

Commentary

The role of religion in end-of-life care: Medical challenges and ethical considerations

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DESCRIPTION

Religion plays an important role in influencing individuals' worldviews, ethical frameworks, and decision-making processes, including those related to medical treatment. Religious beliefs often include views on health, illness, and the human body. For instance, in some religions, illness is viewed as a spiritual imbalance rather than a physical illness, prioritizing prayer over conventional medical interventions. Making medical decisions can be significantly affected by these perspectives. The believers may prioritize spiritual activities over medical care, look for alternative therapies, or oppose specific medical procedures. Such decisions can raise challenges for medical professionals making an effort to provide evidence-based care while respecting patients' religious beliefs. The patients' independence to make informed decisions about their healthcare is an need component of medical ethics. However, when religious beliefs strongly influence these decisions, conflicts may arise.

Furthermore, decisions about the end of life, such as whether to accept or reject life-sustaining therapies, can be influenced by the beliefs of religion. Religious practices are usually connected with cultural norms and societal expectations, further complicating medical decision-making. In many societies, religious leaders hold significant influence, guiding community members' health-related choices. This influence can develop trust in religious guidance while potentially limiting access to medical information and interventions thought to be against the rules of religion. Religious communities may support the use of healthcare procedures that align with their beliefs, such as providing culturally sensitive care or supporting ethical medical research. Despite having different views on health and healing, the collaborations between religious organizations and healthcare professionals show that there are options for respectful involvement and mutual understanding.

Healthcare professionals experience difficulties while navigating the connections between medical care and religious views, especially when it comes to informed consent and patient education. In order to make sure patients are aware of their treatment options, potential risks, and alternatives, effective communication becomes important. In order to resolve concerns

without losing patient safety or medical standards, this communication must be considerate of religious beliefs.

Moreover, disparities in healthcare access and outcomes may arise when religious beliefs determine treatment preferences. For example, communities with religious objections to certain medical procedures may experience higher rates of preventable diseases or delayed diagnoses. In order to encourage health equity while respecting varied beliefs, improving these inequalities requires coordination between healthcare providers, religious leaders, and community organizations.

Despite the complexities involved, religious diversity presents opportunities for improving healthcare practices through communication and comprehension. Cultural competency instructions can help healthcare professionals better manage religious traditions and beliefs, increasing cooperation and trust with a variety of patient populations. Similarly, religious leaders can be extremely important in advancing health literacy and responsible medical decision-making in their communities. Moral systems provide a basis for managing problems between healthcare recommendations and beliefs in religion. One example of this is the medical ethics principle of respect for autonomy. Healthcare professionals can maintain moral standards and promote compassionate care that is appropriate to each patient's requirements by respecting patients' freedom to make decisions based on their beliefs.

Religious practices exert significant impact on medical decision-making, developing views on health, illness, and treatment. While presenting challenges in healthcare delivery and ethical dilemmas, religious beliefs also provide opportunities for cultural sensitivity, and mutual understanding. By respecting patients' religious convictions, healthcare providers can promote patient-centred care that acknowledges and integrates diverse beliefs into the medical decision-making process. Collaboration between healthcare providers, religious leaders, and communities is essential to facilitating equitable access to healthcare while maintaining moral standards and respecting individual choice. Healthcare systems are able to assist varied populations and promote overall health in accordance with religious and cultural values by accepting diversity and encouraging polite conversation.

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