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AMERICAN
ACADEMY OF
AUDIOLOGY



Ethical Dilemmas and Decision-Making, in partnership with the American Academy of Audiology

Erica Friedland, AuD, Alyssa Needleman, PhD, and
Sarah Wakefield, AuD

Nova Southeastern University



Erica Friedland, AuD

Erica Friedland, AuD is Chair of and Professor in the Department of Audiology, Dr. Pallavi Patel College of Health Care Sciences at Nova Southeastern University (NSU). Her areas of interest include pediatric audiology, auditory processing, neuroscience, student clinical assessment, and preceptor roles. Dr. Friedland is a member of the Professional Development Council of the American Academy of Audiology and a program reviewer/site visitor for the Accreditation Commission for Audiology Education (ACAE).



Sarah Wakefield, AuD

Sarah Wakefield, AuD, is the Director of the Audiology Clinic and an Associate Professor in the Department of Audiology at Nova Southeastern University (NSU). She earned her Bachelor of Science from Penn State University and her Doctorate of Audiology from NSU. Her expertise lies in Central Auditory Processing Disorders and tinnitus, areas in which she provides both didactic and clinical instruction. As a certified meditation instructor, Dr. Wakefield integrates mindfulness practices into her clinical work, using meditation to support patients coping with tinnitus and sound sensitivity. She is dedicated to a holistic approach to audiologic care, combining evidence-based interventions with mindfulness techniques to enhance patient well-being.



Alyssa Needleman, PhD

Alyssa Needleman, PhD, is the Director of Clinical Education and a Professor of Audiology at Nova Southeastern University. She received her BA from the University of Maryland, and MS and PhD from the University of Texas at Dallas. Dr. Needleman manages clinical education within the Nova Southeastern University Audiology Program, including coordination of internship and externship experiences, as well as teaching doctoral courses focused on professional issues and research sciences. She is Vice-Chair of Audiology for the Council of Academic Accreditation and president of the Audiology National Honor Society, Alpha Upsilon Delta. Prior to NSU, she worked in academia, hospital administration, and the medical device industry.

Disclosures

- **Presenter Disclosure:** Erica Friedland Financial: Erica Friedland is employed by Nova Southeastern University (NSU). Erica Friedland Non-financial: Erica Friedland serves on the Professional Development Council and the Nominations Committee of the American Academy of Audiology. She is a site visitor and program reviewer for the Accreditation Committee for Audiology Education. She receives no financial compensation for these positions. Sarah Wakefield Financial: Sarah Wakefield is employed by Nova Southeastern University (NSU). Sarah Wakefield Non-financial: Sarah Wakefield serves as the Healthy Hearing Coordinator for Special Olympics, a volunteer role dedicated to promoting hearing health among athletes with intellectual disabilities. She receives no financial compensation for this position. Alyssa Needleman Financial: Alyssa Needleman is employed by Nova Southeastern University (NSU). Alyssa Needleman Non-financial: Alyssa Needleman serves as Vice Chair of Audiology for the Council of Academic Accreditation for Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology, AAA representative to the Audiology Quality Consortium, and on the AAA Advocacy Council. She receives no financial compensation for these roles.
- In lieu of an honorarium, AudiologyOnline has made a donation to Nova Southeastern University on behalf of the presenters for this presentation.
- **Content Disclosure:** This learning event does not focus exclusively on any specific product or service.
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Limitations/Risks

- The applicability and accuracy of the course content may vary by the clinical, geographical, and cultural context; you should evaluate the course accordingly.
- As healthcare is rapidly evolving, new findings may change the validity of the information presented in this course. Providers should always consult the latest research and guidelines from professional associations.
- The interventions discussed in this course may be limited in generalizability, requiring practitioners to consider specific individual and population factors.
- The course may not cover all possible risk factors, diagnostic methods, or treatment options, and complex cases may require additional considerations.
- Healthcare providers should apply cultural competence and sensitivity to ensure effective and respectful care based on their patients' diverse needs.
- Providers should always evaluate the limitations of diagnostic and screening tools, considering their potential for false results as well as any ethical implications.
- It is the responsibility of course participants to critically evaluate the evidence from multiple sources to guide professional practice.

Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Explain how to apply the four pillars of medical ethics and the AAA Code of Ethics to ethical dilemmas.
- Describe essential elements of a systematic approach to addressing ethical dilemmas in clinical practice.
- Identify potential courses of action for resolving ethical issues.

