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Z ch 19 assignment

Ethical Issue in Nursing

One ethical issue in nursing I would like to discuss is physician assisted suicide. This addresses the ANA code of ethics principle stating that “The nurse promotes, advocates for, and protects the rights, health, and safety of the patient” (American Nurses Association, 2017). This is an issue because the code says we want to protect the health and safety of our patients, which would be contraindicated by letting them decide to die, but it also says that nurses advocate and protect the patient’s rights. Give them autonomy to decide to end their own life would be more on the advocacy side of nursing in my opinion. Even if a patient wants to die, this is still an ethical issue as there are so many criteria that must be considered. In reading an article from Saint Joseph’s University, I have been able to devise a list of things that must be taken into consideration when looking at physician assisted suicide, or death with dignity. One thing that would need to be considered when looking at a patient that is considering physician assisted suicide is that the patient is competent enough to make this decision. For example, we would not want a patient that is unconscious or under the influence of any medication that may hinder judgement when making this decision. It must be well thought out as it is a permanent decision. Another thing that must be considered is the patient’s current condition. Are they suffering unnecessarily? There are many other things that must be considered, but I would like to discuss some of the proponents and oppositions for physician assisted suicide. One proponent is that it gives the patient autonomy over their own care and bodies. Autonomy is one of the ethical principles of nursing. If the person is able to weigh their options and know what is going on without influence of others around them, then some believe that it is their right to be able to choose to die. Another proponent is that it shows compassion if we let a patient choose death when they are suffering an unimaginable amount of pain. Especially if we are not able to relieve this pain with treatment, it is thought to be important to give patient’s this choice in order to let them be free of suffering. There are other proponents of physician assisted suicide as well, but for now I am going to move on to oppositions. One opposition is that there is a vast difference between letting someone die and causing their death. Letting someone die is not directly causing

their death, this would be something like holding treatment. Causing someone to die would be something that directly causes a patient to die, such as giving a medication that will cause them to stop breathing or cause cardiac arrest. Another opposition to physician assisted suicide would be that physicians are human and they are bound to make misdiagnosis. This may be very unintentional, however if a patient is involved in a physician assisted suicide and it is determined that they actually died under circumstances that are inappropriate and were not what they had previously thought, it could be deemed unethical (Saint Joseph University, 2011). Overall, there are many ethical dilemmas that medical professionals must take into consideration when providing medical care. Physician assisted suicide is something that is legal in only a couple states and continues to grow as an ethical issue, specifically due to the way it both opposes and complements the ANA code of ethics.

Reference:

American Nurses Association. (2017, October 26). *Code of ethics for Nurses*. ANA. Retrieved February 28, 2023, from https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/nursing-excellence/ethics/code-of-ethics-for-nurses/

Saint Joseph University. (2011, February 1). *Is physician-assisted suicide legal? is it ethical?* Institute of Clinical Bioethics. Retrieved February 28, 2023, from https://sites.sju.edu/icb/is-physician-assisted-suicide-legal-is-it-ethical/