

Chapter 02: Ethical Theories: Their Meaning for Nursing
Keatings: Ethical & Legal Issues in Canadian Nursing, 4th Edition

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1. How may ethics be **best** described?
 - a. The philosophical study of morality
 - b. The process of value clarification
 - c. The beliefs and norms of a society
 - d. The application of ethical principles to moral issues

ANS: A

	Feedback
A	Correct! Ethics, the philosophical study of morality, is a comprehensive approach to the systematic exploration of what is morally right and wrong.
B	Incorrect—Value clarification is a process through which individuals come to understand the values they hold and the relative importance of each of these values and hence come to understand the various and shared perspectives they hold.
C	Incorrect—The beliefs and norms of a society influence ethical perspectives and are explored in the study of ethics.
D	Incorrect—Applying ethical principles to moral issues helps provide frameworks for ethical decision making and is a component of the study of ethics.

DIF: Cognitive level: Knowledge

2. Which of the following is the focus of normative ethics?
 - a. The analysis of morality without taking a moral position
 - b. The question of what is right or wrong
 - c. Explaining how moral attitudes and beliefs differ from person to person
 - d. Distinguishing between what is normal and what is not

ANS: B

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—This is a focus of descriptive ethics.
B	Correct! Normative ethics focuses on the reasons, principles, or arguments that guide decisions about what is right and wrong. Basic principles and virtues are identified to guide morality and provide coherent, systematic, and justifiable answers to moral questions.
C	Incorrect—A person's differing moral attitudes and beliefs help to shape his or her personal values; and influence views about what is right or wrong.
D	Incorrect—People's ideas of normal and abnormal could be based on values, but these distinctions are not necessarily ethical.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension

3. Which of the following fields of ethics applies ethical theories and principles to actual moral problems?
- Philosophical ethics
 - Biomedical ethics
 - Nursing ethics
 - Applied ethics

ANS: D

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—Ethics in general is a philosophical study.
B	Incorrect—Biomedical ethics explores moral issues and ethical questions associated with health care.
C	Incorrect—Nursing ethics focuses on moral questions within all domains of nursing.
D	Correct! Applied ethics is a specific field of ethics where theories and principles are applied to actual moral problems to assist in guiding decision making.

DIF: Cognitive level: Knowledge

4. Which of the following exists when mutually exclusive alternatives can both be supported by strong moral reasons?
- Moral distress
 - An ethical dilemma
 - A value conflict
 - An ethical violation

ANS: B

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—Moral distress results when a person is faced with ethical issues or conflicting values and cannot deal effectively with them or is obstructed from doing so.
B	Correct! An ethical dilemma arises when the best course of action is unclear and there are strong moral reasons supporting each opposing position.
C	Incorrect—A value conflict occurs when people encounter other individuals or groups whose value system are in conflict with their own.
D	Incorrect—An ethical violation occurs when actions and behaviours contradict what is clearly the right action or fail to meet an ethical standard or code of ethics.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension

5. What is the result when a nurse believes that a course of action is correct, but is prevented (e.g., through a law or policy) from carrying out that action or influencing the decision, resulting in feelings of guilt?
- An ethical dilemma
 - Moral distress
 - Ethical reasoning
 - Moral irresponsibility

ANS: B

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—An ethical dilemma arises when the best course of action is unclear and there are strong moral reasons supporting each opposing position.
B	Correct! Moral distress results when a person is faced with ethical issues or conflicting values and cannot deal effectively with them.
C	Incorrect—Ethical reasoning is the process of ethical decision making, not the result of a situation.
D	Incorrect—Moral responsibility refers to the duty to act in accordance with the moral principles that guides groups or society. Moral irresponsibility would occur if a nurse disregarded professional or organizational ethical standards or codes of ethics.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension

6. What is the correct term to describe a framework of principles and guidelines that helps to identify ethical issues and reconcile conflicts?
- Metaethics
 - Ethical theory
 - Ethical values
 - Descriptive ethics