Overview of Ethics

- ***What is ethics?***
 - Branch of philosophy concerning moral considerations
- ***Ethics and Experience***
 - Individual experiences influence the set of beliefs held by an individual
 - Personal values system
- ***External Influences***
 - Religion
 - Socioeconomic conditions
 - Family and friends
 - Geographic location
 - Cultural and heritage traditions

Overview of Ethics

- ***Ethics and Expertise***

- Health care professionals must acquire ethical skills reflecting their field

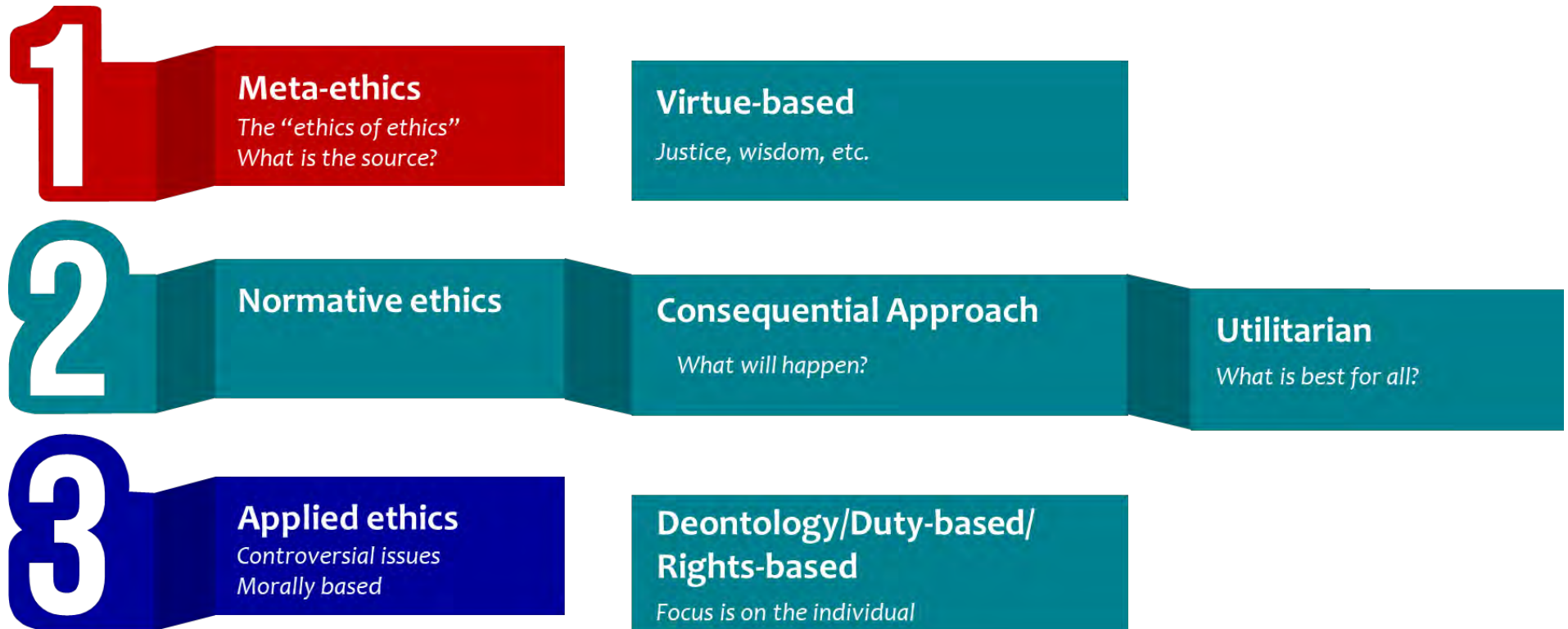
- ***Ethics and Conscience are different***

- Ethics involve a series of systematic beliefs guided by society
- Conscience refers to thoughts about one's personal beliefs and actions
- Ethics is built into us, though interpretations of ethical situations vary

Ethical Dilemmas

- ***Ethical questions***
 - Responsibilities to the welfare of others
 - Conflicts among loyalties to different groups, among responsibilities associated with role, or among principles
- ***Consider dilemmas from different perspectives***
 - Ethical philosophy
 - Medical ethics
 - Professional codes of ethics

Areas of Ethical Philosophy





Areas of Ethical Philosophy

1 Meta-ethics

The “ethics of ethics”
What is the source?

- **Meta-ethics** is the ethics of ethics
 - The nature and the source of ethics, requiring intensive examination and deep reflection

2 Normative ethics

- Considers general issues
 - The meaning of “right/wrong” or “good/bad”
 - The origins of morals

3 Applied ethics

Controversial issues
Morally based

- Whether morality should vary for different people
- Does not resolve practical dilemmas



Areas of Ethical Philosophy

1

Meta-ethics

*The “ethics of ethics”
What is the source?*

- Standards by which right and wrong are determined within or guided by a society.

2

Normative ethics

- **Golden Rule**, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you”

3

Applied ethics

*Controversial issues
Morally based*

- **Three different strategies or subsets**
 - Virtue-based
 - Consequential
 - Duty-based



Areas of Ethical Philosophy





Areas of Ethical Philosophy

1

Meta-ethics

*The “ethics of ethics”
What is the source?*

Virtue-based

Justice, wisdom, etc.

- Balances good over bad consequences

2

Normative ethics

Consequential Approach

What will happen?

