

Imaging Scenario: Student Comprehensive Evaluation

The Case of the Biker Scenario #5

Kristyn Martin; Ethics 101; 12/11/2025

A biker came into the ER one night looking for help after he was in an accident. He was covered in tattoos and smelled as though he had not showered in days. The CT technologist was called to perform imaging of his head. From the start, the technologist displayed fear and irritation toward the biker and his friends. Although she completed the CT scan, her demeanor revealed a lack of empathy for his situation. Later, she was called into her manager's office to discuss the encounter after receiving a negative review. As it turns out, the biker was the hospital's attorney, and he enjoyed getting out of his fancy suit on the weekends.

The technologist's behavior demonstrated prejudice, and a failure to uphold professional standards. Principle-based ethics emphasizes that "personal values and principles drive our professional ethical behaviors." In this case, the technologist's personal values conflicted with the ethical obligation to provide compassionate and equitable care. Before entering the room, she had already judged the patient as undeserving of the same level of treatment as others. As Technologists we are often primary observers for the Radiologist; therefore, it is very important to establish a baseline to be able to monitor any changes in patient condition. If the Technologist was not showing concern for the patient, she left the probability open for the patient's condition to change without her being aware.

Her discriminatory attitude was further evidenced by harmful remarks, including hoping the patient had a donor card and stating, "he most likely deserves what he received." Such statements reflect a profound ethical breach. This violates the ARRT Code of Ethics, which requires radiologic technologists to "conduct themselves in a professional manner and provide services to humanity with full respect for the dignity of mankind." She also displayed a lack of empathy and discriminated against him based solely on his appearance. This behavior is unacceptable—every patient deserves fair and respectful treatment. It is never our role to judge

whether someone “deserves” care. Our responsibility is to provide competent, compassionate care to every patient, regardless of the circumstances.

Alternatively, she could have asked another technologist to take this case. If there were no other technologists to help, then she should have tried to ensure the interaction was done in a respectful manner. She should have completed the exam with a compassionate attitude, regardless of personal beliefs, because they should never interfere with patient care. In healthcare, we often encounter people during the most difficult times of their lives. While we assess patients for many reasons—including cultural or religious considerations—appearance should only be used to identify injuries or guide respectful care, not to judge or discriminate. Our attitudes and expressions send stronger messages than our words. Her demeanor and body language conveyed irritation toward the patient and his friends, ultimately leading to a negative review and ethical implications.

Discrimination in healthcare is prohibited against employees as well as patients, and it is strictly prohibited under both ethical codes and federal law. The Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) mandates that any person presenting to an emergency department must receive an appropriate medical screening and stabilizing treatment, regardless of ability to pay, race, national origin, sex, or other protected characteristics. Failure to provide equitable care can constitute a violation of EMTALA, exposing the institution and involved professionals to enforcement actions, including civil monetary penalties and potential loss of Medicare participation status. Discrimination in patient care is not only an ethical violation but also a legal risk. Ethics Code 2 states that healthcare professionals are obligated to uphold the principal objective to provide services with full respect for the dignity of humankind, ensuring that personal values do not interfere with the delivery of competent and compassionate care.

To conclude, if I were in this situation, I would enter the patient's room with concern and empathy, leaving any personal feelings aside. As a radiologic technologist, my job is to help patients and support my team by providing accurate diagnostic images—not to judge patients or decide the care they deserve. It is essential to recognize that until direct communication occurs, assumptions based on appearance are inappropriate. Physical appearance should serve only as a guide for clinical assessment and culturally respectful interaction, never as a basis for prejudice or discriminatory behavior.

Reference

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