

Ethical Decision Making by Nurses in HIV/AIDS Situations

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Because a nurse's ability to make an ethical decision can be influenced by several forces, nursing programs must address the diverse aspects of treating patients infected with HIV/AIDS, write Adele A. Webb of the University of Akron in Ohio and Sheila Bunting of Michigan's Wayne State University. A study was conducted on 200 registered nurses randomly selected from employment lists at four sites. The sites where the nurses worked included ambulatory care locations, nursing homes, visiting nurse programs, and acute care programs. A revised version of Crisham's Nursing Dilemma Test (NDT) was used in the study to determine the differences in nurses' ethical decision making based on principled and practical considerations. The test showed that the nursing home nurses, visiting nurses, and acute care nurses responded differently in their use of nursing principles for decision making when working with non-HIV/AIDS as compared with HIV/AIDS patients. The ambulatory nurses did not differ significantly on this variable. The results of the study indicate that many nurses are basing their clinical decisions in HIV/AIDS situations on practical considerations instead of nursing principles and standards. Nurses' decisions about caring for AIDS patients appeared to be influenced by considerations of contagiousness and risk of infection, note the authors.

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