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## The Use of Faculty-Student Teams to Strengthen the Ethics Content in a DNP Program

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### Abstract

Nurse practitioners are confronted with ethical dilemmas. Being able to identify these situations is essential to effective resolutions. Ethics content was introduced by a faculty-student team with subsequent survey regarding the usefulness of ethical frameworks in resolving dilemmas. One year later students were asked by another faculty-student team to define and identify ethically challenging situations they encountered. Those in clinical were better able to identify ethically challenging situations. Didactic portion only students do not seem to have the necessary skills to identify ethical dilemmas. Identifying the appropriate place to introduce and discuss ethical dilemmas is paramount for developing effective DNP curriculums.

### Background

Ethics has been a thread in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program curriculum since the program's inception.

It is an outcome measure for the program competencies.

However, graduates indicated they had difficulty identifying ethical dilemmas.

The health care environment demands ethical providers.

### Dundon-Berchtold Fellowships

An endowed institute for applied ethics that provides fellowships for faculty-student pairs to explore moral education and development. The School of Nursing had two faculty-student teams to receive fellowships: 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 to enhance the application of ethical theories and frameworks in healthcare decision making for Doctor of Nursing Practice students.

### Methods

- ❖ Ethical principles reviewed in two courses were: Justice, Nonmaleficence, Beneficence, and Autonomy. These principles enable the nurse practitioner to become more ethically sensitive in responding to healthcare situations.
- ❖ Specific case studies were developed from literature to assist students in identifying and resolving ethical dilemmas.
- ❖ The Social & Health Policy course case study was about low income women with breast cancer lacking access to care.
- ❖ The Human Population Ecology course case study was about tobacco advertising geared toward children.
- ❖ A survey was administered by the 1st faculty team following the case studies and discussion regarding the effectiveness of case studies as a teaching strategy for sorting out ethical dilemmas.
- ❖ The following year the 2nd faculty student team surveyed students regarding identification and definition of, and barriers to ethical dilemmas.

### Methods cont'd

- ❖ 3 case studies were developed from survey data and presented back to the students for validation

### Results

Identification:  
61.5% experienced ethical dilemma in practice

Definitions:  
"Between a rock and a hard place"  
Right vs wrong – both sides presented equally  
"Right choice is not obvious"

Barriers:  
Didn't want to upset preceptor/superior  
Inexperience

Some students were more engaged in discussing the topics than others.

The case studies allowed the graduate student scholar to explore current healthcare topics in more depth than in the classroom.

### Conclusions

Realistic case studies will be incorporated into future courses.

Curriculum interventions should be placed with clinical experiences for optimum results.

### Implications for NPS

The topic fits the nursing profession as this was American Nurses Association Year of Ethics.

This focus on ethics in nursing represents realization of the importance of this topic to everyone in the health care arena.

DNPs will be confronted with individual and population based ethical dilemmas.

To reduce moral distress the use of an analytical framework can assist with ethical decision making.

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