3

Applied ethics

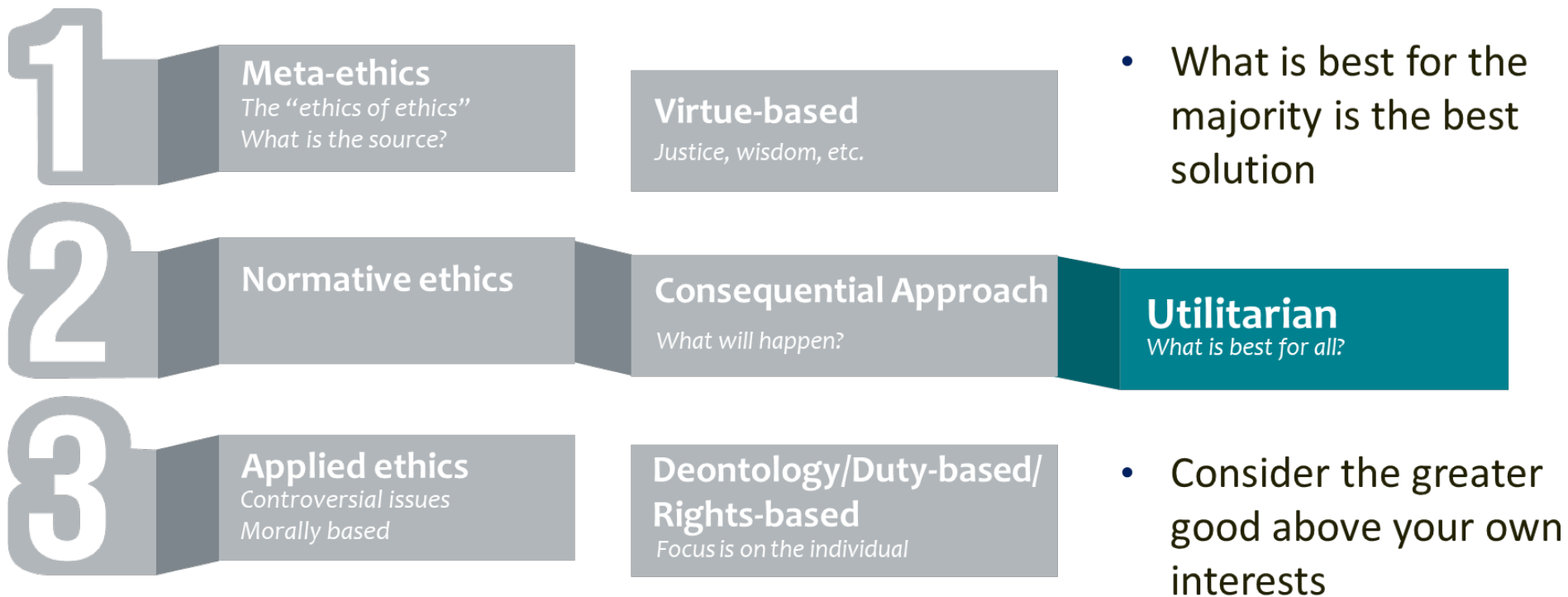
*Controversial issues
Morally based*

Deontology/Duty-based/ Rights-based

Focus is on the individual

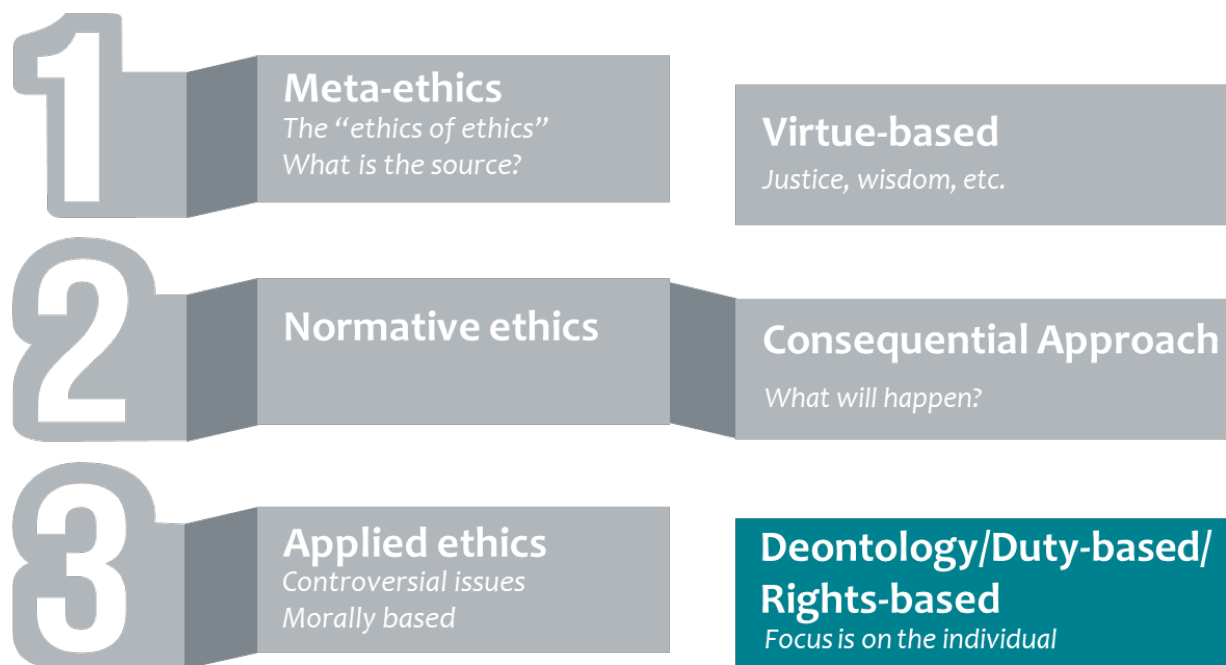


Areas of Ethical Philosophy





Areas of Ethical Philosophy



- Individual rights are central
