PT 201A PT

Ethical Case Study Questions-Small Group Discussion

Cases: Joe, Melissa, and Andrew (cases adopted from Dr. Nancy Kirsch-see end of document for reference)

* Is the case a moral dilemma for the main character? Why or why not?
* Is the case an ethical dilemma? Why or why not?
* What are the relevant facts and contextual information?
  + What are the choices in conflict?
  + Who are the relevant actors (stakeholders)?
  + Where does the action take place? Does this matter? Is it morally or ethically relevant?
  + When does the action take place? Does this matter? Is it morally or ethically relevant?
* What are the relevant laws, duties, obligations as it relates to our profession? What professional resources speak to this situation?
  + Code of Ethics
  + Guide for Professional Conduct
  + Core Values
  + Practice Act
* Do any of these self-tests help identify the appropriate course of action?
  + Legal test: is it illegal?
  + Stench test: does it “feel” wrong? Such as “gut” reaction?
  + Front-page test: how would like this on the front page of your local newspaper—or website?
  + Mom test: if I were my mother (or parent), would I do this?
  + Professional ethics test: does the Code of Ethics, Guide for Professional Conduct for the PT, Standards of Ethical Conduct, Core Values prohibit or discourage the action?
* What are some foreseeable consequences of each potential decision?
* As the main character, what would be your next steps for implementing your decision?

**Case Three:**

Andrew is in the concluding week of his final clinical affiliation at “HHH,” a large hospital. He’s been offered a position there as a staff physical therapist and was thrilled to accept—acceptance being contingent, of course, on his completing the current rotation, graduating, and passing his licensure exam.

Andrew is an excellent student, due to graduate near the top of his class. But like most PT students, he’s a bit nervous about taking the National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE). He’s well aware that every year, scores of equally competent PT students across the country fail the exam on their initial attempt. The possibility of this happening to him always is in the back of his mind.

The department director who had offered Andrew the job meets with him to discuss specifics and invites him to join a hospital-sponsored study group for prospective new hires who have yet to take the NPTE. Andrew is told that the hospital will pay his exam fee if he completes review sessions as part of the study group. He scarcely can imagine a better opportunity—built in study buddies, and a significant expense that will be paid by his future employer.

Later that afternoon, Andrew enters the conference room where the study group is holding its weekly meeting. The session is led by a facilitator named Don. As Don goes over the practice questions, Andrew realizes that he’s never encountered some of these particular queries in the test prep books he’s been reading on his own. During a break in the session, Andrew asks one of the other participants about this, and is told that the hospital has developed its own bank of questions for use in studying for the exam. Andrew’s classmate adds that these queries have been culled over the past 18 months from questions supplied by students who have recently taken the NPTE.

After the break, Andrew finds it difficult to concentrate. He can’t stop thinking about the implication of what he’s been told. But finally, he decides that what the other student said probably is inaccurate, and there is undoubtedly another explanation for the question’s origin. He elects to ask Don, the course facilitator, to alleviate his concerns. Don is very forthcoming, but Andrew does not find the conversation comforting. Don explains that each student who takes the NPTE at the hospital’s expense is assigned to remember a question he or she was asked. Each student submits his or her question, and all the submitted questions are used cumulatively to help prepare future test takers. Don assures Andrew that this is done all over the country and is not inappropriate. It augments the study process, Don says, by encouraging students to consider how they would answer a wide variety of questions. It is his understanding, he adds, that there are two or three versions of the NPTE, each of which has 250 questions, with many questions changing from year to year. This means the potential impact on actual test results of question sharing is minimal, and that students’ obligation to study intensively for the NPTE remains intact.

Andrew, nevertheless, is troubled by Don’s explanation and justifications. He feels trapped in a situation that compromises his integrity.

Andrew doesn’t live in the part of the state where this clinical affiliation is located, and he rents an apartment that he must vacate the day his affiliation ends. After that, he will be faced with a three-hour drive to attend the HHH study group, so he decides to use the inconvenience and expense of the commute as an excuse to decline participation. He breathes an initial sigh of relief, as he sees a way out of the situation.

But during the last two days of the affiliation, Andrew’s discomfort resurfaces. While he’s comfortable with his individual decision, there remains a larger concern he cannot ignore. Andrew keeps encountering an imposing box “Exam Security” featured prominently on the website of the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy, which administers the NPTE. The box states, in part, in capital letters: “THE FSBPT STRICTLY PROHIBITS ANY SHARING OF ANY INFORMATION WHATSOEVER ABOUT ANY QUESTIONS CONTAINED WITHIN ANY PAST OR PRESENT NPTE.” Andrew is acutely aware that his decision to walk away from the s

Activity and case adapted from Dr. Nancy Kirsch’s “Ethics in Practice” column in PT in Motion (May 2008)

<http://www.apta.org/Ethics/Tools/Articles/>

http://www.apta.org/PTinMotion/2008/5/EthicsinAction/

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