

Imaging Scenario: Student Competency

Scenario #5

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Scenario Summary

In this scenario, we will discuss an interaction between a CT technologist and a patient admitted into the emergency room. This patient happened to be a biker who suffered severe injuries from a collision with a car. The patient was dressed in leather, his arms were covered with tattoos, and he was unshaven and in need of a bath. A head CT scan was called in for the patient who was also accompanied by his fellow biker friends. When the CT technologist entered the room she was fearful and irritated by the bikers. She felt certain that the patient got what he deserved and hoped that he had signed a donor card. The interaction is an unpleasant one as the tech openly displays her fear and irritation with the patient. The technologist then receives a negative customer service survey that results in a visit to her manager's office. Furthermore, the biker later returns for a follow-up CT scan. This time, he is dressed in a business suit and the technologist is shocked to realize that he is one of the hospital's attorneys. He informs the technologists that he enjoys riding with his biker friends on weekends who, like him, also wear suits during the week.

Ethical Dilemmas

In this scenario, the technologist treated the patient unfairly and in addition did not provide a quality patient care experience. A very significant issue in this scenario was the discrimination and prejudice that the technologist portrayed towards the patient and his friends. The technologists made inappropriate assumptions of the patient and his friends based primarily on their appearance. This demonstrates disrespectful behavior from the technologist and carelessness of the patient's autonomy. In addition, justice was not served to the patient as it was wrong of the technician to believe that he got what he deserved. In this dilemma, the patient's rights were disregarded when he did not receive considerate and respectful care from the

technician. In order to fix this issue, the technician should have treated the patient in the same manner that every patient is treated. The technician should remember that it is important to treat each patient fairly regardless of their injuries or appearance.

Legal Obligations

The actions of the technician in this dilemma are considered medical negligence due to their failure to follow the appropriate standard of care. It is unacceptable for any health care professional to have or show bias and treat patients unfairly. In this case, the technician is negligent for not providing the patient with the same degree of care as another reasonable person would have in the same situation. Medical negligence is also considered a form of an unintentional tort which further makes the actions of the technician a legal issue. Although the patient only submitted a negative customer service survey, he may have easily filed a lawsuit against the technician because of her behavior. In order to prevent malpractice in the healthcare setting, professionals need to act with competence and compassion at all times. It is of great significance that the technician realizes what they did wrong during this patient encounter therefore it can be fixed in the future.

Professional Obligations

This dilemma also addresses the important concept of Standard of Care and what is expected of professionals in the healthcare setting. Standard of Care can be defined as "...the obligation of health care professionals to do no harm and their duty to provide reasonable patient care."(Book 35) This points out how the technician has failed their professional responsibility of serving patients. The actions of the technician may have caused harm to the patient due to their careless thoughts and behavior. Due to the technician's beliefs, this also caused neglect to the patient as they did not receive a satisfactory patient care experience. It is also important to

analyze this dilemma based on the professional Codes and Rules of Ethics. For this discussion, Codes 3 and 8 from the Codes of Ethics will be considered. Code 3 reads “ The radiologic technologist delivers patient care and service unrestricted by the concerns of personal attributes or the nature of the disease or illness, and without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, or socioeconomic status.”(Book 263) This code points out a significant flaw in the technologist's actions and behavior towards the patient. Unfortunately in this case the technician did not abide by this and instead let her beliefs get in the way of her primary responsibility. In addition, Code 8 may also be discussed which reads “ The radiologic technologist practices ethical conduct appropriate to the profession and protects the patients rights to quality radiologic technology care.”(Book 264) The technician did not, in this case, protect the patient's rights by not advocating for the patient and providing him with quality care. Additionally, I do not believe that the technologist acted with appropriate ethical conduct in this circumstance. Therefore I also want to mention Rule #10 from the Rules of Ethics. I want to add that the technician broke this rule as well due to their “...willful or careless disregard for the health, welfare, or safety of a patient.”(Book 266) The comments and thoughts made by the technician were hurtful and demonstrated the technician’s carelessness for the patient’s health and safety. It is never okay for a professional to wish harm to a patient or believe that they do not deserve quality care.

Discussion Summary

Analysis of this dilemma demonstrated the ethical, legal, and professional obligations that the technologist failed to perform. Understanding the rules that were broken by the technologist helps us realize what actions need to be worked on and how to prevent this from happening again in the future. As medical professionals, we must respect the autonomy of the

patient which includes accepting the cultural differences of each individual. Discrimination is not acceptable as it is crucial that every patient receives quality care from their providers. Regardless of the technologist's fear or irritation, the technologist should have refrained from showing her feelings and continued to provide outstanding patient care to the patient. Every attempt should be made to provide each patient with a high-quality exam during each visit. It is important for every health care professional to perform their duties with care and compassion free of prejudice or unfairness.

References

Towsley-Cook, D.M., Young, T.A., (2007). *Ethical and Legal Issues*. Mosby, Inc., an affiliate of Elsevier Inc.