- Deontology does not permit the greater good to override an individual's rights



Areas of Ethical Philosophy

1 **Meta-ethics**
The “ethics of ethics”
What is the source?

- Involves the investigation of morally controversial issues

2 **Normative ethics**

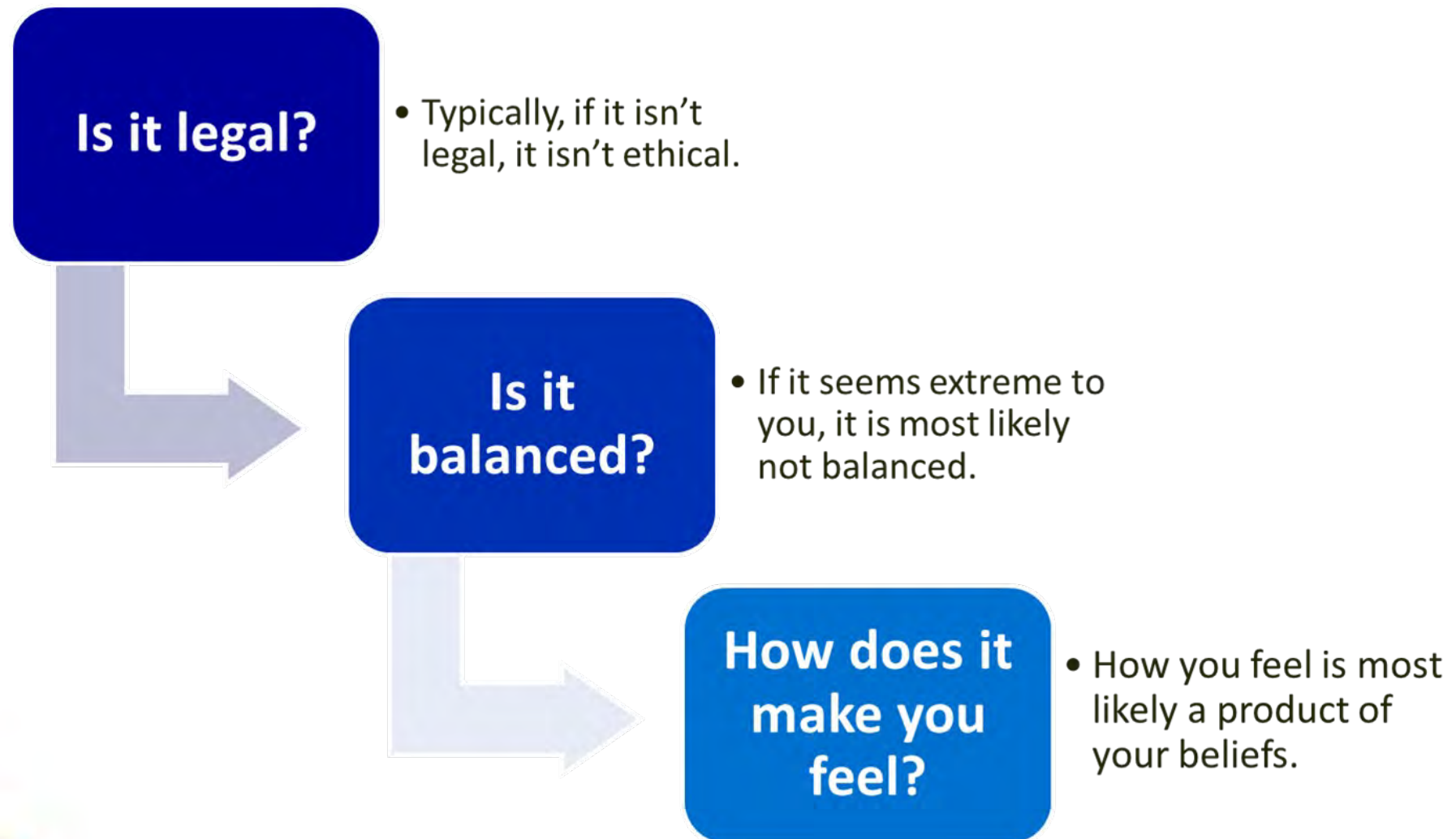
- Issue must be classified as a moral issue with more than one viewpoint

