

Imaging Scenario: Student Comprehensive Evaluation

The Case of Jacob and the Diseased Leg- Scenario No. 2

Shayla Hardin; Ethics 101; 12/11/2025

Jacob was a normal high school student, who was a quarterback on the football team. He was an excellent quarterback and had been offered a scholarship after graduation. At a summer practice Jacob suffered a compound fracture of his fibula. Because the bone broke through the skin, he had to have surgery to realign the bone and close the wound. Jacob stayed in the hospital for three days where he received intravenous antibiotics. At his six week follow up with Dr. M for his cast removal they noticed some inflammation and drainage around the stitches, though the fracture looked to be healing. His surgeon, Dr. M went to see another patient across the hall. This patient, Sarah K, had a serious leg infection called osteomyelitis. The doors to the patient's rooms were left open, this allowed Jacob's parents to see and hear what was going on in the other room. Dr. M removed his gloves and washed his hands before going to Sarah's room. While in Sarah's room, Dr. M did not use gloves to examine Sarah's infected leg. He then went back to Jacob's room without washing his hands. He then started to examine Jacob's leg again. Jacob came back a week later with his leg infected and a large abscess. Jacob had to have another surgery to drain the abscess, and with further testing showed that he had osteomyelitis. The infection took months to heal. Jacob could not play football and eventually lost his football scholarship. Jacob's parents requested the tissue results and sued Dr. M for negligence.

There are obvious mistakes that Dr. M made. One mistake was not using gloves when examining Sarah. The second mistake was not washing

his hands before leaving here room. The third mistake was leaving the doors open while he went to see the other patient. This allowed Jacob's parents to see what was going on. Jacob's parents contributed in what led Jacob to contract osteomyelitis. His parents saw Dr. M examining Sarah's leg without gloves and did not stop the doctor from touching Jacob's leg. There was already concern with the inflammation and drainage around the stitches. There are other questions that could have been asked such as did he take the antibiotics like he was supposed to and was that area on his leg kept clean and dry. Those questions we do not have the answers to because they are not stated. Everybody in this scenario could be at fault. The one most important thing that could have prevented Jacob from getting an infection would have been hand washing. If Dr. M would have washed his hands, this could have stopped the infection from being spread to Jacob. The parents should have stopped the doctor from touching Jacob's leg until he washed his hands.

There are many ethical dilemmas that are presented in this scenario. The most important of standard infection control procedures was not followed causing harm to Jacob. One ethical principle is nonmaleficence which means "to do no harm". Dr. M failed to put on gloves or wash his hands properly after examining another patient's infected wound. This allowed Jacob to be introduced to a serious disease. This negligence went against the ethical principle to protect Jacob from harm that could have been prevented. Another ethical principle that was violated with beneficence

which means actions that bring about good are considered right. Dr. M had a responsibility to ensure his patients with a safe and clean environment. In this case, he did not bring out an action of good. Jacob's leg was still healing along with the inflammation and drainage; he was at risk for developing an infection. Because Dr. M went between both rooms and did not use protective measures, this allowed Jacob's risk of infection to be greater.

Another ethical principle that was violated was justice which. Means fairness and "the obligation to act with equity". It was not fair to Jacob or his parents that the doctor came back in to examine his leg after seeing another patient with an infection and not remembering the very basic thing to do,

handwashing. There was no justice in what the doctor did, and Jacob had to pay the price for the act. In addition, fidelity was also misused. Fidelity is to be faithful and loyal. Patients have a sense of faith that they put into the doctor to do what is best for them. Each patient is different, and they want the doctor to act in their best interest. The doctor did not act this way. He was not faithful to Jacob or Sarah, in the sense of protecting them. Who is to say that the Sarah did not contract osteomyelitis that same way that Jacob did. Another situation that comes up is the invasion of privacy and confidentiality.

Because the doors were open between both rooms, Jacob's parents were able to see and hear information about Sarah's condition.

Patients expect their information to be kept private. It is very easy to become complacent in the workplace, doing the same thing every day or seeing the same thing day in and day out. Complacency can lead to poor outcomes.

