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Article Review

BIOETHICS AND PATIENT INVOLVEMENT IN MEDICAL DECISION-MAKING: CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

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Abstract

Background

Patient involvement in medical decision-making has become an integral element in contemporary healthcare, affirming the rights and autonomy of patients in their care processes. This review presents an in-depth study concerning the issue of patient involvement in medical decision-making from a bioethical perspective, as well as exploring the challenges and ethical implications that arise in clinical practice.

Methods

A literature review method is used in this study, encompassing various literary sources that detail bioethical principles such as patient autonomy, justice, beneficence, and non-maleficence in the context of medical decision-making. Additionally, this study seeks a profound understanding of how clinical practices and health policies influence patient involvement and present specific ethical challenges.

Results

The findings of this literature review highlight the crucial role of bioethics in shaping more ethical practices in medical decision-making and identify key issues that need attention, such as inequality in access and information, value conflicts between patients and healthcare providers, and the need to focus on the best interests of the patient.

Conclusion

By understanding these ethical challenges and implications, we can better develop guidelines and policies that support meaningful and ethical patient involvement in clinical practice. Thus, this research contributes to the development of healthcare that respects bioethical values as well as the rights and needs of patients.

Keywords: Bioethics; Health; Medical; Patient

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary healthcare era, patient engagement in the process of medical decision-making is regarded as a critical element to ensure the autonomy and rights of patients are respected (Vaughn, 2010). However, with the increasing complexity of diseases and advancements in medical technology, various ethical dilemmas emerge that demand careful attention. One of the primary challenges is to maintain a balance between patient autonomy and the most appropriate medical decisions. Inequality in access to information and healthcare also emerges as a crucial issue that can impact a patient's ability to fully engage in the decision-making process. Additionally, conflicts of values between patients, families, and healthcare providers often arise, prompting questions about how to balance diverse interests (Menon *et al.*, 2020).

In hospital treatment, patients have the capacity to make decisions. However, patients may also not have the opportunity to make informed decisions about treatment options due to socio-cultural factors such as family hierarchy and certain cultural beliefs. The presence of family involvement or certain cultural contexts surrounding health and illness can prevent patients from making decisions independently or even not being involved in the decision-making process (Deem & Stokes, 2018). The influence of socio-cultural factors on patient involvement in decision making can be an ethical problem, this is because it can conflict with the moral beliefs of health workers. It is recognized that mentally capable patients should be involved in decisions regarding their own treatment or, at least, have the opportunity to make decisions themselves or delegate decision making to others (Hurst *et al.*, 2022).

Through a profound understanding of these challenges, this research is expected to contribute to the development of ethical guidelines and policies that support meaningful patient involvement aligned with bioethical principles (Lewis & Holm, 2022). Thus, the study not only explores the complexity of these issues but also seeks solutions to enhance the quality of clinical decision-making in accordance with ethical values and patient interests (Aksoy & Elmai, 2002; Varkey, 2021). This review presents an in-depth study concerning the issue of patient involvement in medical decision-making from a bioethical perspective, as well as exploring the challenges and ethical implications that arise in clinical practice. However, this study places emphasis on the aspects of bioethical theory.

METHODS

The literature review research method is an investigative approach that involves examining and analyzing literature or written sources relevant to the topic or research question. This research entails a systematic search, selection, and evaluation of a collection of writings, articles, books, and other documents to gather information that supports a comprehensive understanding of the subject under investigation. In a literature review, researchers identify key findings and concepts from existing literature to build a theoretical and contextual foundation for the ongoing research.

RESULTS

The review article sources used by the author came from four articles (Table 1). The research findings include insights into the ethical conflicts that arise, challenges in implementing patient engagement, and how bioethical factors such as autonomy, justice, beneficence, and non-maleficence play a role in this context.

Tabel 1. Characteristics of Study Literature

Author	Title	Context	Result
(Bata <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	Satisfaction during childbirth	Understanding patient satisfaction during childbirth can enhance the quality of services, yet it is not consistently done in every healthcare facility in Indonesia. This study aims to investigate the factors influencing satisfaction during childbirth in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara.	20,4% of respondents were satisfied with the information provided and participated in decision-making, while low satisfaction levels were associated with episiotomy.
(Syofian, 2020)	Patient participation in clinical decision-making in nursing	The nurse-patient interaction supports clinical decision-making. Nurses must be able to think critically to respect patients' rights in making clinical decisions	Involving patients in clinical decision-making enhance their independence. Nurses, as facilitators, require critical thinking skills to make clinical decisions. However, decision-making is not yet fully done collaboratively between nurses and patients.

(Cantú Quintanilla <i>et al.</i> , 2024)	Perceptions of COVID-19 patients in the use of bioethical principles and the physician-patient relationship: a qualitative approach	Exploring the application of bioethical principles in the doctor-patient relationship in hospitals	The majority of patients reported positive treatment experiences, free from discrimination. Patient's rights to make treatment decisions were also respected.
(Vahdat <i>et al.</i> , 2014)	Patient involvement in health care decision making: a review.	The importance of patient participation in treatment decision-making. Patient involvement enhance services and health outcomes	Patient involvement is influenced by the doctor-patient relationship, allocated time for participation, and patient knowledge of healthcare services

Patient Involvement for decisions regarding advanced cancer therapy, expresses concerns about potential side effects and how they may affect her quality of life and had a unique values and preferences related to the quality of life and the values she desires. Related decision-Making Process, the medical team provides clear information to help the patient understand available therapy options, open discussions are conducted to explore the patient's preferences and values related to treatment and decisions are made collaboratively, taking into account the patient's views and desires, as well as the medical assessment of the care team. The patient and the care team reach an agreement on a treatment plan that considers the patient's preferences and values, engagement process strengthens the trust relationship between the patient and the medical team and feels more understanding and supportive of the decisions made, enhancing adherence to treatment (Bata *et al.*, 2019; Cantú Quintanilla *et al.*, 2024; Syofian, 2020; Vahdat *et al.*, 2014). There are patient involvement helps create a more holistic decision-making process that aligns with the individual values of the patient, creating more personalized and effective care.

