

Health Policy 201

Fall 2010

Writing Assignment #6 – Ethics question OP-ED

Write an OP-ED taking a position on any of the topics below. First, research OP-ED policies and customs (length, audience, tone, format, etc.) of the publication. Consider your point(s) and include some support (statistic, another credible source, a common sense consequence, etc.) for each point. Your case will be stronger if you acknowledge the opposite argument and refute it. Cite appropriately for the format. Do not just make a statement and expect the reader to just believe you – make the case and back it up.

For a start, look at [http://www.cthealthpolicy.org/toolbox/opinion/op\\_ed\\_letters.htm](http://www.cthealthpolicy.org/toolbox/opinion/op_ed_letters.htm)

**Questions to consider:**

Is an individual mandate, a requirement that everyone buy health insurance, ethical?

How to decide who gets scarce transplant organs? How to set priorities – just first come first served, who is sickest (but still likely to fully recover), value judgments (i.e. nuns vs. prisoners on death row vs. welfare recipients), potential years of quality life left (children vs. seniors), by income (who can pay the most, who has insurance)

Is it ethical to pay organ donors?

Ethics and patient's rights – able to choose not to get treatment, for themselves, for children

Infertility – should it be covered? Plastic surgery?

Is profit in health care inherently unethical?

Is research on human stem cells, originally derived from embryos, ethical or not? Is the use of stem cells to cure disease ethical or not?

Is it ethical for a doctor to assist a patient in committing suicide?

Should people who have committed no crime be locked up against their will to protect the public, i.e. to ensure TB treatment, for mental health reasons?

Should patients be told of diagnoses that cannot be cured? If they pose no danger to others?

Is it unethical for a doctor to take gifts, lunches, trips, etc. from drug companies? Is it only unethical if he agrees to favor their products in exchange of receiving the gifts? How about to take samples to give uninsured patients?

Should infertility treatments be provided under health insurance? Even if it means other services must be reduced? Is it alright to offer this treatment but only for people who can pay the full price?

Should a doctor reveal to a patient's partner that his patient is HIV positive if he knows the patient is having unprotected sex with the partner?

Should pregnant women who continue to drink alcohol be locked up to protect the baby?

Should a doctor who knows or should have known that a patient was being abused be punished for not reporting the abuse? What if the patient asks him/her not to?

Is offering concierge medical services to some patients in a practice, who pay more for the service, ethical?

Is it ethical for a doctor to prescribe a medication for an off-label use before it has been tested for safety in that population for that use? What if it shows anecdotal promise? What if there are no other standard treatments available for the patient?

Should the state allow some people to refuse immunizations?

Should parents be able to refuse recommended, medically necessary treatment for a sick child due to religious reasons? Should courts be able to step in for the health of a child?

If a patient comes into a doctor visit insisting on a prescription for a medication that they saw in an ad, but the doctor does not believe the patient has the condition described, the medication would do them no harm, but no good either – can he prescribe the medication ethically?

Can a doctor ethically prescribe a placebo?