While Dr. M possibly spreading the infection may have been unintentional this caused harm to Jacob. He had to have another surgery to have the abscess drained. This left Jacob to heal for months and lose his football scholarship.

The patients, community, and the institutions are affected when these ethical principles are not used. This results in a loss of trust. One wrongdoing that was caught can lead to many others being caught. This leaves patients to question their care. If that happened to one patient, it could happen to others. The community is affected because doctors are held to a higher standard and are supposed to protect their patients. The institution is also affected because they can lose out on money that is brought in from this doctor. They could also have to pay for the damages to the patients as well as losing patients to different institutes.

As we continue through ethical dilemmas, there is a question of how this needs to be handled, what outcomes should have occurred, and how to prevent this from happening in the future. First, you must identify the problem. Dr, M did not follow basic infection control procedures to protect this patient along with patient privacy. Because of this, Jacob was harmed. Now we look for alternate solutions that can be put into place to prevent this from happening in the future. One solution would be to use gloves and handwashing after every patient. This would include the use of hand sanitizers. A second solution would be to keep the doors closed between all exam rooms to maintain the patient's privacy. A third solution would be to

determine a way to schedule patients with infection in separate areas or separate days. A fourth solution would be to wait to see Jacob until the doctor could ensure proper handwashing procedures could be done. The best solution would be to change gloves and wash hands in between patients. Dr. M should have made sure that he was following procedures for infection control. Hand washing is very important in healthcare. It is the number one way to prevent the spread of contaminants. If the doctor had taken the time to perform hand hygiene there may have been a good chance the Jacob's leg may not have gotten infected. The simple things can lead to the best outcomes for both Jacob and Dr. M.

There were many violations that deal with the ethical principles and because of that there is legal action that must take place. This scenario would fall under civil law which involve torts. There are two types of torts, intentional and unintentional. The failure to maintain confidentiality, negligence and even malpractice, this would fall under an unintentional tort. An unintentional tort occurs when a person causes harm to another through being careless and a failure to meet the standards of care. Negligence results from actions not intended to harm. This could also be considered gross negligence because there was no regard to life or limb. Dr. M had a duty of care to provide Jacob with care to meet the professional standards. This would include the use of gloves and handwashing to prevent the spread of infections. There was a breach of duty because Dr. M did not follow standard precautions. He examined a patient's infected leg without gloves and then

went without washing his hands back to examine Jacob's leg. A week later Jacob was back with a leg infection. This could be linked back together. It makes sense that Dr. M spread the infection to Jacob because he did not wash his hands. This proves that Dr. M is responsible for happened to Jacob. Jacob suffered many losses during the time of healing. It took him months to heal from this infection. He also lost his football scholarship during this process. All of this could have been easily prevented.

Medical malpractice, also called medical negligence, also occurred. Medical malpractice occurs when a healthcare professional does not do his duty to follow the standard of care and results in harm to the patient. Once again, the doctor had a duty to protect Jacob during his care. The doctor was expected to take precautions to keep Jacob safe. He violated that duty when he did not wash his hands after touching another patient's infected leg, causing that infection to be spread to Jacob. Which lead to show that the doctors action caused harm to Jacob. He can be tied back to this negligence because he was careless with his actions. Because of this Jacob suffered long-term damages, from possibly being in pain to his leg taking months to heal to losing his football scholarship. There are many ways to prevent malpractice, and it deals with the Seven Cs. This includes competence, compliance, charting, communication, confidentiality, courtesy, and caution. Dr. M did not follow the Seven Cs. He was not compliant; he did not follow the procedures in a medical office and that led to a patient being harmed. He did not protect patient confidentiality. A patient's medical information was

not kept between the patient and doctor because the exam room doors were left open. This allowed the patient's information to be overheard. He was not courteous because he did not take into consideration that patient's well-being. It showed an attitude of being careless. He did not use caution. He was not cautious when dealing with infections. He was not cautious when he decided not to wear gloves or wash his hands. The Seven Cs are important because it can affect a person's life whether it be good or bad. In this case it was not used to perform good, and a patient was harmed in the outcome.

