

CASE STUDY: ETHICAL DILEMMA

Sexual and gender minorities

James was transferred by ambulance as an emergency to the male surgical ward in a provincial hospital due to a head injury that he sustained during a motor vehicle accident. When he regained consciousness, he immediately expressed his dissatisfaction with the ward he found himself in. He explained to the professional nurse that he was gay and he wished to be placed in a unisex ward as he did not feel safe in a male ward. The professional nurse in charge explained that she could not fulfil his request as the ward was full and there was nothing she could do to accommodate his needs as the hospital did not have a unisex ward. He then requested to be transferred to the side ward where he would not be sharing a room. He was informed that the side wards were also full. He still expressed his dissatisfaction as he felt the ward was not suitable and safe for his stay.

- Identify the ethical dilemma.
- What are the ethical issues that you can identify in this scenario?
- What would you do differently if you were the professional nurse in charge of the ward?
- Discuss measures that can be put in place to accommodate the LGBTQQIP2SAA community in healthcare settings.

Possible solutions to the dilemma: Sexual and gender minorities.

The ethical dilemma in this case study involves the inability of the hospital to accommodate **members of the** LGBTQQIP2SAA community in healthcare settings as their wards are designed to accommodate male and female (heteronormative) patients only.

The ethical issues involved are:

- Respect for autonomy: James deserves respect as a person. James revealed the information about his sexual preference to the nurses who must keep it confidential and respect his freedom of choice. He has the right to choose how he would like to be treated. He requested to be nursed in a private side ward as he needed to have privacy. The nurses should find a way of accommodating his request.
- Beneficence: we must always do well. James verbalised his problem. It is the responsibility of nurses to do good and avoid inflicting harm (maleficence). Harm in this case can be viewed as inability to provide a comfortable and safe place for the patient.
- Justice: in this case James may feel that he is being treated unfairly based on his sexual orientation. He may feel discriminated against.
- Patient's rights: According to the Patients' Rights and the Bill of Rights, James has a right to equality, dignity and privacy and the hospital's failure to accommodate sexual minorities infringes on these rights.
- Right to safety: James has a right to be nursed in a conducive and safe environment which will make him feel comfortable.

Measures that can be put in place to accommodate the LGBTQQIP2SAA community in healthcare settings

- Create a hospital facilities that accommodate LGBTQQIP2SAA community for example, toilets that are unisex, private side wards etc.
- Create an inclusive environment.
- Include sexual orientation and gender identity options on the hospital forms.
- Train nurses and all members of the healthcare team about LGBTQQIP2SAA community and diversity of needs.
- Suggestion: What about the lack of resources? There is already a lack of beds for many people, building or converting space to private facilities will deprive of other people of those opportunities by catering for only a select few (minorities)?