3 **Applied ethics**
Controversial issues
Morally based

Ethical Decision Making

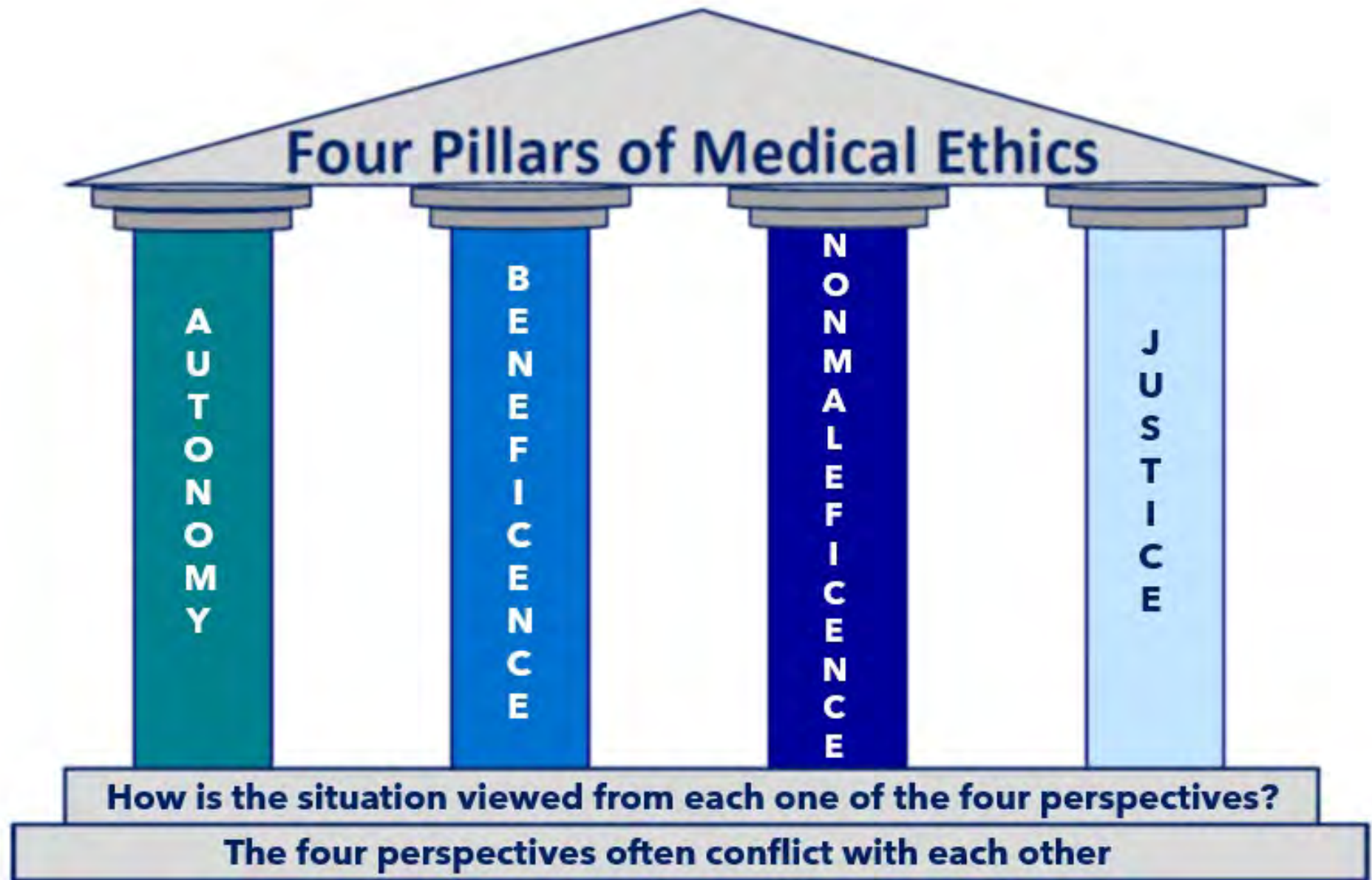
- The entire healthcare profession and services are based on decisions
- Professional knowledge combined with skills plus a caring attitude make for the best patient care knowledge
- A **Three-step Model** can guide ethical decisions

Ethical Decision-making Model



Putting It All Together

- To be balanced in thinking (e.g., Three-Step Model), all three major areas of ethics are used: **meta-ethics**, **normative ethics**, and **applied ethics**
- Decision making by the healthcare professional involves intentional reflection
- Knowing your own values facilitates a logical and practical conclusion and appropriate choice
- Practice and experience enhance decision-making skills





Pillar 1 - Autonomy

- **Self-rule**: it is the patient's right to come to their own decisions about what is best for them, even if these decisions are viewed as unwise
- Patients cannot demand a specific treatment that a doctor does not deem to be suitable.
- Requires patient is competent and has capacity to make decisions