ANS: B

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—Metaethics analyzes the meanings of concepts, such as <i>right</i> , <i>obligation</i> , <i>good</i> , and <i>virtue</i> , and attempts to distinguish between what is moral and what is not—for example, the difference between a moral rule and a social rule.
B	Correct! Ethical theory is the study of the nature and justification of general ethical principles that can be applied to moral problems.
C	Incorrect—Ethical values are ideals and may vary across individuals, groups, or populations; they do not resolve conflicts but help in understanding various perspectives on an issue.
D	Incorrect—Descriptive ethics encompasses explanations and factual descriptions of moral behaviour and beliefs; it does not identify ethical issues or resolve conflicts.

DIF: Cognitive level: Knowledge

7. Which of the following **best** describes the concept of equality for all Canadians?
- A belief
 - A value
 - A principle
 - A moral dilemma

ANS: B

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—A belief is individual and is something felt to be true; the concept of

	equality is not simply an individual belief.
B	Correct! Equality for all is a societal value; the majority of Canadians subscribe to this ideal. A value has significant meaning to an individual, group, or society.
C	Incorrect—Principles help to guide moral decisions; the concept of equality is based on the principle of justice.
D	Incorrect—A moral dilemma occurs when the right course of action is not clear.

DIF: Cognitive level: Application

8. A nurse's support of client autonomy is based on which of the following?
- An "a priori" principle
 - A personal value
 - A professional value
 - A legal requirement

ANS: C

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—Ethical principles are considered "prima facie"; that is, their application may be relative to another principle that may have more weight or priority in a given situation. They are not considered "a priori" or binding.
B	Incorrect—A nurse's support of client autonomy may be an example of a personal value, but not exclusively.
C	Correct! Professional values build and expand on personal values. The value of client autonomy is a professional (and possibly personal) value and is evident in codes of ethics and professional standards for nurses.
D	Incorrect—Some legal doctrines, such as informed consent, are based on the principle of autonomy, but generally, supporting client autonomy is not a legal requirement.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension

9. Which of the following theories may guide nurses to choose actions that will lead to the best consequences, outcomes, or results?
- Utilitarian
 - Deontological
 - Normative
 - Relative

ANS: A

	Feedback
A	Correct! Utilitarianism is a teleological theory in which the ethical choice is the one with the best consequences, outcomes, or results.
B	Incorrect—Deontological theories make explicit the duties and principles that should guide people's actions; they do not focus on the consequences of actions.
C	Incorrect—Normative theories are intended to provide frameworks and rules to guide decisions about what is right or wrong, but they do not focus on the consequences of actions.
D	Incorrect—Relativism states that there are no moral absolutes and that the

	concept of morality varies across cultures and among individuals; it does not provide a guide to choosing the best actions.
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DIF: Cognitive level: Knowledge

10. What is the main principle underlying a rule-based theory of utilitarianism?
- The theory is always deontological.
 - The theory considers individual acts.
 - The theory considers general patterns of behaviour.
 - The theory is the foundation of nursing ethics.

ANS: C

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—Deontological theory (which includes the belief that standards for moral behaviour exist independently of means or ends) includes both rule- and act-based theories but is not the main underlying principle.
B	Incorrect—Rule-based theories consider general patterns of behaviour, whereas act-based theories consider individual acts.
C	Correct! General patterns of behaviour are the foundation of rule-based theories. Rule-based theories consider general patterns of behaviour, whereas act-based theories consider individual acts. Both rule- and act-based theories are utilitarian (in which the best choice is the one with the best outcomes).
D	Incorrect—Such approaches as caring ethics and ethical principles, not rule-based theories, are the foundation of nursing ethics.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension

11. Which of the following is the basis for ethical decision-making frameworks?
- Ethical reasoning
 - Ethical values
 - Ethical dilemmas
 - Ethical principles

ANS: D

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—Ethical reasoning is a <i>process</i> of ethical decision making using a framework.
B	Incorrect—Ethical values are beliefs held by an individual or a group and may evolve over time; they are not the basis for ethical decision-making frameworks.
C	Incorrect—Ethical dilemmas arise when the best choice of action is unclear and when strong moral reasons support each position; they are not the basis for ethical decision-making frameworks.
D	Correct! Ethical principles serve as rules to guide moral conduct and provide a framework for ethical decision making.

