



How are the Principles of Medical Ethics Interpreted in Gaza?

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Abstract

Medical ethics are sacrificed in Gaza and the international organizations are watching. In these short comments, we have a quick overview of the current state of medical ethics in different groups of people in Gaza.

Keywords: Medical ethics; Gaza; genocide

Dear Editor,

Medical ethics are sacrificed in Gaza and the international organizations are watching. In these short comments, we have a quick overview of the current state of medical ethics in different groups of people in Gaza.

1. The challenge of morality and expediency in Gaza

Modern medical ethics follows four important principles; beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, and justice^{1,2}.

Justice in health means that drugs, medical equipment and specialized therapists should be available to all people based on justice and fairness. Humans all have human rights and their gender, social class, skin color, race, culture, and religious should not lead them to be deprived of their basic rights³. Today in the Gaza, justice in health is far from this important principle of medical ethics. Access to health facilities is not available for people (Figure 1).

Children struggle with illness and death⁵. Children die of starvation. In order to save human lives, the injured organs of children and the injured are cut even without anesthetics⁶ (Figure 2). These conditions are very far from the principle of medical ethics of not

harming the patient and the principle of justice and action based on the patient's consent.

According to international laws and the Geneva Convention, healthcare workers must be protected in wars^{7,8}. But in Gaza, medical staff and even hospitals have been directly attacked by air and ground (Figure 3).

In terms of medical ethics, this situation is full of moral ambiguities. Aren't the people living in Gaza a subset of the principle of justice in health? Or do the principles of medical ethics need to be reviewed and revised? Or do principles need those who implement them? What about respect for patient autonomy? Can the wounded in Gaza decide on their treatment? Can they choose alternative treatment for themselves? What does the concept of informed consent mean in Gaza?

Are the principles of medical ethics full of exceptions that differ for each human group or in each time and place?



Figure 1: The sick and injured die due to the lack of necessary facilities ⁴.



Figure 2: More than 10 children a day lose a limb in three months of brutal conflict ⁶.



Figure 3: The Ministry of Health of Palestine in Gaza announced the latest statistics of the martyrs of the medical staff of more than 990 people⁹

2. Suggestions

- International assemblies and activists in the field of medical ethics all over the world should react to this unethical situation by publishing statements and articles and by other possible methods and condemn the lack of respect for the principles of medical ethics. They should reiterate that gender, religion and race should not make a difference in the provision of health services to war victims.
- In order to implement the principles of medical ethics, such as the principles of ethics in research (Helsinki), a strong executive support should be created in the world, and failure to comply with it for any individual or group implies paying heavy costs.
- Medical organizations around the world must support the right to security for doctors and health system workers under any circumstances.
- In Gaza, the total blockade should be lifted as soon as possible.

With the supervision of international organizations that defend medical ethics and justice in health, the necessary facilities to prevent human disasters in the field of food, medicine and health should be provided.

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