

Imaging Scenario: Student Comprehensive Evaluation

The Case of Misunderstanding, Scenario No. 1

Joley Weaver; Ethics 101; December 12, 2024

A young woman who is six months pregnant arrives at a Trauma center after she is in a Motor Vehicle Accident. Her seat belt and airbag has left severe bruising and she is experiencing chest pain and she has not felt her baby move. While having images taken the patient overhears a conversation happening in the adjoining room and they say things like “fetal death”, “oxygen deprivation”, and “internal injuries”. The imaging professional quickly closes the door, but the increased concern of the patient makes the woman go into premature labor. Both the woman and baby are hospitalized for multiple weeks.

We as imaging professionals are supposed to do no harm, nonmaleficence, and have professionalism within our profession. Some of the characteristics of professional behavior are honesty, integrity, and fairness. I do not think it was fair to the patient that the imaging professional was talking about her case in the other room. I also think that it is important to have integrity in situations such as those because you never know what the patient could be thinking or going through outside of what has already happened to her, and she was already flustered and not feeling great since she had just been in a Motor Vehicle Crash. When the Imaging professional was talking about the case going on in the other room that was the first problem that I noticed from the scenario. HIPPA, as I have learned in school, is very important and something that should not be violated. The first violation that the imaging professional crossed to me was the HIPPA violation. We have a legal obligation to protect our patient’s rights at all costs first and foremost because of HIPPA. I also think that autonomy was an important role that should have been practiced by the imaging professional and it seems as if that kind of went out the door for them. Personally, I would be careful of my surroundings if I was going to talk about something that was going on but again this should not be happening in the first place. For this to

not happen again I think protocols should be put into place for the imaging professionals to not talk about any cases near patient accessible areas. I think this is important to protect the patients as well as the imaging professionals. For some places I understand that this may not be accessible, but I think it could be something to help prevent this from ever happening again. I also think additional staff training might be necessary in this case just to reiterate the legal and ethical breaches that can occur when or if a patient overhears you talking about things that are going on or what could be possible outcomes. As well as reiterating the possible legal actions that could take places for the consequences of the employee's actions. Discussing these things further with the departments employees could help implement a more professional and confidential environment to the departments patients that come in. I also think that in this case the patient could have been more immediately attended to. It did not seem like the imaging professionals soothed or helped her in a way that could calm her down soon after hearing what she overheard. It is always important to ensure your patients safety and to make sure that your patient is comfortable. Additional training may be necessary here as well to help the imaging staff to understand or just retrain the professionals on how to calm and soothe an anxious or emotionally distressed patient. In this specific scenario that patient was already emotionally stressed and anxious about her baby, and I think the premature labor could have been avoided if the Imaging professionals who were helping her could have been a little more soothing to her and her babies needs at the time.

I think the best solution for the Imaging team would be to enhance staff training. I think it would be a good way of implementing to the needs from the staff as well as reiterating the need for taking care of patients and implementing department protocols. Sometimes additional training is necessary, and we are in a field of work that requires continued education and training

to be able to achieve our job well. To help prevent this scenario from happening again a training can be helpful in discussing how to prevent things like this from happening in the future.

Discussing with staff how to speak compassionately and sensitively to patients can help soothe the patient in a time of need such as this. And, discussing with the staff to not talk about the patient near patient accessible areas and providing alternative solutions may be helpful.

Discussing this can improve the patient's trust that come into the imaging department and help improve the patient care of the imaging professionals for the facility overall. Having a staff training could be an immediate impactful solution to the problem to be able to retrain the faculty on what to do in specific cases such as this one. Working in a fast-paced trauma center there can be complications sometimes with staff and patients and making sure that confidentiality and privacy are obtained in these types of environments is very important. Being proactive and trying to prevent the cause of the problem before it happens should be the first step in ensuring a situation like this one not happening in the first place. Training can also further address Tort Law concerns such as negligence, HIPPA, beneficence, and nonmaleficence. The duty to do no harm is our priority and provide reasonable care. Due to the imaging professionals' mistakes causing the patient and her baby to have to stay in the hospital for multiple weeks, I think this was a breach of duty. Using phrases like "fetal death" and "oxygen deprivation" was not appropriate to be saying or discussing in the next room. And this was the overall cause of the pregnant women going into premature labor. This all leading to a longer hospital stay than what was expected by the patient and a longer hospital stay means the patient having to pay more money and that is never the goal for patients that come into the hospital. HIPPA violations were crossed and the patients right to privacy was not obtained. Serious matters such as this should never be discussed near a patient, let alone the patient that it is about. Letting the patient overhear details that caused

emotional harm to the patient could have been avoided. Beneficence and nonmaleficence are also important to point out because we have a goal to do good, and to do no harm. Keeping these in mind with every patient that we see in the imaging department is important to maintain an overall great image for ourselves, our fellow coworkers, and the facility overall. Remembering that we represent the whole facility is something that should always be considered when we have a patient. I make it a personal goal of mine to try and treat every patient that comes in with respect and professional care to be able to satisfy the patients' needs with the time that I have with them. Nonmaleficence is our primary responsibility, and we want to strive to ensure that we obtain our standard to protect our patients.

To be able to prevent these things from happening again I think that an immediate staff training is necessary to go back over the duty of care and reiterate Torts Law. Retraining the staff would be cost efficient and beneficial to be able to get everyone on the same page. To help uphold the standards of healthcare as well as maintaining a good image of the facility I think it would be beneficial as well to make sure that if any future incidents were to take place the staff is adequately trained and prepared on how to treat the situation and prevent any situation like this from happening again. Maintaining a strict policy and implementing effective communication within the department will also be beneficial to help keep everyone on the same page. If I were the pregnant woman in the scenario, I would not want my case to be talked about like the imaging professionals were in this matter. I think it is important to uphold our duty of care as medical professionals and maintain a good image for ourselves, our team, and the facility overall. One of the Imaging professionals that I have had the privilege of working with this semester taught me to treat every patient that comes in like they were my own family. If we all

had the same ideal perspective, even though we all as individuals have our own way of doing things, I think that this could also be beneficial to anyone in the medical field.

Overall, I think a staff training is necessary and will be helpful to all the staff in the imaging department. This scenario taught me how important it is to attend to all your patients and to not say things about your patients at all. If there is a need to do so you can find somewhere that is a little more private but treat others the way you would want to be treated. Diving into the ethical dilemmas and issues in this scenario have helped me to better understand the position that I will be in soon as an Imaging professional.

Cites

Towsley-Cook, D.M., & Young, T. A. (2013). *Ethical and legal issues for Imaging Professionals*. Mosby.