EP 23: Describe and demonstrate how nurses use available resources, such as the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses (ANA 2001), to address complex ethical issues. Provide examples from different practice settings.

Florence Nightingale first provided a structure for nursing and nursing practice. This structure was written in the Florence Nightingale Pledge, the first nursing code of ethics (ANA, 2001a). Since the time of Florence Nightingale, nursing practice has undergone many changes, but ethics has remained an essential foundation upon which nursing practice is based.

Nurses at all levels and in all areas of Riverside Medical Center use resources such as the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics for Nurses to address complex ethical issues. The ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses is a nonnegotiable statement of the ethical obligations and duties all persons entering the nursing profession are held accountable to follow (ANA, 2001a). The Code of Ethics for Nurses is an expression of nurses' understanding of the commitment they have to society. The Code (2001b, p. xviii) states, “The need for healthcare is universal, transcending all individual differences. The nurse establishes relationships and delivers nursing services with respect for human needs and values, and without prejudice.”

The ANA’s (2004) Scope and Standards of Practice is another resource for ethical practice that is available to Riverside nurses at all levels. Standard 12, Ethics, states: “The registered nurse integrates ethical provisions in all areas of practice” and “The registered nurse uses the Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements to guide practice” (ANA, 2004, p. 39).

Ethical structures such as the ANA Scope and Standards of Practice and the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses are embedded in Riverside’s Nursing mission, vision, values, and philosophy; in our Vigilance Professional Nursing Practice Model; in our Vigilance Care Delivery Model, RN Job Descriptions, and Performance Appraisals; in hospital policies and procedures; and in our Ethics Committee structure. Processes related to the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses are defined in our policies and procedures and are carried out by nurses at every level in their daily care of our patients/families and via our Ethics Committee structure. The embedding of the ANA foundations in our hospital structures and processes across all nursing areas provides evidence that these nursing foundations have been enculturated into our nursing practice. Descriptions of our structures and processes related to the ANA tenets of ethical practice follow. We have also provided several examples of our outcomes related to ethical practice in several hospital settings.

Riverside Medical Center’s (RMC) Nursing Mission, Vision, Values, and Philosophy

At Riverside Medical Center, we demonstrate our commitment to ethical nursing practice through our nursing mission, vision, values, and philosophy. Nurses at all levels
in the hospital were involved in developing these statements. These nursing structures underlie our commitment to providing ethical care.

**Nursing Mission**

Riverside’s nursing mission is: *Riverside nurses are vigilant in providing quality, caring services in a safe environment to our patients and families.* Our nursing mission exemplifies the second and third provisions of the ANA’s (2001a, p. 9) Code of Ethics for Nurses:

2. **The nurse’s primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, or community.** In the Riverside nursing mission, patients and families represent inpatients, outpatients, and anyone who is defined by the patient as family.

3. **The nurse promotes, advocates for, and strives to protect the health, safety, and rights of the patient.** Patient safety is an integral part of nursing practice at Riverside. Our recognition by HealthGrades™ as one of the safest hospitals in the nation for the 5th consecutive year is outcomes evidence that Riverside nurses embrace patient safety as a basic practice tenet.

**Nursing Vision**

Riverside’s nursing vision is: *Professional Nurses Empowered to Create a Culture of Excellence.* Our nursing vision provides a direction for nursing practice and supports the fifth provision of the ANA (2001a, p. 18) Code of Ethics for Nurses:

5. **The nurses owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to preserve integrity and safety, to maintain competence, and to continue personal and professional growth.** Empowerment denotes the right and responsibility afforded to Riverside nurses to uphold the delivery of excellent patient care. Ownership of practice is an expectation of Riverside nurses and responsibilities related to excellent care delivery are our nurses’ willingness to maintain competence, seek opportunities for professional growth, and refer patients to and consult with other caregivers when needed. These are elements of the ANA’s Code of Ethics Provision, 5.2: Professional growth and maintenance of competence.

**Nursing Values**

Riverside’s nursing values are:

*Partnership – Nurses work in cooperation with patients, families and other care providers guided by open communication and decision-making.*

*Integrity – Nurses are honest and ethical in all interactions with our patients, families, and colleagues.*
Excellence – Nurses strive to utilize best practices for optimal patient outcomes.

Stewardship – Nurses are responsible for the use of hospital and patient resources in our practice of nursing.

