

Imaging Scenario: Student Comprehensive Evaluation

The Case of Jacob and the Diseased Leg- Scenario 2

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The scenario about Jacob and his diseased leg is a very despairing story about how he was held back from an incredibly good opportunity. This scenario describes how Jacob suffered from an injury playing football where he ended up having to get surgery to repair his lower leg. All is well until his recovering injury grew into osteomyelitis. This is what caused him to lose his opportunity at a scholarship as it delayed his recovery process. The parents of Jacob believe that it was the doctor at fault for this infection. The doctor was accessing multiple patients and failed to perform proper hygiene and sanitation techniques. This inevitably caused him to get sued by Jacob and his family.

There are many ethical dilemmas that arise with a scenario like the one above. This doctor did not actively attempt to perform nonmaleficence. Nonmaleficence is the avoidance of evil. This could have been acted upon by performing proper handwashing techniques, replacing the gloves before transferring over to a new patient, using hand sanitizer as he switched between rooms, etc. Nonmaleficence goes together with beneficence. Beneficence is the performance of good acts. Doctors are held to a standard and expected to promote good action and prevent harm or evil. While attempting to perform beneficence on Jacob's leg, Doctor M made the mistake of causing more harm than good. Doctor M's mistake led to causing a man his opportunity at something important in his life.

Healthcare workers must follow a code of ethics. This ensures patients the best care they could have while also outlining what to expect when being in the healthcare setting. Patients should be aware of their expectations, patients should know their rights, and they should know their responsibilities as well as the healthcare workers' aiding them. Patients have an expectation of the quality of care that they should receive as well as the environment they will be in. They expect to be cared for as a first priority with respect. They should know the identities of the healthcare workers helping them and also expect these healthcare workers will follow the policies and procedures to ensure the safest environment. This is where the Jacobs family felt as though Doctor M did not hold up his standards. While not performing the proper procedures and policies in place for hygiene from patient to patient, Doctor M put a patient at risk who expected to be safe in this healthcare setting.

There are more obligations in place for healthcare workers to follow to ensure patient safety and comfortability. Patients should be knowledgeable about their medical conditions as well as the available treatments. Doctor M did follow the protocols on this expectation. Patients should also expect the doctor to be aware of or ask about the medical histories of their patient to have a full understanding to make treatment decisions. They should also protect your privacy as well as aid everyone in insurance claims, preparing for leaving the hospital, etc. The patient should feel as comfortable and safe as possible. By doing all of this, it can avoid any mistakes before they happen. If Doctor M had performed proper hygiene before assisting patients at risk, he would have avoided this situation all together.

Virtue ethics focuses on the use of practical wisdom for emotional and intellectual problem solving. Doctor M should have been performing using virtue ethics. By doing this, he could have identified that he did not perform the proper hygiene techniques before going into the patient's room and touching his leg. Instead, Doctor M should have washed his hands and

replaced his gloves before going back into Jacobs room to access his wound. By doing this, Jacob would not have obtained osteomyelitis and therefore could have recovered faster and still had his football scholarship. This could have also prevented Doctor M from being sued.

Tort is a civil wrong for which the law provides a remedy. Doctor M performed what is called unintentional tort. This is defined as wrongs resulting from actions that were not intended to do harm. Doctor M did not purposely try to give Jacob osteomyelitis through his wound. This was done unintentionally by a simple step missed while treating patients. Doctor M had a duty which he did not perform adequately. Medical malpractice was also performed in this scenario. Doctors have a duty to follow the appropriate standard of care. By not performing this, Doctor M may be held liable as the plaintiff can prove evidence that the standard has been violated, show that an injury occurred, prove that the injury was caused by the violation of the standard of care, and evidence of an applicable standard of care. This is a legal obligation for doctors and healthcare professionals to abide by.

In the Rules of Ethics, it states under three. (i.) “Conviction of a crime, including a felony, a gross misdemeanor, or a misdemeanor, with the sole exception of speeding and parking violations. All alcohol and/or drug related violations must be reported. Offenses that occurred while a juvenile and that are processed through the juvenile court system are not required to be reported to ARRT.” Doctor M must report this to the ARRT as he may be a part of a civil case as medical malpractice is usually a civil case unless it is filed in a deferral court, which does happen in some cases. He may be charged with a misdemeanor, but it is exceedingly rare to be charged with a felony in this case unless it progresses and gets worse. He may have his license suspended or taken away depending on the outcome of the suit filed. Doctor M also violated the Rules of Ethics under six. (i.-iii.) which states “Engaging in unprofessional conduct, including, but not limited to: (i)a departure from or failure to conform to applicable federal, state, or local governmental rules regarding radiologic technology practice; or, if no such rule exists, to the minimal standards of acceptable or prevailing radiologic technology practice; (ii)any radiologic technology practice that may create unnecessary danger to a patient's life, health, or safety; or (iii)any practice that is contrary to the ethical conduct appropriate to the profession that results in the termination from employment.”

Professionalism is particularly important in the healthcare setting. It sets the overall tone and environment for the patients. Professionalism is defined as an awareness of the conduct, aims. And qualities defining a given profession. Professionals have values that are motivated by the code of ethics, formal instruction, and role modeling. By modeling professionalism, you are building trust between yourself and the patient. Trust is especially important between patients and healthcare workers. This can improve communication, patient satisfaction, sense of safety, confidence, and give an overall better patient experience. This leads to positive health outcomes and overall quality of care. Professionalism is also included in the Code of Ethics stating, “The radiologic technologist conducts herself or himself in a professional manner, responds to patient needs, and supports colleagues and associates in providing quality patient care.” The experience that a patient has reflects not only the healthcare provider but also the institution. In this scenario, since this situation happened between Jacob and Doctor M, the family may have a bad reputation

of the institution which is shared with their friends and family and travels by ear. Although this happened with one doctor it will reflect on the institution and the other healthcare workers who were not involved with the incident.

In conclusion, this scenario is very avoidable as there was one simple thing that could have been done to avoid the situation that happened. In my opinion, if Doctor M had simply used proper hand hygiene before continuing to the next patient, this could have all been avoided. Jacob would have been able to recover properly and maintain his scholarship opportunity while allowing Doctor M to maintain a good reputation. Therefore, it is important to continue to follow the proper protocols and procedures in place which also follow the code of ethics expectations to provide patients with the best experience possible. It also goes to show how one mistake may become a big problem that could have been avoided altogether. Everything you do as a healthcare worker reflects onto yourself, your institution, and others in the healthcare field. This is why it is important to maintain professionalism and values to carry with you day to day.