Pillar 2 - Beneficence

- Doing what is **best for a patient**
- What would an independent health care professional deem to be in the patient's best interest?
- **Autonomy and beneficence may conflict**
 - The patient's perspective is already covered by the pillar of autonomy

Pillar 3 – Non-Maleficence

- Avoid harming patients
- Beneficence and non-maleficence may conflict



Pillar 4 - Justice

- Fairness across the wider population
- Providing resources to one set of patients will have an impact on what can be offered to others in a society with limited resources

Professional Codes of Ethics

- Codes of Ethics are agreed upon minimum standards of practice
- Audiologists are free to exceed standards
- Specific codes apply only to members of the organization

Importance of Codes of Ethics

- **Be aware**
 - *Ethical guidelines are outlined in state licensure laws*
 - Failure to comply can result in the loss of your license
 - Ignorance is not a defense
 - *The Codes of Ethics of organizations which you are a member*
 - Failure to comply can result in you being removed from the organization and/or losing your credentialed status
 - Also, some of the aspects of a Code of Ethics can also protect you from violating legal statutes, laws, rules, or regulations



AAA Code of Ethics

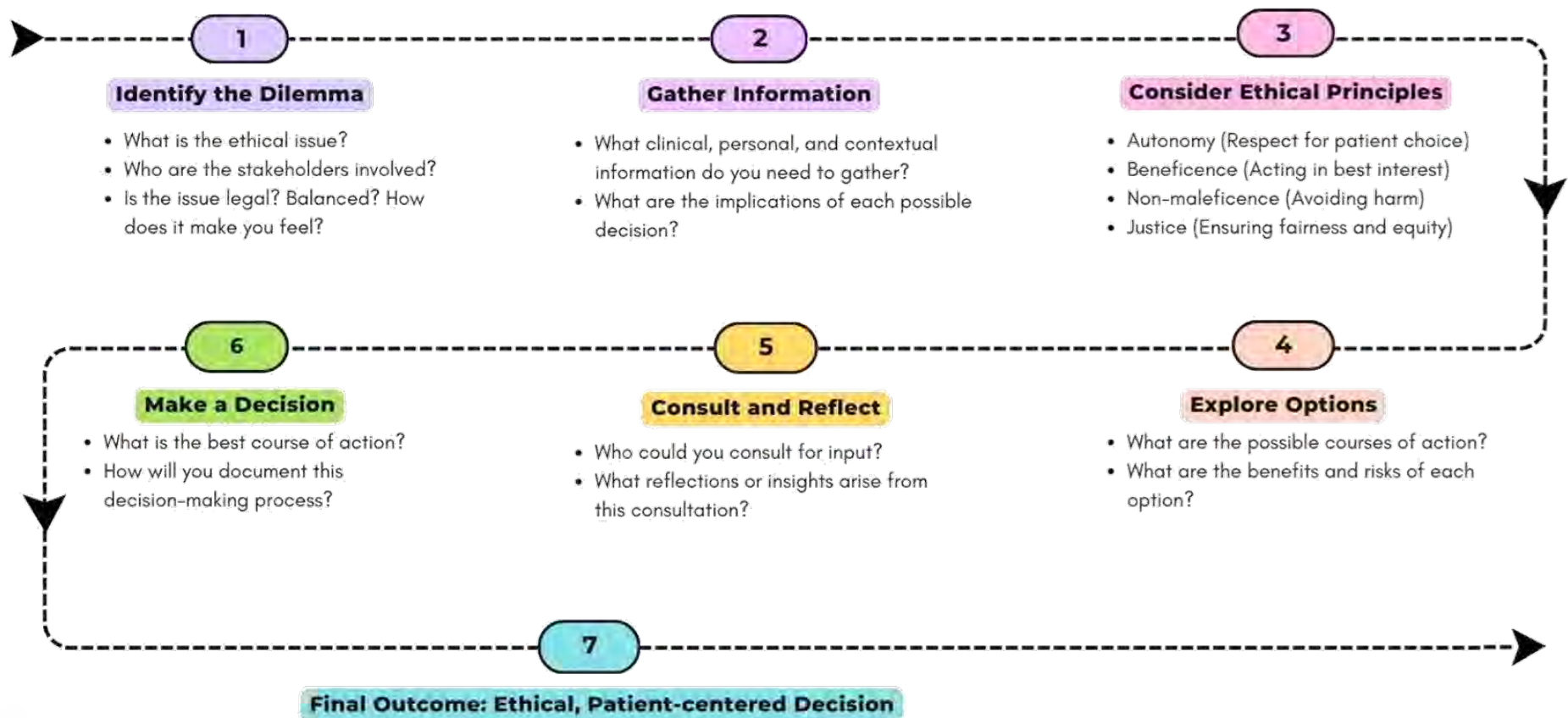
Principle 1:	Members shall provide professional services and conduct research with honesty and compassion, and shall respect the dignity, worth and rights of those served
Principle 2:	Members shall maintain high standards of professional competence in rendering services
Principle 3:	Members shall maintain the confidentiality of the information and records of those <u>individuals</u> receiving services or involved in research
Principle 4:	Members shall provide only services and products that are in the best interest of those served
Principle 5:	Members shall provide accurate information about the nature and management of communicative disorders and about the services and products offered
Principle 6:	Members shall comply with the ethical standards of the Academy <u>with regard to</u> public statements or publication
Principle 7:	Members shall honor their responsibilities to the public and to professional colleagues
Principle 8:	Members shall uphold the dignity of the profession and freely accept the Academy's self-imposed standards