Like our nursing vision, Riverside nurses’ second value, integrity, is also congruent with the fifth provision of the ANA Code of Ethics, under 5.4: Preservation of integrity. ANA states, “Integrity is an aspect of wholeness of character and is primarily a self-concern of the individual nurse” (ANA, 2001a, p. 19). Conflict of interest for nurses, element 2.2 under the ANA’s second provision, also addresses the integrity of the nurse when conflicts arise between the nurses’ professional and personal values; between the nurses’ and patient/family values; and among patients, families, physicians, and co-workers. Riverside nurses demonstrate their adherence to these ANA Code of Ethics provisions in their vigilant care of patients and families and in their interactions with peers, physicians, and other caregivers. Several examples of the outcomes related to our nursing values will be provided later in this source of evidence.

Nursing Philosophy

Riverside’s nursing philosophy, like our mission and values, was developed with input by all levels of nurses. Our philosophy describes our beliefs in the nature of nursing practice at Riverside and uses the ANA Code of Ethics as a foundation for our beliefs.

Following is Riverside’s nursing philosophy. Relevant elements from ANA Code of Ethics are included.

“Nursing is an art and human science dedicated to improving the physical, psychological, socio-cultural, and spiritual well being of the patient. To that goal, we believe in:

• Collaborative, interdisciplinary, compassionate, vigilant care.

  (ANA Provision 1: The nurse, in all professional relationships, practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and uniqueness of every individual, unrestricted by the considerations of social or economic status, personal attributes, or the nature of health problems.)

• Promoting excellent quality outcomes through the use of evidence based practice.

• Following ethical principles to protect the health, safety, and rights of patients, community, and colleagues.

  (ANA Provision 3: The nurse promotes, advocates for, and strives to protect the health, safety, and rights of the patient.)

• Facilitation of patient and family education throughout the continuum of care to
promote wellness, safety, disease prevention, and healthy life styles.

(ANA Provision 8: The nurse collaborates with other health professionals and the public in promoting community, national, and international efforts to meet health needs.)

• Continually striving to identify uniqueness, values, needs, and beliefs of our patients and families.

(ANA Provision 1: The nurse, in all professional relationships, practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and uniqueness of every individual, unrestricted by the considerations of social or economic status, personal attributes, or the nature of health problems.)

• Active participation in determining the practice care environment, a culture that supports empowerment and accountability.

(ANA Provision 4: The nurse is responsible and accountable for individual nursing practice and determines the appropriate delegation of tasks consistent with the nurses’ obligation to provide optimum patient care.)

• Education as the cornerstone that fosters professional growth, confidence, competence, critical thinking, and decision-making.

(ANA Provision 5: The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to preserve integrity and safety, to maintain competence, and to continue personal and professional growth.)

(ANA Provision 7: The nurse participates in the advancement of the profession through contributions to practice, education, administration, and knowledge development.)

• An environment that nurtures and supports self-esteem and a love of nursing.

(ANA Provision 6: The nurse participates in establishing, maintaining, and improving health care environments and conditions of employment conducive to the provision of quality health care and consistent with the values of the profession through individual and collective action).

• The value of team members, a multidisciplinary approach, which creates trusting relationships with our patients, families, and community.

(ANA Provision 8: The nurse collaborates with other health professionals and the public in promoting community, national, and international efforts to meet health needs.)
• Being a patient advocate and calculated risk taker on behalf of our patients and families.

(ANA Provision 2: The nurse’s primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, or community.)

• Respect.

• Each Other.

• Us.

• Nursing at Riverside.

**Vigilance Professional Nursing Practice Model**

The ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses (2001a) and ANA Scope and Standards of Nursing Practice (2004) are also foundations of our Vigilance Professional Nursing Practice Model. One of the elements of Riverside’s Vigilance model is the professional nursing characteristic of Authority. For our nursing practice model, Authority is “the recognition and use of the nurse’s rights, power, and responsibility given them by [ANA] Standards of Professional Practice and the [ANA] Nursing Code of Ethics to use nursing knowledge, skill, and judgments that promote patient care and impact outcomes.”

Another element of the Vigilance model is Outcomes, “the results that reflect what patients and healthcare providers planned for the healthcare experience. Intended outcomes reflect knowledge of the patient/patient populations’ healthcare needs, health trajectory, and family and community resources.” In our model, one of the elements in outcomes is Active Participation of Patient, Family, and Community, or “the purposeful involvement of the patient, family, and community in determining the intended result of the healthcare experience.” This Vigilance model concept is congruent with ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses, Provision 2: The nurse’s primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, or community.

