

The Ethics:

Prescription Drug Abuse

Laura R. Lander, LICSW

Department of Behavioral Medicine and Psychiatry

West Virginia University

Share The Vision 2009, Charleston Civic Center

What do we mean by Ethics?

- Values and Principals
- Standards
- Duties and Responsibilities

Ethics

- Overview
 - Social work
 - Psychologists
- Case Examples specific to PDA

General Ethical Principals

- Beneficence – the duty to promote good and prevent harm to patients
- Nonmaleficence – do no harm
- Respect for patient autonomy – recognize the right of the patient to make their own decisions
- Justice – the duty to treat individuals fairly

Ethical Values and Principals

Social Workers (values)

- Service
- Social Justice
- Dignity and Worth of Person
- Importance of Human Relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

Psychologists (Principals)

- Beneficence vs. Nonmaleficence
- Fidelity vs. Responsibility
- Integrity
- Justice
- Respect for People's rights and Dignity

Ethical Standards

- Resolving ethical issues
- Competence
- Human Relations
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Advertising and Public Statements
- Record Keeping and Fees
- Education and Training
- Research and Publication
- Assessment
- Therapy

(Psychologists)

Duties and Responsibilities

- To the patient
- To colleagues
- To the organization/agency/practice setting
- As professionals
- To the profession
- To society

(NASW)

Laws vs. Ethics

- Laws are rigid and impersonal
- Ethical judgments are based on the nature of relationships and values

Boundaries vs. Ethics

- Boundary violations are not always ethics violations
- Ethics violations are always boundary violations

Prescription Drug Abuse

- Ethical issues:
 - Legal
 - Breaking confidentiality
 - Safety
 - Of patient
 - Of dependent children
 - Of self
 - Of others
 - Boundaries
 - Conflicting treatment goals

Prescription Drug Abuse – What do you see?



Ethics Dilemmas

- Ethical dilemmas occur when there are two courses of action which are in conflict, but both choices could be considered morally justified or “right”
- A professional code of ethics gives you a framework in which to resolve dilemmas where there is no clear choice between right or wrong

PDA Case Examples

- CPS reporting – opiate use when breast feeding
- Dr. shopping – your patient is getting multiple rxs from multiple drs
- Problem doctor – several of your patients report a specific doctor notorious for prescribing narcotics liberally

PDA Case Examples

- Reporting criminal activity – your patient reports to you that he is selling his xanax in order to pay for his suboxone treatment because he has no insurance
- Practice setting conflicts – it is the rule of your addictions clinic to discharge patients out if they relapse and lie about it. Your patient did this, but you feel they are making progress and that if she is discharged her 5 children will be in danger.

PDA Case Examples

- Professional clashes – you and your colleague disagree about how to handle a patient who chronically relapses on pain medications because he reports chronic pain
- Safety issues – your patient has been discharged from the methadone clinic due to repeatedly coming up positive for cannabis. He threatens to assault his former counselor.