONS

Ethics and bioethics in healthcare are essential to guarantee the quality and integrity of medical care. Ethical principles must be integrated into teaching, research, and medical care. Practicing ethics in healthcare can improve the relationship between healthcare professionals and patients and contribute to fairer and more equitable care.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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