Approaching Ethical Questions

- Ethics questions are not a test to see if you “know” the right answer, law, or legislation
- They are a test of your ability to see things from multiple perspectives and your thought process in presenting an answer
- Discuss the multiple issues and perspectives of a situation, evaluate them and then include your overall final opinion
- Be prepared to defend your opinions
- Be open and respectful of different viewpoints

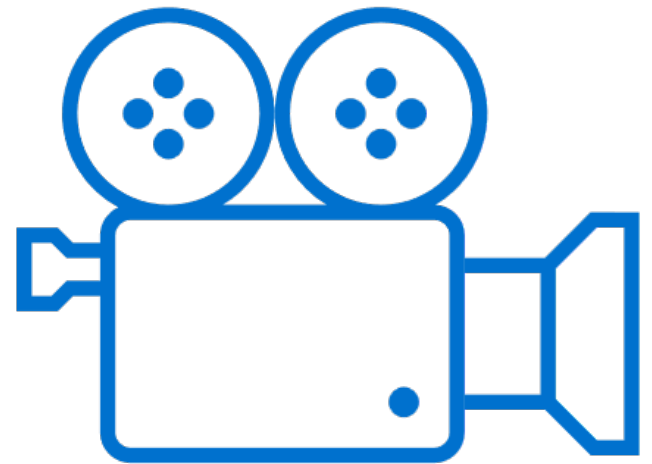
Recognizing and Approaching Ethical Dilemmas in Audiology

Ethical dilemmas often arise in audiology practice, requiring thoughtful decision-making. Use this structured approach to recognize, evaluate, and address dilemmas.



Friedland, Needleman, and Wakefield, 2025

Ethical Scenario: Secret Recording



Background

- **Dr. Stevens** consults with **Mrs. Thompson** regarding her **hearing loss**.
- Dr. Stevens **discusses** recommendations for treatment, and Mrs. Thompson **appears to understand**.
- **Mrs. Thompson returns with her daughter**, who expresses **confusion** about the consultation.
- The daughter claims **Dr. Stevens didn't clearly explain** the hearing aid options
- **Unknown to Dr. Stevens**, Mrs. Thompson had **recorded** the consultation using her smartphone
- Mrs. Thompson **plays the recording, challenging Dr. Stevens' explanation**.
- This situation raises **ethical concerns** about **consent** and **miscommunication** between the patient and the audiologist.



Ethical Dilemma

- **Dr. Stevens' Perspective:**

- Feels violated and betrayed.
- Concerned about misinterpretation, context loss, or legal risks.
- Believes doctor-patient trust is compromised.

- **Mrs. Thompson's Perspective:**

- Difficulty remembering information
- Recording was necessary to ensure her daughter was an active participant in her care

- **Key Conflict:**

- Dr. Stevens is concerned about ethics and trust.
- Mrs. Thompson believes the recording was essential for clarification and better care.



Questions for Consideration

1. Should Mrs. Thompson have been allowed to record the session without Dr. Stevens' knowledge, given her need for clarity and her daughter's involvement in her care?
2. Is it ethical for a patient to record a healthcare provider without their consent, even if the intention is not malicious, and what should be the boundaries regarding patient autonomy and confidentiality in the audiology setting?
3. How can the audiologist and patient navigate this situation to rebuild trust and ensure clear communication in future appointments, while respecting both the patient's needs and the provider's right to privacy and trust?
4. What should audiologists do to protect themselves from unauthorized recordings, and should they adopt policies regarding recordings in their practice? How should they approach the legal and ethical implications of such recordings?



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Key Medical Ethical Considerations

Autonomy

- The patient has the right to make decisions about her care and ensure she understands the information
- The doctor was not informed about the recording, impacting trust

Beneficence

- The doctor aims to provide the best care by explaining the hearing aid options clearly

Non-maleficence

- The doctor may feel harmed by the secret recording, fearing it could be misused or misinterpreted
- The patient's intention is not to cause harm, but to clarify details for her daughter

Justice

- The doctor feels the recording is unfair as they weren't given the chance to consent
- The patient feels it's fair to record for clarity and to ensure both they understand the information

AAA Code of Ethics

PRINCIPLE 1: Respect for Dignity, Worth, and Rights of Those Served

- **Rule 1b:** Individuals shall not discriminate in the provision of services to individuals based on culture, race, religion, sex/gender, or general health and/or disability.

PRINCIPLE 3: Maintaining Confidentiality

- **Rule 3a:** Individuals shall not reveal professional or personal information obtained from the person served professionally unless authorized by law.

