Ethics of care in Flanders

Empirical and normative perspectives

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• Normative perspective
  – Care ethics approach to nursing ethics (C. Gastmans)
  – Foundational approach to care ethics (L. Vanlaere)
  – Justice, luck & responsibility: implications for end-of-life care (Y. Denier)

• Empirical perspective
  – Ethics codes in nursing (E. Verpeet)
  – Ethics policies on euthanasia (J. Lemiengre)
  – The good nurse (C. Gastmans)
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• Empirical and normative perspectives
  – Nurses and euthanasia (Y. Denier & C. Gastmans)
  – Nurses and tude feeding (E. Bryon & C. Gastmans)
  – Nurses and physical restraint (S. Goethals & C. Gastmans)
  – Care approach to sexuality in nursing homes (L. Mahieu)
Care ethics approach

• Three aspects:
  – Lived experience
  – Interpretative dialogue
  – Normative standard
Care ethics approach

• Lived experience:
  - Lived experiences (inductive approach), not abstract constructions (deductive approach) should be primary guide for development ethical approach
  - Empirical research in ethics (cfr. empirical focus of projects)
Care ethics approach

• Interpretative dialogue:
  - Ethical decision-making is based on dialogue between all people involved in ethical problem
  - Ethics concerns interpretation of viewpoints of people involved in ethical problem
  - Empirical and normative research in ethics (cfr. empirical and normative focus of projects)
Care ethics approach

• Normative standard
  - Ethics implies normativity (Why do we feel as if we should care? What counts as good care? ...)
  - These normative questions invoke a certain view of mankind that underlies care, that is, a specific anthropological framework
  - Normative research in ethics (cfr. normative focus of projects)
Dignity-enhancing care

• **Vulnerability** (lived experience)
• **Care** (interpretative dialogue)
• **Dignity** (normative standard)

**Ethical essence of care practices:**

*Providing care in response to the vulnerability of a human being in order to maintain, protect, and promote his dignity as much as possible* (Gastmans 2012).
DIGNITY-ENHANCING CARE

Starting point

Lived experiences = Vulnerability

Mean

Interpretative dialogue = Care

Purpose

Normative standard = Dignity
Dignity-enhancing care

• **Vulnerability** (*a profound lived experience*)
  - Human life is characterized by vulnerability
  - Vulnerability invokes ethical question
  - Care for vulnerable patients as moral duty
  - Cfr. empirical focus of projects
Dignity-enhancing care

- **Care** (*a dialogical-interpretative process*)
  - Concern about the vulnerable state in which a fellow human being finds himself (attentiveness)
  - Searching for most adequate and appropriate answer to vulnerability through shared dialogical process of communication and interpretation (competency and responsibility)
  - Cfr. empirical and normative focus of projects
Dignity-enhancing care

• **Dignity** (*a normative standard*)
  - Vulnerability that affects person in all his dimensions, results in the dignity of the person itself being threatened
  - Goal of care: promotion of dignity of the person by providing good care on the physical as well as the psychological, relational, social, moral, and spiritual levels
Dignity-enhancing care

- Ethical reflection on care has its origin in the notion of personhood
- When this view on human person is made explicit, what is understood by ‘dignity-enhancing care’ also becomes clear
- Anthropology that inspires care, should be based on dialogue and intersubjectivity, not on autonomy (cfr. Louvain personalism)
References


• C. Gastmans. Dignity-Enhancing Nursing Care. A Foundational Ethical Framework. (Submitted)