

WHY STUDY MEDICAL ETHICS?

Medical ethics guide physician through decision-making and through interaction and conduct with patients.

Violations of medical ethics can threaten your job, medical license, or even constitute a crime.

Ethics provide us with moral compass the guide us through medical situations that are not straightforward.

The difference between Ethics and Moral

Ethics

- The Greek word ethike means habit, action, character.
- Ethics refer to the science or study of morals and its activity in the academic context.

Moral

- The Latin word mos (morals) means habit or custom. Both words refer to the general area of right and wrongs in the theory and practice of human behavior.
- Morals refer to standards of behavior held or followed by individuals and groups.

Ethical theories

3 QUESTIONS MAY HELP TO ANSWER "IS THIS ETHICAL"

- Consequences of the action (utilitarian theory)
- Is the ACT itself ethical "deontology theory".
- Is the acting AGENT (physician) a virtuous one.

Utilitarian theory

Also called Teleological, Greek word, Telos, meaning end or consequence. Consequences alone that determine what is right or wrong. The greatest good for the greatest number of the community. Seek for the greatest aggregate welfare of the community as whole.

Deontological theory

Deontological theory: Non-consequentialism: Derived from the Greek word, Deon, meaning duty. Considers that some acts are right or wrong independent of their consequences.

General principles of medical ethics

Autonomy

Ability of the patient to make his own decisions

Beneficence

Best interest of the patient

Non-Maleficence

The principle of nonmaleficence is captured by the Latin maxim, primum non nocere: "above all, do no harm." Non-maleficence states that a medical practitioner has a duty to do no harm or allow harm to be caused to a patient through neglect.

Distributed Justice

is generally interpreted as fair, reasonable, and appropriate treatment of persons. We have a duty to treat all fairly, distributing the risks and benefits equally. Patients in similar situations should be offered similar care unless extenuating circumstances are involved, such as for emergency cases.

Traditional arrangements of the field of ethics:

- Meta-ethics (nature of right or good, nature and justification of ethical issues)
- Normative ethics (standards, principles)
- Applied ethics (actual application of ethical principles to particular situation)

Normative Ethics v Meta Ethics

Normative Ethics

Deals with what things are right or wrong. They help people to understand what is right and moral and what is wrong and immoral.

They tell people what to do and what not to do.

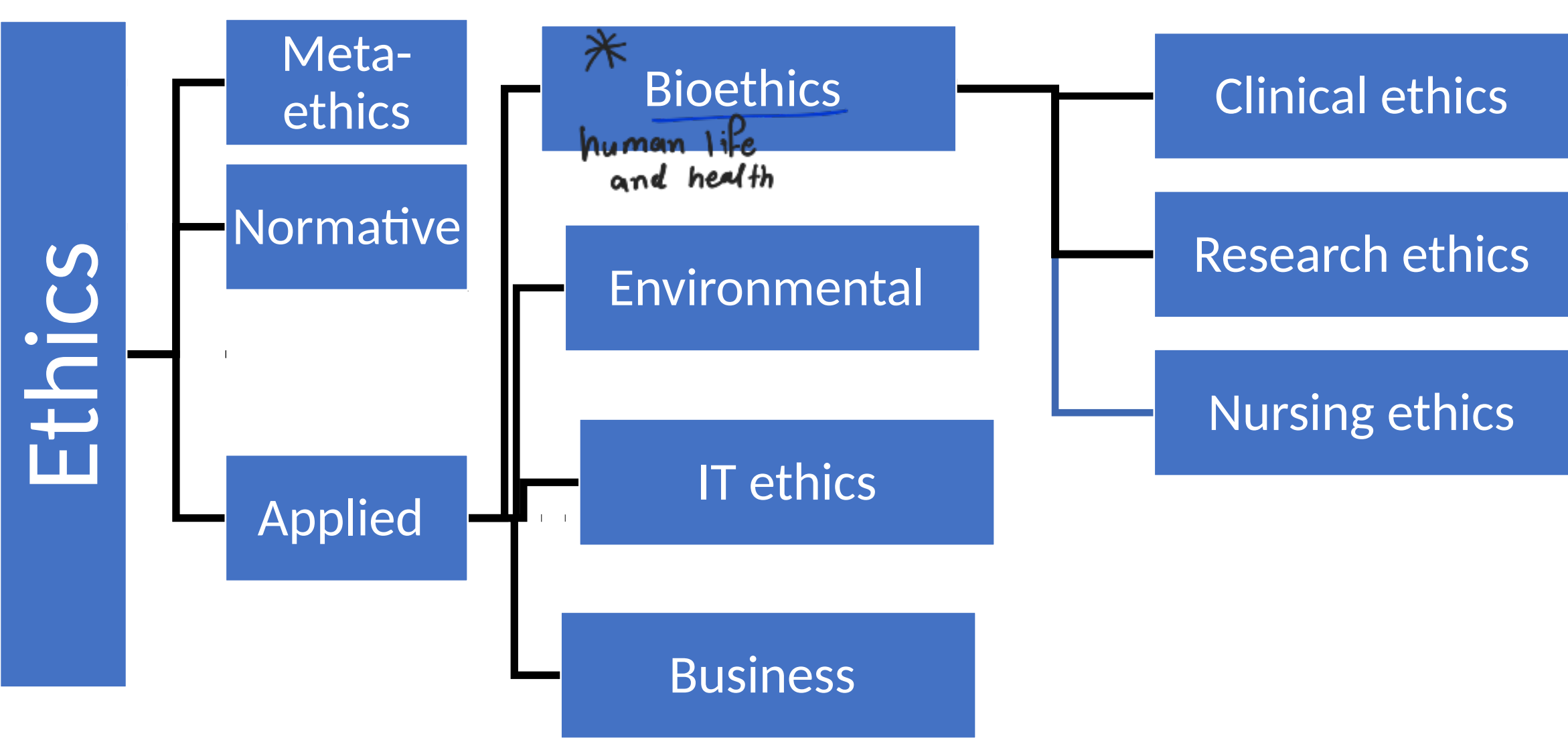
'This is a good gun' – is the gun morally good?

Meta Ethics

Deals with what it means to claim that something is right or wrong.

It is like a foreign language you have to understand what the word means to understand what is being said.

'This is a good gun' – what do we mean by using the word good. (Is it good because it fulfils its purpose or because I approve of it?)



Ethical versus legal obligations

Parameters of Comparison	Legal	Ethical
Basis	Based on law	Based on principles
Effect of nonadherence	Not adhering is punishable.	Not adhering is not punishable.
Scope of choice	Lawfully mandatory	Voluntary
Form	Have written records	Totally abstract form.
Governed By	Government	Individual, Legal and Professional norms

3 conditions should be fulfilled to obtain correct autonomy:

- **Capacity** usually refers to the mental competencies that are needed for a human to make rational decisions, which includes the ability to understand the information about an intended intervention (or medical condition), appreciate the risks associated with the proposed intervention (medical condition, or research) and be able to recall this information later on.
- **Disclosure.** This condition emphasizes that the information given to the patient, who is supposed to take a decision, is given in a thorough, yet simple and understandable way and that the person is given the chance to have his/her questions answered in a satisfactory way.
- **Voluntariness** refers to the importance of having the freedom to take these decisions without any pressure or coercion, including the emotional and social pressure conveyed by other family members or the health care team.

Justice

1. is generally interpreted as fair, reasonable, and appropriate treatment of persons.
2. We have a duty to treat all fairly, distributing the risks and benefits equally. Patients in similar situations should be offered similar care unless extenuating circumstances are involved, such as for emergency cases.