

Public Health Nursing Ethics in Undergraduate Nursing Curricula

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Public Health Nurses



- face unique ethical issues compared to other RNs
- limited published research exploring ethical issues faced by PHNs
- ethical issues in PHN involve relationships with clients, colleagues, and organization (Duncan, 1992; Falk-Rafael & Betker, 2012; Oberle & Tenove, 2000)
- ethical issues in PHN are highly relational in nature (Marcellus, 2005) and rooted in context, interwoven, and complex (Oberle & Tenove, 2000)

**PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING ETHICS IN
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BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION:
INFLUENCE, INFORM, INSPIRE

June 17 - 19, 2013
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Kelowna, BC

Ethics and Public Health

- Application of biomedical principles can be limiting (Upshur, 2002)
- Ethical framework need to focus on public interest and common good (Baylis, Sherwin, & Kenny, 2008)
- Must also address issues concerning social justice (Kass, 2001)

Ethical Frameworks in Public Health

Principles for
the Justification
of Public Health
Intervention

Upshur, 2002

An Ethical
Framework for
Public Health

Kass, 2001

A Relational
Account of
Public Health
Ethics

Baylis, Sherwin,
& Kenny, 2008

PHN ethics and nursing curricula (survey)

Response rate: 46.5% (40/86 schools of nursing accredited through CASN)

- 92.5% (37) offered a community health nursing course (43% offered in third year of nursing program)
- 55% (22) discussed PHN and Home Health Nursing as distinct specialties of community health nursing

How is public health nursing ethics addressed within the course/curriculum?

- PHN ethics integrated in class discussions (48.7%) but amount of time spent and ways of discussion varied between programs
- Used CNA (2008) Code of Ethics for RNs and the CHNC (2011) Canadian Community Health Nursing: Professional Practice Model and Standards of Practice as frameworks
- Introduced ethical theories such as utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics, feminist ethics
- Other concepts used: primary health care principles, social justice, advocacy, equity

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Survey Findings

- Public health nursing ethics content in nursing curricula still evolving
- Concept of social justice frequently mentioned by respondents when teaching community health nursing/public health nursing
- No consensus on ethical frameworks used to teach public health nursing ethics

Recommendations

Nursing Education:

- Add/strengthen discussion of public health and public health ethics in nursing curricula
- Continue discussion of social justice in nursing curricula
- Use Relational ethics to examine ethical issues in public health nursing

Nursing Practice:

- Provide continuing education to support PHNs' ethical decision making
- Create space for PHNs to address ethical issues faced in practice e.g. forming local public health nursing ethics committee

Nursing Research:

- Explore PHNs understanding and experience of ethical issues in the workplace through nursing research

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