In addition, legal consequences for invasion of privacy can be considered because of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Dr. M violated this when he left open the doors between patient's exams. This allowed Jacob's parents to overhear and see what was going on in the other room. There is a great chance Dr. M violated federal privacy laws. This can lead to fines, lawsuits against the doctor, and lawsuits against the institution. Once again, this affects the patients, community, and the institution. This affects the trust that comes from the doctor and the institution. The institution could be at fault by having to pay for the damaged caused to the patient. The patients and the community would not trust this doctor or even the institution to correctly care for them.

Dr. M failed to perform up to the standard of how a professional should act. This resulted in harming one of his patients. He failed to maintain a safe environment, to protect the patient from preventable infection, and failed to maintain confidentiality. To put this into perspective, there are Code of Ethics

and Rules of Ethics. The Code of Ethics and the Rules of ethics were put into place to assist in upholding ethical conduct and to provide patients with protection, safety, and comfort. Each health care profession has codes and rules in their line of duty, and each must be followed. Regarding Dr. M failing to maintain a safe environment, he would have violated Code eight, Rule ten. Code eight states “the radiologic technologist practices ethical conduct appropriate to the profession and protects the patient’s right to quality radiologic technology care.” (Young, 2007, p. 263). Rule ten states “engaging in any unethical conduct, including, but not limited to, conduct likely to deceive, defraud, or harm the public; or demonstrating a willful or careless disregard for the health, welfare, or safety of a patient. Actual injury need not be established under this clause.” (Young, 2007, p. 265). The ethical duty would not have been upheld to the patient. It is very easy to spread infections between exams. There was clearly a disregard to the patient’s health and safety. In regards to protecting the patient code two and rule twenty-two were violated. Code 2 states “the radiologic technologist acts to advance the principal objective of the profession to provide services to humanity with full respect for the dignity of mankind.” (Young, 2007, p. 263). Rule twenty-two states “failing to immediately report to his or her supervisor information concerning an error made in connection with imaging, treating, or caring for a patient. For purposes of this rule, errors include any departure from the standard of care that reasonably may be considered to be potentially harmful, unethical, or improper (commission). Errors also include

behavior that is negligent or should have occurred in connection with a patient's care, but did not (omission). The duty to report under this rule exists whether or not the patient suffered any injury." (Young, 2007, p. 266). If the tech had happened to oversee this interaction with the patient, they would have a duty to report this back to their supervisor. The professional did not act with respect towards the patient. It led to negligence, and the patient had to deal with those actions. The doctor openly did not wash his hands or use gloves between patients. Regarding to patient confidentiality, code nine, rule 12 was violated. Code 9 states "the radiologic technologist respects confidences entrusted in the course of professional practice, respects the patient's right to privacy, and reveals confidential information only as required by law or to protect the welfare of the individual or the community." (Young, 2007, p. 264). Rule 12 states "revealing a privileged communication from or relating to a former or current patient, except when otherwise required or permitted by law." (Young, 2007, p. 266). There should always be a respect to the patient's right to privacy and that did not happen in this scenario. The doors were left open between exam rooms. Not only did Jacob's parents overhear what was going on in the room others could have too. Sarah lost her right to privacy without even knowing what was happening.

In conclusion, many things went wrong in the scenario. There was a failure to protect the patient, failure to create a safe environment, and a failure to maintain confidentiality. All of this led to two patients being

harm. Jacob was harmed because of the spread of an infection from one patient to another and Sarah was harmed because she lost the right to her privacy. The doctor could be held under an unintentional tort for the actions that he caused. This leads to a loss of trust to those professionals held to a higher standard. In my opinion better care should have been provided of course. The doctor should be held liable for his actions. He failed to do the most basic thing and that was to wash his hands. If I were the parent in this scenario, I would have stopped him from touching my child until he washed his hands. I am not sure if that is because I have been in the medical field long enough to know what needs to be happen between patients. I also believe that should be some common sense to think to wash hands after walking out of a room to see another patient. All of this could have been prevented.

Citation

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