DISCUSSION

These sources of ethical conflict take various forms and can help design a better approach to patient involvement in clinical decision-making by considering different values and perspectives. Differences in values often arise among patients, families, and healthcare providers. Divergent ethical perspectives, cultural backgrounds, religions, and customs can lead to tensions in determining appropriate clinical decisions. Patients lacking information or a full understanding of the consequences of medical decisions may experience ethical conflicts.

Inequality in understanding medical information can result in disagreement between patients and healthcare providers. Therefore, in this context, informed consent is crucial for patients to comprehend (Bata *et al.*, 2019; Nuwagaba *et al.*, 2021). Further ethical conflict arises from conflicting interests among patients, families, and healthcare providers (Bata *et al.*, 2019). For example, a pregnant mother may desire a home birth with all the possible risks involved, while healthcare providers may see the best benefit in hospital care considering the availability of comprehensive medical equipment.

The challenges in implementing patient involvement in clinical decision-making involve various aspects. Patients and healthcare providers may have conflicting preferences or views regarding specific treatment options or medical procedures. Some medical decisions can be highly complex, and understanding their consequences may be challenging for patients without a medical background. Patients may experience stress, anxiety, or confusion that can affect their ability to fully engage in clinical decision-making (Banner *et al.*, 2019; Syofian, 2020).

The role of the family in decision-making can create additional dynamics and present challenges in reaching agreement between the patient and the family. Cultural and language differences can be barriers to communication and understanding, influencing patient engagement and the achievement of consensus among the patient, family, and healthcare provider. Understanding these challenges can help healthcare providers design more effective strategies for involving patients in clinical decision-making (Deem & Stokes, 2018; Syofian, 2020).

The principles of bioethics have many importance and relevance in healthcare practice. The application of these principles helps protect the dignity of patients, respect their autonomy, and give them control over the healthcare they receive. Bioethical principles provide a framework for considering and resolving ethical dilemmas that may arise in healthcare practice. This assists healthcare professionals in making ethical decisions that align with moral values (Cantú Quintanilla *et al.*, 2024; Kreh *et al.*, 2021). The application of these bioethical principles is key to creating an ethical, safe, and patient-centered healthcare environment. It also helps build trust between patients and healthcare providers and enhances the overall quality of care.

The principle of autonomy emphasizes the patient's right to participate in decisions regarding their own healthcare. In this context, patient involvement ensures that medical decisions reflect the patient's preferences, values, and personal desires (Forte *et al.*, 2018; Vaughn, 2010).

Patient involvement in clinical decision-making aligns with the principle of beneficence as it aims to achieve beneficial outcomes for the patient. By involving the patient, decisions are expected to be more in line with the patient's needs and desires, thereby improving the quality of care. Patient involvement also supports the principle of non-maleficence by minimizing the risk of harm or negative impacts from medical decisions. Through open dialogue and shared decision-making, patients can have a better understanding of the risks and benefits of a medical intervention. The principle of justice emphasizes fair and equal treatment for all individuals. In patient involvement, justice can be realized by ensuring that all patients have equal opportunities to participate in clinical decision-making, without discrimination (Menon et al., 2020; Vahdat et al., 2014; Vaughn, 2010).

Overall, considering these four bioethical principles in patient involvement helps create an ethical decision-making process that respects the rights, needs, and values of individual patients. Case example of a cancer patient facing treatment options. A female patient diagnosed with advanced breast cancer has undergone several sessions of chemotherapy and is now confronted with a decision regarding further therapy. The medical team has provided detailed information about available treatment options, including potential side effects and potential benefits.

CONCLUSIONS

The research findings indicate that patient participation in clinical decision-making is essential in creating an ethical, safe, and individual-focused healthcare environment. By understanding and applying the principles of bioethics, patient involvement can be guided by underlying moral values.

The significance of the autonomy principle in granting patients the right to participate in decisions regarding their healthcare is evident. The research results also demonstrate that patient participation aligns with the principle of beneficence, aiming to enhance favourable outcomes for patients. Meanwhile, the principle of non-maleficence is acknowledged by minimizing the risks and negative impacts of medical decisions, and the principle of justice is integrated to ensure equality and fairness in patient participation.

Overall, this research provides profound insights into the importance of integrating aspects of bioethical theory in the context of patient participation. Its implications encompass the expansion of understanding and application of bioethical principles in healthcare practice to enhance the quality of care and uphold moral integrity in clinical decision-making.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

The data and materials used in this research can be freely accessed in journals, both from Indonesia and abroad. This study does not utilize new data and materials as the basis for analysis.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This research does not conflict with the interests of anyone, and the data and references used are from public documents. This study contributes to expanding insights into patient rights, healthcare provider rights, and the medical field in general.

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