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One of the ANA code of ethics for nurses that stood out to me was the one that stated, ***“a nurse owes the same duties to self, including the responsibility to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, maintain competence, and continue personal and professional growth”***. I thought this was important because it is a reminder that your health as the nurse is just as important as your patients. Like anyone else when we get sick it’s harder to know when we need a break and get off the floor. When we’re sick, it is harder to focus which as a nurse makes it more difficult to make rational and competent decisions for your patient. Personally, I forget to prioritize my own health often. But now that I’m older I’m finding out that a lot of the problems I’ve been having could’ve been avoided had I gone to the doctor sooner or at least said something sooner. I’ve always heard people say that nurses make the worst patients and now I know why, as nurses we prioritize everyone’s health around us except for our own and eventually it catches up with us. This could lead to ethical issues because if you’re not being safe with yourself it could lead to safety issues for your patient.

During the pandemic nurses were in high demand and so many people were getting sick that nurses were going to work wearing multiple masks and pushing through their shifts, going home to take their clothes off that they wore to work just to hopefully avoid letting their families encounter anything they may have brought home with them. Nurses and healthcare workers were the heroes saving people day after day. But now that COVID19 numbers continue to decrease people forget about the healthcare workers and the bacteria/diseases they continue to encounter daily. During the pandemic, nurses were working so many hours and endless shifts that many nurses commonly reported moral distress, compassion fatigue, and burnout (Dellasega & Kanaskie, 2021). Burnout is a form of exhaustion which could be caused by a constant feeling of being busy or swamped. Healthcare was so short staffed during the pandemic and most of the patient care fell back on the nurses. Nurses were having to lift patients, and most were hooked up to a lot of machines that could lead to nurses hurting themselves not having as much help to move for their patients. Hospital directors didn’t want too many people in the room and at one point no one was allowed in the hospitals besides the patients. Nurses became their patients support system; nurses began to feel guilt secondary to isolating patients from their families (Dellasega & Kanaskie, 2021). In the ICU nurses were sitting with their patients as they passed away because families and loved ones were not allowed in the hospital which can put a lot of emotional stress on the nurses. Burnout is a real state of mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion that effects everyone, but as a nurse you’re taking care of someone, and people’s lives are at stake if mistakes are made. As a nurse this could be an ethical issue because you have someone’s life in your hand, medications and documentation errors

can occur. If you're not paying attention and grab or scan the wrong medication you could potentially harm your patients and it could result in death or other incidents. These can become bigger ethical issues because with burnout and stress it is more difficult to protect patient rights and autonomy, adequate staffing levels can lead to inadequate care and issues with facilitating end of life decision making.

I believe it is very important to prioritize your own health and safety. Know when you've reached your limit and when you need to take a break and breathe. By taking this time for yourself it will help you maintain competence and continue both personal and professional growth. Also, by taking this time to be responsible for yourself; you're helping eliminate the chances of errors and incidents leading to more ethical issues in the hospital setting and ensuring the safety of your patients.

Resource:

Dellasega, C., & Kanaskie, M. L. (2021). Nursing ethics in an era of pandemic. *Applied nursing research: ANR*, 62, 151508. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnr.2021.151508>