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Course Number: FHE-100

Introduction

In any professional setting particularly within healthcare and other decision-making fields—critical thinking and ethical obligations are essential traits that guide responsible and effective practice. Critical thinking enables individuals to thoroughly analyze situations, assess evidence, and draw logical, well-informed conclusions. In contrast, ethical obligations ensure that decisions and actions align with established moral principles, prioritizing the well-being of others and upholding professional integrity. Together, these traits play a complementary role in navigating complex and often ambiguous situations where both reason and morality are required. The integration of critical thinking with ethical responsibility not only enhances the quality of decisions but also fosters trust, accountability, and equity in professional environments. This combination is especially vital in high-stakes fields such as healthcare, where professionals frequently encounter challenging scenarios involving patient care, resource allocation, and confidentiality. By applying critical thinking within an ethical framework, individuals can arrive at solutions that are not only practical and effective but also morally sound. This essay explores the intersection of critical thinking and ethical obligations and highlights how their integration supports ethical decision-making and improves outcomes across a range of professional settings.

Characteristic One: Ethical Responsibilities

Ethical responsibilities in nursing refer to the set of moral obligations and professional standards that guide nurses to advocate for, protect, and promote patient well-being. This includes respecting patients' autonomy such as their right to informed consent acting in their best interests avoiding harm and treating all individuals fairly. According to the American Nurses Association's Code of Ethics (2023), ethical awareness enables nurses to identify morally significant situations, critically reflect on them, and uphold patient-centered standards even under pressure. The importance of ethical responsibility in daily nursing practice was highlighted by recent qualitative research of public health and critical care nurses, which revealed that ethical obligation is deeply felt as a need to respond to human vulnerability,

often amid uncertainty and solitude. Together, ethical obligations serve as the cornerstone of nursing's moral integrity, high standards of care, and trust.

As a medical Assistant, I was getting ready to hand off a patient to a Nurse for a procedure during a hectic shift at a clinic. I unintentionally left a patient's chart which contained private health information and personally identifying details on the counter in a public hallway, where other patients and guests may see it.

To strengthen my ethical responsibility in the scenario above, I can begin by developing a habit of double-checking my surroundings and ensuring all patient documents are secure before leaving any area especially during busy or high-stress shifts. I can also use the phrase "Never Leave Paper PHI Unattended" to become a personal motto. Make sure that any PHI-containing document, such as a prescription pad, patient chart, or other document, is constantly in reach and control or locked in a cabinet or drawer, I can also Use Secure Storage Even if I just need to store patient charts temporarily, try to keep them in locked file cabinets or other secure locations. As a nurse, building trust of your patient is very important and always ensuring patient safety and supporting high standards of care are all made possible by ethical obligations, which are essential to nursing professionals' success and development. Nurses who continuously adhere to ethical standards enhance their standing as trustworthy and caring experts. Along with improving patient outcomes, this dedication cultivates cooperative connections with healthcare teams and coworkers. Strong ethical responsibility practices eventually result in better leadership prospects in the field, personal development, and self-assurance.

Characteristic Two: Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is a fundamental skill that allows individuals to analyze information, evaluate evidence, and form reasoned judgments objectively and rationally. It goes beyond passively accepting information, encouraging individuals to question assumptions and explore various perspectives before forming conclusions.

As a medical assistant working with children, critical thinking is essential for assessing symptoms, recognizing when something is outside the norm, and responding appropriately to unexpected situations. For example, there's time when I may need to quickly determine whether a child's complaint is routine or a sign of a more serious condition. Using critical thinking helps me prioritize tasks, communicate effectively with healthcare providers, and ensure that each child receives safe, timely, and appropriate care.

Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly, logically, and carefully when making decisions or solving problems. As a medical assistant working with children, critical thinking is especially important because it helps ensure their safety and proper care before medical procedures. For example, when checking vitals, confirming a child's weight, or verifying that they haven't eaten or drunk anything before surgery, you must pay close attention to details and recognize when something doesn't seem right. If a child's weight seems ok or a parent mentions the child ate recently, you must think critically and act quickly to alert the nurse or provider. Using critical thinking throughout the day helps prevent serious complications and keeps each child safe and prepared for their procedure.

To develop critical thinking skills in my role as a medical assistant working with children, I will start by carefully reviewing each child's medical history and procedure instructions before taking vitals or preparing them for surgery. Practice asking clarifying questions when something doesn't seem right, like confirming fasting status or verifying weight measurements. Reflect on past experiences to identify

patterns or common issues that require extra attention. Additionally, seek feedback from nurses and doctors to improve your decision-making and stay updated on best practices. These strategies will help me become more confident and accurate in ensuring children's safety and care.

People can improve their critical thinking skills by consistently engaging in reflective thinking, which involves reviewing and analyzing their choices and behaviors to gain knowledge from them. Continuing education keeps information current and improves problem-solving abilities. Examples of this include reading current medical guidelines or attending workshops. Asking questions and getting other viewpoints from coworkers promotes a greater comprehension of circumstances.

Furthermore, maintaining organization and practicing good time management enable deliberate decision-making as opposed to snap decisions, which is crucial in hectic healthcare environments

Healthcare professionals' critical thinking and clinical decision-making abilities were shown to be considerably enhanced by reflective journaling and case discussions, for instance, according to a 2020 study published in Nurse Education Today. Furthermore, in her TED Talk on "How to Think Like a Scientist," Dr. Samantha Agoos highlights that critical thinking skills may be strengthened by challenging presumptions and asking the proper questions. These revelations show that critical thinking can be a potent instrument for enhancing professional performance and patient care when combined with deliberate practice and education.

In hospital settings, critical thinking is crucial because it enables medical staff to make well informed, evidence-based judgments under duress. To ensure patient safety, it helps them to precisely evaluate patient conditions, spot minute changes, and foresee possible issues. Effective problem-solving is facilitated by critical thinking, which aids medical teams in navigating challenging and uncertain circumstances through problem analysis and creative solution development. In the end, this skill set improves patient outcomes and the general standard of care in the hectic hospital.

Analyzing information objectively, challenging presumptions, and reaching logical and supported conclusions are all components of critical thinking. It assists people in effectively resolving issues while maintaining an open mind to various viewpoints. Moral values like honesty, justice, and accountability serve as a framework for ethical decision-making, which also takes other people's feelings into account. Critical thinking and ethics work together to guarantee that decisions are morally and rationally sound.

Together, critical thinking and ethical decision-making make sure that choices are both morally and logically sound. While ethics makes sure your decisions are in line with fundamental principles like justice and integrity, critical thinking aids in objective situational analysis and helps you avoid prejudice. Together, they produce deliberate, morally sound deeds that withstand examination. The overarching idea of making wise, responsible decisions in both personal and professional life is supported by this collaboration.

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Critical Thinking
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