

A FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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Abstract: When faced with a morally charged situation, nurses engage in an ethical decision-making process to resolve the ethical dilemma. Because of its significance to nursing and other professional practices, ethical decision making deserves more focused analysis. This paper uses Rest's Four Component Model of Morality as a theoretical framework to suggest that the production of moral behavior is complex and addresses the role of the moral practitioner from initial recognition that an ethical situation exists to implementation of a justifiable action. In the model, Rest integrates the cognitive and affective processes that underlie a holistic understanding of ethical practice: sensitivity, judgment, motivation, and action. Implications of the model for nursing education, including practical strategies to enhance ethical skills are discussed.

Keywords: Nursing Ethics, Rest's Four Component Model of Morality, Cognitive Moral Development Theory