**Vigilance Care Delivery Model, RN Job Descriptions, and RN Performance Appraisals**

Riverside’s nursing care delivery model is also based on the concept of Vigilance. In the Professional Practice Model, Vigilance is the overarching concept that describes how nursing is practiced throughout the hospital. In the care delivery model, the concept of Patient/Family Vigilance through Primary Care Delivery or Team Care Delivery - determines how care is delivered by nurses in each unit or department.

Riverside’s Vigilance Care Delivery Model, RN job descriptions, and RN performance appraisals incorporate the ANA tenets of ethical care. The Vigilance Care Delivery Model includes the concepts and standards of all hospital RN job descriptions and
performance appraisals. The concepts or standards of the care delivery model, which address ethical care, are in Standards 6 and 7:

**Standard 6, Measure 6B:** Delegates appropriate tasks to other registered nurses, LPNs, and CNAs, in accordance with the Illinois State Practice Act and the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses, and ensures follow-up.

**Standard 7, Measure B:** Displays cultural sensitivity to the unique health needs of the patient and family, according to the ANA Scope and Standards of Nursing and the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses.

**Riverside Medical Center Ethics Committee – Structure and Processes**

Another structure available to our nurses is the ethics committee. Riverside nurses face ethical situations related to healthcare issues such as end-of-life decisions, a patient’s altered decisional capacity, treatment of pain, patient-family conflicts, and moral distress, which may be caused by conflicting personal and religious values. In its Scope & Standards of Nursing Practice, the ANA (2004, p. 39) states, “the registered nurse contributes to resolving ethical issues of patients, colleagues, or systems as evidenced in such activities as participating on ethics committees.”

Riverside has an active ethics committee, which holds scheduled and unscheduled meetings to discuss ethical concerns we face in delivering care to our patients. The committee regularly meets every other month. The committee is comprised of physicians, nursing leaders, staff nurses, social workers, and pastoral care providers. The purpose of the ethics committee meeting is to provide possible recommendations regarding a situation of ethical concern. Attendees at these meetings may include the family, any person involved in the care of the patient, and Ethics Committee members. Following is regular committee membership. Direct care RNs may also attend when the situation concerns patient care on their units:

- Dave Duda, RN, MSN, CNO
- Chris Anthony, RN, Director of Behavioral Services
- Director of Patient Safety/Employee Health, Hospital Risk Manager
- Judy Amiano, RN, Vice President of Senior Living Services
- Mary Schore, RN, MSN, Director of Quality Improvement
- 2ICU Direct Care RN
- Margaret Ondrey, RN, MSN, CNS/APN, Medical/Surgical & Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Specialist
- Sandy Viall, RN, MSN, Director of Nursing Services

The structure and processes of the Ethics Committee are provided in the following policy named, Ethics Committee Appointments and Meeting Procedures.
Subject: Ethics Committee Appointments and Meeting Procedures

Policy: A multi-disciplinary Ethics Committee shall be a committee of Riverside Medical Center. It shall have ten (10) members composed of persons interested in this important phase of healthcare practice. Consultants in specialized fields may be called in if needed; i.e., lawyers, psychologists, ethicists.

Standard: The work of the committee shall include:

1. Directing and facilitating educational programs on ethical issues for the committee itself, medical staff, hospital staff, and the community at large.

2. Serving in an advisory capacity for case consultation as requested by patients, their surrogate decision-makers, family members, healthcare personnel, and physicians when they are confronted with bioethical dilemmas.

3. Providing a forum for discussion among professionals and others about biomedical ethical issues. This could include retrospective case review of decisions having biomedical ethical implications.

4. Serving as an institutional resource for development and review of institutional policies and procedures related to ethical issues.

Procedure:

1. The President of the Medical Staff shall appoint the five (5) physician members, one of whom shall be appointed as chairman of the committee. The President/CEO of the hospital shall appoint the other five (5) members which shall provide a multi-disciplinary approach to ethics concerns.

