

Autonomy and Accountability: Ethical Perplexity

Objectives

- Define autonomy and accountability in this context
- Identify two social and cultural factors that influence the tension between autonomy and accountability
- Evaluate three components of ethically compassionate caregiving

Definitions

- **Autonomy:** the freedom to make one's own decisions
- **Accountability:** responsibility for one's own actions (Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition. © 2003 by Saunders, an imprint of Elsevier, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Complex Connections





Complex Connections

Mothers

- Autonomous
- Few legal restrictions on individual rights
- Individual choices influence unborn child
- Little accountability for individual choices which influence the unborn child



Complex Connections

Fetus and Infant

- Non-autonomous
- Few legal protections
- Life-long consequences to poor maternal choices




Complex Connections

Society at Large

- Believes society has a role to protect children
- Believes a woman's autonomy is of paramount importance
- Adheres to a continuum of positions concerning the moral status of the unborn child

Complex Connections





Components of ethically compassionate caregiving

- Provide non-judgmental caregiving
 - No socio-economic discrepancies
 - Make resources available to all
- Do good to all
- Value every human, looking equally at the health of the mother and the unborn child

Primary Ethical Principles

- Autonomy
- Beneficence
- Non-Maleficence
- Justice

Bibliography

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