DIF: Cognitive level: Knowledge

12. What is the main difference between deontological and teleological theories?

- a. Teleological theory focuses on the use of principles to choose the correct actions.
- b. Deontological theory focuses on ends or outcomes and consequences of decisions.
- c. Deontological theory suggests that standards for moral behaviour are independent of the ends or outcomes of actions.
- d. All teleological theories are rule based.

ANS: C

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—Teleological theory is focused on the end results or outcomes of actions.
B	Incorrect—Deontological theory is focused on acts and rules that support principles or duties, not on the ends or outcomes of decisions.
C	Correct! Deontological theory suggests that standards for moral behaviour are independent of the ends or outcomes of actions, whereas teleological theory focuses on the outcomes and consequences of actions.
D	Incorrect—Teleological theory is focused on the end results or outcomes of actions. Although rule utilitarianism, a teleological theory, considers the utility of general patterns of behaviour rather than that of specific actions.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension

13. Which of the following ethical principles is the foundation of informed consent?
- a. Beneficence
 - b. Justice
 - c. Nonmaleficence
 - d. Autonomy

ANS: D

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—Beneficence holds that one must make a positive move to produce some good or benefit for another; it is not the foundation of informed consent.
B	Incorrect—Justice is based on the notions of fairness and equity; it is not the foundation of informed consent.
C	Incorrect—Nonmaleficence obliges people to act in such a way as to prevent or remove harm; it is not the foundation of informed consent.
D	Correct! Autonomy, or self-determination (including the right to choose one's own path), is the foundation of informed consent.

DIF: Cognitive level: Analysis

14. Which of the following influenced the shift in ethical thinking away from abstract rules that reinforce a deductive reasoning process?
- a. Patricia Benner
 - b. Maternalistic attitudes
 - c. Feminine ethics
 - d. The principle of nonmaleficence

ANS: C

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—Patricia Benner observed the value of a nurse’s intuition and proposed that emotions are central to perception and rationality; she did not influence this shift in ethical thinking.
B	Incorrect—Maternalistic attitudes have not influenced shifts in ethical thinking.
C	Correct! Feminine ethics argues for an inductive process in which the starting point is the individual’s circumstances or personal story. It has influenced the shift in ethical thinking away from abstract rules that reinforce a deductive reasoning process.
D	Incorrect—Nonmaleficence is an ethical principle meaning “do no harm.” This longstanding principle was also present during periods when abstract rules reinforced a deductive reasoning process.

DIF: Cognitive level: Knowledge

15. Which of the following considers the influence of the nurse–patient relationship on ethical decision making?
- Social Justice
 - Autonomous ethics
 - Feminine ethics
 - Relational ethics

ANS: D

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—Social justice addresses equity and fairness within a society. Nurses advocate for strategies that address the societal issues that affect the health and well-being of persons in Canadian society.
B	Incorrect—Autonomy is an ethical principle; however, “autonomous ethics” is not a recognized form of ethics.
C	Incorrect—Feminine ethics emphasizes relational ethics, but relational ethics is not the main focus of feminine ethics.
D	Correct! Relational ethics considers the influence of the nurse–patient relationship on ethical decision making. If the entire focus is on ethical principles and the relationship between the nurse and the patient is ignored, then relational ethics is not present and the nurse may become disengaged.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension

