

What Would You Do?

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“I have neither given nor received, nor will I tolerate others’ use of unauthorized aid.”

**Do you want to know the crime of the prisoner to whom you have been assigned to deliver care?**

When it comes to providing care for someone, as a nurse, the main concern is being able to provide the proper professional care that will benefit the patient so that they can get better. As a nurse, I need to be able to provide professional care while being sensitive to the patient's values and beliefs as well as their cultural background. Yes as a nurse, you will interact with patients who have totally opposite values and beliefs as you are, not everything that you believe will apply to them. We have to come together and respect the wishes of our patients so that we can provide proper care. As long as we are able to help without compromising the values and beliefs of the people we care for, then we have done our part as a nurse. Now, with treating a prisoner, I am torn between two sides; one second is telling me that who they are and what they did does not really matter as long as they treat me as their medical professional while I treat them as my patient in a professional manner. The second is having me want to know what they did to earn their sentence and why they did it. The latter would create unnecessary biases that would keep me from performing my job at the best of my abilities. So how do I approach or how would I approach this situation?

Discussing the latter point would be my first focus which is wanting to know what the individual did to earn their sentence. I would like to know because it will give me an idea on how I need to take care of myself before caring for this patient. I want to know if I am dealing with someone who can end up hurting me while I treat them. Of course, this is easier said than because I personally do not know how I would react to this situation. To make everything simple, let's say the individual had taken someone else's life; a lot of factors play a role in this situation. Was it for self-defense? Was it a life or death situation? Are they mentally ill? Questions like

these would start to brew in my head to see why the individual did what they did. That, of course, will elicit different types of emotions when caring for the patient. It would cause me to have my judgements and biases that would in turn, reflect the quality of care that I provide for the patient. If they were put in a life or death situation where the only way they will make it out alive is to take another's life, then society says that we need to help that individual survive because they have been through enough. If they took someone else's life because of their mental state, then society says that they deserve to suffer. So judgements and biases for the person will be prioritized over their quality of care. My own personal values and beliefs will take over my emotions causing a decrease in my performance to actually given the best care that I can give. I would turn to what society has to say and believe that the reasons sound rational and logical.

Reflecting on that point is where professionalism comes in. When caring for an individual who has been incarcerated, they have the right to the same equal quality care as of other patients. As I mentioned earlier, who they are and what they did does not really matter much as long as they treat me like their medical professional while I treat them as my patient. We have to treat our patients with justice, defined as, "treating people fairly" (Hood 30), whether they are incarcerated or innocent. Plus, it really is none of my business on what the patient did to be incarcerated because that is not my job. I was hired to heal people and help them get better, not to decide whether or not the level of offense the person had committed is offensive enough to label them as a criminal. As a professional, the only thing I need to know is whether or not I can perform my duties safely and proficiently. Also, know just enough to protect myself from danger because if I get hurt, not only myself, but also the rest of the medical team and the other patients that I am responsible for will suffer. My own personal feelings with my values and beliefs will definitely be on the back of my head while caring for the individual, but having strong emotional

control plays a major role in this situation. As a professional nurse, my commitment is to the patient, as stated by the second code in the American Nurses Association Code for Nurses, “the nurse’s primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, community, or population” (Taylor 106). A lot of people may not agree with the proper quality care of incarcerated individuals for the things they have done, but they also need healthcare. As nurses, it is our duty to preserve all human life as much as possible. In healthcare, we aim to treat everyone equally and accordingly and even before getting into nursing school, we as students somewhat knew what we were getting ourselves into, no matter how hard it is.

So to answer the question of the topic, no, as professional in the field of medicine, I think it is unnecessary to know what the incarcerated individual did for them to end up in prison. I just need to know what I have to do to protect myself and others so that I can perform my job accordingly. It is not my place to know that side of the patient because that is not what I was hired to do. The patient is under my care because something is wrong with them and I am proficient enough to help them get better. The information about their crimes will not be beneficial when it comes to providing the best possible care for the individual. The only thing that such information will do is create unnecessary biases and judgements that will diminish the care that will be provided for the patient. Knowing that the patient is incarcerated for a crime is enough to create the unnecessary tension that can affect the care that is provided, let alone knowing the details. From a personal stand point, everyone would want to know what the individual did, but that’s what creates the barriers that will affect the team’s ability to perform at the best of their abilities. Keeping it professional will be the best plan of action, especially when dealing with situations like this. To state once again, as nurses, our prior commitment is to the patient.

References:

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