2. The term of service will be a minimum of two (2) years. Suggested maximum is eight (8) years.

3. A secretary shall be appointed to keep minutes, type the necessary correspondence, and inform members of meetings.

4. Meetings will be held bi-monthly for committee education and/or attending to its functions.

5. All requests for case consultation shall be presented to the committee chairman or his designee.
6. The committee shall be informed of all requests for case consultation. The report shall include indication as to whether the case was reviewed, denied review, or handled in some other way.

7. The committee shall review and evaluate the consultation process at least yearly.

8. Policies and procedures that originate in this committee shall be reviewed and approved by the department(s) affected.

9. All members shall have equal input and vote. They can place items on the agenda by informing the secretary.

10. The Medical staff Executive Committee and President/CEO shall receive a copy of all minutes.

In addition to the regularly scheduled Ethics Committee meetings, any physician, staff member, or family member can request an emergency Ethics Committee meeting to discuss ethical dilemmas or situations. When an emergency meeting is called, the physician leading the committee will remind committee members that they do not make final decisions, but have been asked to assist in making recommendations regarding the patient’s care. The person requesting the ethics meeting will present the case and ask the committee for input and recommendations. All parties involved, including nurses, have the ability to participate in the meeting and offer recommendations regarding the issue presented. This process demonstrates how nurses actively fulfill our Riverside nursing mission, vision, values, philosophy, professional practice model, and care delivery model regarding complex ethical issues on a regular basis or in emergent or urgent situations. The policy outlining convening of emergency Ethics Committee meeting follows:

Riverside HealthCare
Kankakee, Illinois
Policy & Procedure

Subject: Requests for Ethical Consultation

Policy: To provide patients and/or their families as well as all healthcare givers with the benefit of consultation on an ethical issue. These issues will be addressed by members of the Ethics Committee when requested. The consultation may be requested by the patient and/or family, patient care staff, or member of the medical staff.

Procedure:
1. A request for an Ethics Consultation may be made at any time, 24 hours a day
and 7 days a week, to any of the following: physician, nurse, nursing supervisor, director, vice president, or member of the Ethics Committee.

The person receiving the request shall contact the Ethics Committee Chairman or designee immediately.

2. The meeting will convene as soon as all interested parties are agreeable to a date and time.

3. The Chairman will determine appropriate members of the healthcare team and Ethics Committee Members that are necessary.

4. In addition to the person(s) requesting the consultation, the patient's physician shall be invited to attend.

5. The requesters shall be informed that the decisions of the committee are advisory.

6. Documentation that a consultation was held will be recorded in the patient's chart and in the minutes of the committee.