16. Which of the following aligns with the use of the narrative in nursing ethics?
- Ethic of care
 - Relational ethics
 - Value clarification
 - Moral perspectives of Indigenous peoples

ANS: D

	Feedback
A	Incorrect—An ethic of care offers an approach to ethics that values feelings, emotions, empathy, and care. It recognizes the importance of relationships and

	the uniqueness and context of particular situations. It recognizes the value of knowing the person and his or her context; however, the use of narrative is not the major focus.
B	Incorrect—Relational ethics considers the influence of the nurse–patient relationship on ethical decision making. Although understanding a person’s story is part of relationship building, it is not the major focus.
C	Incorrect—Value clarification assists individuals in understanding the values they hold and the perspectives they may share with others.
D	Correct! The use of stories to uncover the complexity of moral issues is part of the rich oral Indigenous culture. Through stories, shared from generation to generation, they have created a strong system of knowledge and mythology that guides their moral thinking and actions. In nursing narrative ethics encourages the sharing of stories to gain a clearer understanding of the ethical issues and challenges embedded in them.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension

TRUE/FALSE

1. Rationality is related to the notion of thinking and reasoning. It is associated with comprehension, intuition, and intelligence.

ANS: F

	Feedback
Correct	Rationality is associated with comprehension, intelligence, or inference; intuition is not considered a component of rational thinking.
Incorrect	Rationality is associated with comprehension, intelligence, or inference; intuition is not considered a component of rational thinking.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension

2. Ensuring open visiting for those important to the person is an expression of a Canadian value.

ANS: T

	Feedback
Correct	Canadians value equity, individual rights, health and well-being, quality of life, and human dignity. Most Canadians, whatever their cultural background may be, value their family and friends—those closest to them. It is the person’s choice to make as to who should be present with them when they are unwell. Of course, this has to be balanced with the rights of others in the same setting.
Incorrect	Canadians value equity, individual rights, health and well-being, quality of life, and human dignity. Most Canadians, whatever their cultural background may be, value their family and friends—those closest to them. It is the person’s choice to make as to who should be present with them when they are unwell. Of course, this has to be balanced with the rights of others in the same setting.

DIF: Cognitive level: Synthesis

3. Cultural relativists value democracy is the most ethical way to govern.

ANS: F

	Feedback
Correct	Relativists believe that the moral values and principles of one culture do not govern the conduct of others. What may be considered moral in one culture may be considered immoral in another. Although some societies value democracy, others disagree and value utilitarian regimes, which may be the most appropriate, or the best, for that particular society.
Incorrect	Relativists believe that the moral values and principles of one culture do not govern the conduct of others. What may be considered moral in one culture may be considered immoral in another. Although some societies value democracy, others disagree and value utilitarian regimes, which may be the most appropriate, or the best, for that particular society.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension

4. W. D. Ross identified *prima facie* duties as those duties that one must always act upon unless they conflict with duties of equal or stronger obligation.

ANS: T

	Feedback
Correct	Ross proposed that “right” choice or action is the one consistent with all the rules. When all of the duties are consistent, then the choice is based on preference. When there is conflict, then one appeals to the higher rule to resolve the conflict (e.g., sanctity of life versus veracity).
Incorrect	Ross proposed that “right” choice or action is the one consistent with all the rules. When all of the duties are consistent, then the choice is based on preference. When there is conflict, then one appeals to the higher rule to resolve the conflict (e.g., sanctity of life versus veracity).

DIF: Cognitive level: Knowledge

5. Indigenous peoples have a consistent view of morality, and this is embedded in their rich oral tradition.

ANS: F

	Feedback
Correct	Not all Indigenous communities hold to one philosophical view, religious belief, or moral code; however, all share an oral tradition that transmits history, traditions, and culture across generations.
Incorrect	Not all Indigenous communities hold to one philosophical view, religious belief, or moral code; however, all share an oral tradition that transmits history, traditions, and culture across generations.

DIF: Cognitive level: Comprehension