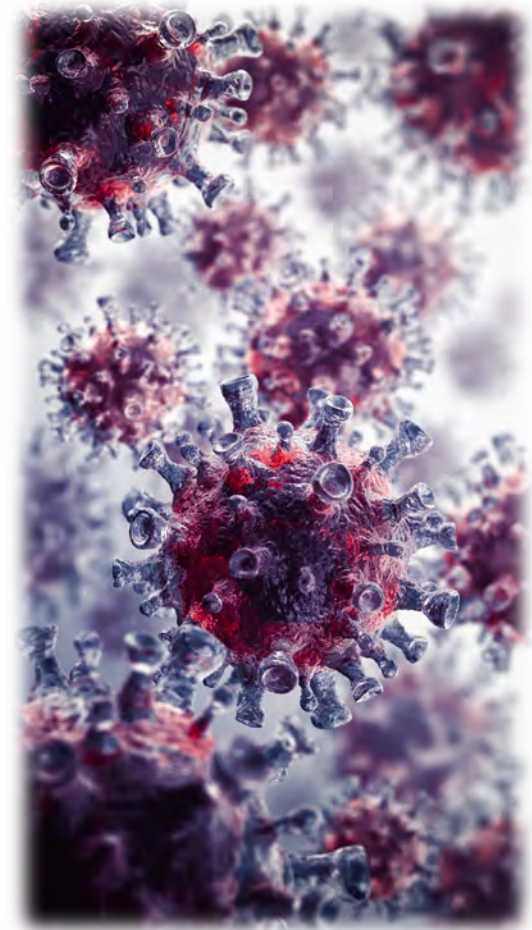
PRINCIPLE 4: Services in the Best Interest of Those Served

- **Rule 4a:** Individuals shall not exploit persons in the delivery of professional services.
- **Rule 4c:** Individuals shall not participate in activities that constitute a conflict of professional interest.

PRINCIPLE 5: Providing Accurate Information

- **Rule 5a:** Individuals shall provide persons served with the information a reasonable person would want to know about the nature and possible effects of services rendered or products provided.

Ethical Scenario: Cochlear Implantation During Global COVID Pandemic



Background

- It is April 4, 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitals have postponed elective surgeries to prioritize resources for COVID-19 patients and minimize exposure risks. However, a 30-month-old child with bilateral profound hearing loss is scheduled for cochlear implant surgery. The surgery is crucial because the child is nearing the end of the critical period for language development, a time during which auditory input is vital for effective language acquisition.
- The parents are anxious about delaying the procedure, fearing long-term impacts on their child's speech and language development. On the other hand, the surgical team and hospital administrators are debating whether the cochlear implant qualifies as an essential procedure or should be postponed as elective surgery.
- The case was taken to the hospital's bioethics committee to deliberate on whether cochlear implant surgery for a 30-month-old child nearing the end of the critical period for language development should proceed amid the COVID-19 pandemic.



Questions for Consideration

1. Does the timing of this surgery meet the threshold for essential, time-sensitive intervention rather than elective care?
2. How do we weigh the child's developmental needs against the potential risks of COVID-19 exposure?
3. Could alternative interventions (e.g., intensive auditory therapy or sign language) be pursued to mitigate delays in development until surgery becomes safer?
4. What protocols or safeguards could reduce COVID-19 exposure risks if the surgery proceeds?



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Key Medical Ethical Considerations

Autonomy

- Respecting the parents' wishes while balancing public health concerns.

Beneficence

- The surgery could significantly benefit the child by providing exposure to sound necessary for language development and improving quality of life.

Nonmaleficence

- Proceeding with surgery could expose the child, family, and healthcare staff to COVID-19 and the risks that go with it.

Justice

- Ensuring fair allocation of hospital resources during a pandemic.

AAA Code of Ethics

PRINCIPLE 1: Respect for Dignity, Worth, and Rights of Those Served

- **Rule 1a:** The delivery of professional services should not be limited based on irrelevant or unjustifiable factors.
- **Rule 1b:** Individuals shall not discriminate in the provision of services to individuals based on culture, race, religion, sex/gender, or general health and/or disability.

PRINCIPLE 2: Maintain the Highest Standards of Professional Competence

- **Rule 2c:** Professionals must exercise precautions to avoid injury during service delivery.

PRINCIPLE 4: Services in the Best Interest of Those Served

- **Rule 4a:** Services must not exploit or neglect individuals.

PRINCIPLE 5: Providing Accurate Information

- **Rule 5a:** Provide families with clear, accurate information about the risks, benefits, and alternatives of delaying or proceeding with surgery.

PRINCIPLE 8: Uphold the Dignity of the Profession

- **Rule 8a:** Adherence to ethical principles is paramount.

Thank You To Our Debate Teams!

- Team 1
 - Tamara Blemur
 - Sophia Hepner
 - Jordan Redding
- Team 2
 - Taylor Morales
 - Elena Plata
 - Madison Vidal
- Videographer
 - Colin Cronin

