
Background - Bioethical Principles

'Respect'

This principle focuses on respect for individuals. Part of respecting an individual has to do with respecting their autonomy. The word autonomy comes from the Greek *autos* (self) and *nomos* (governance). Autonomy emphasizes the responsibility individuals have for their own lives. Individuals have the right to self-determination and to make their own decisions and choices. The rules for informed consent in medicine derive from the principle of autonomy. In medicine, there is also a special emphasis on respecting individuals from vulnerable populations.

'Do Good' / 'Do no harm'

'Do Good' (beneficence) stresses directly helping others, acting in their best interests, and being a benefit to them. It requires positive action.

'Do No Harm' (nonmaleficence) relates to one of the most traditional medical guidelines, the Hippocratic oath (First of all, do no harm). It requires individuals to not intentionally or directly inflict harm upon others.

Justice- 'Be Fair'

This principle relates to 'Giving to each that which is his due' (Aristotle). It dictates that persons who are equals should qualify for equal treatment, and that resources, risks, and costs should be distributed equitably.

Some ethicists also add:

Care

Focus on the maintenance of healthy, caring relationships between individuals and within a community. The principle of care adds context to the traditional principles and can be used in a complementary way alongside them.

Focus on the Principles

Consider how the principles apply to the ethical question.
Some principles may apply more than others for a particular situation.

