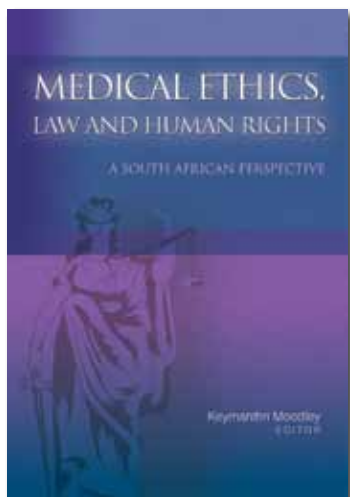


## Medical ethics, law and human rights: a South African perspective



**Title:** Medical ethics, law and human rights: a South African perspective

**Editor:** Keymanthri Moodley

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Ethics is defined as the “study of morality: a careful and systematic reflection on and analysis of moral decisions and behaviour, whether past, present or future.”<sup>1</sup> This book uses case studies to assist the healthcare practitioner to identify and analyse ethical, moral and value concepts, and to apply these to scenarios that they may encounter in real life. There are 21 chapters in this book, divided into Part 1 (chapters 1-11) and Part 2 (chapters 12-21), covering various aspects of medical ethics, law and human rights, with chapters 1-3 setting the introduction in understanding ethics and philosophy, ethics theories and approaches in bioethics. Chapters 4-7 explain the four principles of ethics, namely patient autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence and justice. Chapter 11 is a very interesting chapter that offers the healthcare practitioner a logical, step-wise approach to decision making which I found useful for day-to-day clinical practice when resolving ethical dilemmas. Ethics in the consulting rooms (chapter 12) is more relevant

to the healthcare practitioner working in a private practice setting. Chapter 13, on paediatric ethics, reviews children’s rights in South Africa and explains that decisions for children are usually made using the “best interests” principle. The latter part of the chapter covers the legally defined ages at which children may consent to healthcare-related tests and treatment, and the contentious situation of the child and research. As one reads through the remaining chapters of the book, the regular use of case studies helps the reader to unravel the critical ethical, legal or moral issues faced during patient interactions.

The book was compiled by 12 authors who are experts in their various areas of expertise, and edited by Prof Keymanthri Moodley, who is the Head of the Unit for Bioethics at Stellenbosch University. In my opinion, this is one of the few books on ethics, law and human rights that I have thoroughly enjoyed reading, especially with the regular use of case studies which made the issues clearer to understand. I recommend this book as a core textbook for family medicine registrars and their trainers, and I also think that it is essential reading for health science students and practising healthcare practitioners. The continuing professional development (CPD) programme attached to this book is accessible at [www.sun.ac.za/bioethics](http://www.sun.ac.za/bioethics), via the CPD section. These are multiple-choice questions (MCQs) for six chapters and the healthcare practitioner needs to answer 75% correctly to qualify for three CPD points. MCQs on the remaining chapters will be added later in 2011 and the proceeds for the CPD programme goes to the Unit for Bioethics of Stellenbosch University.

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### Reference

1. Williams JR. World Medical Association medical ethics manual. Ferney-Voltaire Cedex: Ethics Unit of the World Medical Association; 2009.