**Additional Policies and Procedures Pertaining to Ethics**

In addition to the two policies above, Riverside has other policies and procedures that relate to ethical issues nurses might face. These policy names, policy statements, and policy overviews are described in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Name</th>
<th>Policy Statement</th>
<th>Policy Overview</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics and Standards</td>
<td>It is recognized that Riverside Health System has an ethical responsibility to the patients and communities it serves; and as such, business will be conducted in accordance with uncompromising ethical standards. This Code of Ethics and Standards has been developed to provide every person who works for or provides services to Riverside Health System, including but not limited to board members, medical staff, administrators, employees, and volunteers, with standards of professional conduct and ethical behavior.</td>
<td>Defines expectations related to our values. Defines how we conduct business with and treat the public — honestly, fairly, confidentially, avoid conflicts of interest, Defines how we treat the public — with respect, dignity, compassion, fairness, and patient autonomy. States that we promote fair</td>
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| Matters of Conscience | Riverside will consider a request by an employee not to participate in an aspect of patient care when such a request is based on personal or cultural values and/or religious beliefs; however, in no event will a patient's care be negatively affected as a result of requests of this nature. | Establishes the conditions for which employees may object to providing care. For example:  
- Withdrawing treatment  
- Sterilization procedures  
- Following a physician’s plan of care when the employee believes the best interests of the patient are at risk.  
Outlines the procedures for employees to request removal from care provision, to which the employee may object.  
States these situations may be referred to the Ethics Committee for review. |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Withholding/Withdrawing Medical Treatment | In accordance with current patient rights policies, and the Illinois Health Care Surrogate Act effective September 26, 1991, Riverside Medical Center supports the withdrawing or withholding of medical treatment under the appropriate circumstances. | Defines and explains the elements of the Illinois Health Care Surrogate Act, enacted in September of 1991.  
States these situations may be referred to the Ethics Committee for review. |
<p>| Photographing, Filming, and Recording of | In order to insure the patient's right to privacy and confidentiality, this policy regulates internal and external use of photographs, filming or recording of | Defines the patient rights, law enforcement authorities', and physicians' |
| Patients | The likeness of a patient may be recorded through a number of visual means, including still photography, videotaping, digital imaging, and others. Photographs, filming, images, and recordings are not taken or released as souvenirs. Any photographs, films, or recordings are the property of Riverside Medical Center. |
| Do Not Resuscitate Orders (DNR) | A physician shall determine when DNR Orders are appropriate for a specific patient. It is deemed medically appropriate when the patient is chronically ill, terminally ill, or when death is imminent. In the absence of written DNR orders, all cardiac and respiratory arrests will be resuscitated. An individual is not required to consent to a DNR order as a condition of treatment or care. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Uniform Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) Order Form, or a copy of the form (henceforth referred to as the IDPH DNR Order Form), will be honored by Riverside emergency medical services personnel and staff. |
| | Describes how DNR is ordered by physicians. Describes the role of the Ethics Committee, the Department Director, Nursing Supervisor, or the Vice President of Patient Care when a physician refuses to write the DNR order (due to Matters of Conscience). Lists exclusions to DNR orders such as for pregnant patients with viable fetuses or patients undergoing surgical or diagnostic procedures. Describes the documentation that must be included in the patient record. Describes how DNR orders are carried out for competent adult patients, adults with a Living Will, adults judicially deemed... |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Patient Refusal of Blood Transfusion for Personal/religious Reasons</th>
<th>Riverside Medical Center will honor an individual’s right to refuse medical treatment including personal/religious convictions regarding blood and blood products transfusion. In an emergency, a patient who has expressed refusal of blood and blood products may be treated with non-blood volume expanders including Dextran, saline, ringer's solution and Hetastarch.</th>
<th>Describes the hospital policies when patients – adults, minors, and pregnant patients – refuse blood transfusions. Describes the role of the Ethics Committee when a physician requests review when a patient continues to refuses a blood transfusion during emergent situations. Describes the policies for blood transfusion refusal for adults with and lacking decisional making capacity, minors, and pregnant patients. Describes when judicial intervention may be needed.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Advance Directives</td>
<td>It is Riverside Medical Center’s policy to comply with applicable law and honor the treatment preferences expressed by patients in their advance directives.</td>
<td>Describes the procedures for assessing, documenting, developing, storing, executing, and revoking Advance Directives.</td>
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Defines who may assist patients in executing Advance Directives: Patient Liaison, Pastoral Care employees, and Social Services employees.

Dissemination and Enculturation of Ethical Practice Resources and Policies

Nurses first learn about our nursing mission, vision, values, and philosophy in orientation. These Riverside nursing foundations also are posted on the Riverside Medical Center website at riversidehealthcare.org. The Vigilance Professional Nursing Practice model and the Standards of Nursing Process and Practice are posted in all Riverside nursing departments. The ANA foundational resources, including the Scope & Standards of Nursing Practice, Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements, and Nursing's Social Policy Statement, are available in each Riverside nursing department. New and incumbent registered nurses complete formal classes and/or self-studies describing Riverside's use of these resources for ethical practice. The formative and summative RN performance appraisal process is used throughout all nursing areas in the hospital.

Guidelines for ethical care and addressing ethical dilemmas are included in orientation of newly hired employees, including nurses. All employees complete an annual on-line lesson via OLIE, our electronic education and tracking system. OLIE lessons are updated as federal and state laws and hospital policies are revised. When ethics policies and procedures change, dissemination to employees is done via a number of methods, including department meetings, department postings, formal classes, OLIE lessons, paycheck stuffers, and email messages. Nurses and other employees have used our ethics structures and processes to address ethical issues.

Summary

Riverside's structures and processes incorporate the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses and the ANA Scope and Standards of Practice to address ethical dilemmas. These ANA resources have been used to develop and support our Nursing Mission, Vision, Values, and Philosophy; our Vigilance Professional Nursing Practice Model; our Vigilance Care Delivery Models, RN job descriptions and performance appraisal standards; our Ethics Committee structure and processes, and our policies and procedures related to ethics. The Ethics Committee members use the structures and processes during regularly scheduled meetings and at emergency meetings to address complex ethical issues. These structures and processes have been successfully disseminated and enculturated throughout our nursing units.

References

