Bioethics Grand Rounds

Co-sponsored by the Department of Bioethics & Humanities and the Ethics Advisory Committee at the University of Washington Medical Center

Shared Decision-Making in Medicine: A Decrepit Concept

Thursday, November 14, 2013
3:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Health Sciences Building, T-739
Reception to follow

Shared decision-making is both useful and valuable in medicine. It embodies the principle of informed consent and improves patient participation in decision-making, which can increase patient satisfaction with their care. However, I will argue that shared decision-making has become a decrepit concept. Largely as a result of a variety of societal and cultural forces, shared decision-making has come to reflect something different—a consumerist model of the physician-patient relationship—than what it was originally intended to mean at its inception. As a result, shared decision-making today not only strikes an unsuitable balance between respecting patient autonomy and physician obligation to promote the health and well-being of the patient, but it also may be bad for patient’s health. I will draw upon my recently completed research on the provider-parent relationship in the context of childhood vaccines to illustrate the problem with shared decision-making today followed by a discussion of postmodern medicine and the evolution of shared decision-making in medicine.

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