UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Introduction To Professional Ethics

2526-1-I0101D917-I0101D915M

Aims

The course introduces the student to an understanding of the ethical and deontological principles and concepts to be followed in caring for the patient and focuses on the development of an ethical and deontological knowledge base to guide his/her actions as a “moral agent”.

At the end of the course the student will have developed:

1. Knowledge and ability to understand
To describe:

1. the concepts of morality, ethics and deontology, arguing the differences and relationships between them;
2. the main ethical theories and the role of the nurse as a moral agent;
3. the ethical concepts for nursing practice: advocacy, accountability, cooperation and caring according to Fry & Johnstone's model as a basis for ethical analysis and decision-making in nursing practice;
4. the origins, structure and principles of the Code of Ethics for Nursing Professions.

2. Ability to apply knowledge and understanding
To analyse some simulated clinical scenarios identifying emerging principles, ethical concepts and values.
To apply the Code of Ethics of the Nursing Professions, integrating it into nursing practice in order to orientate responsible care choices respecting the patient, his/her wishes and the care setting.

3. Autonomy of judgement
Critically evaluate the ethical, deontological, relational and caring implications of nursing decisions, justifying them in the light of values, ethical and deontological principles, legal norms and related responsibilities, while respecting the dignity, will and values of the patient.

4. Communication skills
To express one's own judgement on ethical and value issues in a clear, empathetic and respectful manner, with the assisted person, family members and in the professional team, promoting a climate of trust and mutual respect.

5. Ability to learn
To develop an ongoing reflective and critical approach towards one's professional practice in relation to ethical and deontological implications, through active participation in case analysis, peer and teacher discussion.

Contents

The meaning of morality, ethics and deontology.
Ethical principles according to principialism.
Ethical concepts for nursing practice according to Fry & Johnstone.
The Code of Ethics for the Nursing Professions (structure, principles and underlying ethical concepts); deontological and legal implications in professional practice in relation to some issues of professional relevance, also with reference to recent regulatory indications.

Detailed program

General principles and introduction to ethics: the formation of values, the nature of values (personal, moral, cultural, religious, professional), the conflict of values, the concepts of morality, ethics and bioethics, the nurse as a moral agent, ethical responsibility, moral development according to Kohlberg, HINTS on the main ethical orientations (principialism, personalism, utilitarianism, etc.), ethical principles (autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, truthfulness and fidelity), ethics and human rights, Health as a right.

Ethical concepts for nursing practice: the concepts of advocacy, accountability, cooperation and caring according to Fry & Johnstone's ethical decision-making model as a basis for ethical analysis and decision-making in nursing practice.

Professional deontology: Deontology and the development of codes of ethics in the nursing profession; structure, functions and general characteristics of the Code of Ethics of the International Council of Nurses (ICN, 2021); structure, functions and general characteristics of the Code of Ethics of the Nursing Professions (FNOPI, 2025) and its analysis according to ethical principles and concepts. Analysis and discussion of the ethical and deontological implications of some topics of professional relevance (e.g. informed consent and advance treatment provisions, protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data, safety of care and the assisted person, professional liability of health professionals).

Prerequisites

This course builds on the knowledge of Fundamentals of Nursing and Midwifery Science.

Teaching form

All lectures (n. 6 lessions of 2 hours each) are conducted in a delivery mode (deductive lecture) in the initial part, which is aimed at involving the students interactively in the subsequent part (inductive lecture, with the possibility of guided discussion, in plenary and in small groups, of simulated clinical cases with ethical implications and video film sequences). All activities are carried out in presence.

Textbook and teaching resource

Basic bibliography for the exam (all the schools):

1. Fry ST, Johnstone MJ (2004) Etica per la pratica infermieristica Milano: CEA (capitoli 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).
2. International Council of Nurses – ICN (2021) Il Codice Deontologico del Consiglio Internazionale degli Infermieri. Edizione italiana a cura della Consociazione Nazionale Infermiere/i (CNAI). Disponibile da: https://www.cnai.pro/codice-deontologico
3. Federazione Nazionale Ordini delle Professioni Infermieristiche - FNOPI (2025) Codice Deontologico delle Professioni Infermieristiche. Roma: FNOPI. Disponibile da: https://www.fnopi.it/norme-e-codici/deontologia/#1571846131365-8f70c763-6358
4. FNOPI: Revisione del Codice Deontologico delle Professioni Infermieristiche, 2025. Testo approvato dal Consiglio Nazionale 22/03/2025; reperibile da:
5. https://www.fnopi.it/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025.03.22-Presentazione-al-Congresso-Nazionale.pdf.
6. Campo A, Draoli N, Mastorianni C, Pittella D, Prandi C, Rosini I, Scipioni S. (2019) La disciplina infermieristica all'interno della Legge 219/17 "Norme in materia di consenso informato e di disposizioni anticipate di trattamento". Roma: FNOPI. Disponibile da: https://www.fnopi.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Linee-Guida-Fine-Vita.pdf
7. DECRETO LEGISLATIVO 10 agosto 2018, n. 101 "Disposizioni per l'adeguamento della normativa nazionale alle disposizioni del regolamento (UE) 2016/679 del Parlamento europeo e del Consiglio, del 27 aprile 2016, relativo alla protezione delle persone fisiche con riguardo al trattamento dei dati personali, nonché alla libera circolazione di tali dati e che abroga la direttiva 95/46/CE (regolamento generale sulla protezione dei dati)".
8. LEGGE 22 dicembre 2017, n. 219 "Norme in materia di consenso informato e di disposizioni anticipate di trattamento".
9. LEGGE 8 marzo 2017, n. 24 "Disposizioni in materia di sicurezza delle cure e della persona assistita, nonché in materia di responsabilità professionale degli esercenti le professioni sanitarie".

Semester

Second semester.

Assessment method

The details are available in the Syllabus of Metodologia clinica nelle scienze infermieristiche.

Office hours

By appointment.

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS | PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS