Ethical Complexities in Assessing Patients’ Insight

Laura Guidry-Grimes, PhD

APRIL 16, 2018, 10-11AM, HEALTH SCIENCES RM T-498

ABSTRACT: The question of whether a patient has insight is among the first to be considered in psychiatric contexts, but also elsewhere in the hospital. There are several competing conceptions of ‘insight,’ which broadly refers to a patient’s awareness of their medical condition. In the literature, current accounts of insight generally have more demanding criteria than clinicians had in years past. Data on which groups of psychiatric patients tend to lack insight have changed dramatically over the years. Studies also give contradictory evidence regarding the frequency and consequences of poor insight. A number of crucial questions remain unanswered or fiercely debated. Given the conceptual ambiguities associated with the meaning of insight, there are significant ethical concerns about how patients’ decisions are weighed and evaluated-making. After outlining some of the key disagreements in the literature about what insight means, I will demonstrate how insight assessments can impact attempts at shared decision-making.

OBJECTIVES:
1. Define ‘insight,’ and describe the competing criteria used for assessing it.
2. Identify ethical implications associated with documenting a patient’s lack of insight (in full or in part).
3. Examine the moral requirements of shared decision-making when providers suspect the patient lacks insight.

Dr. Guidry-Grimes is an Assistant Professor of Medical Humanities and Bioethics at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock and a clinical ethicist at UAMS and Arkansas Children’s Hospital. Her research focuses on disability advocacy, psychiatric ethics, social justice, relationality, and the interaction between institutional structures and autonomous agency. www.lauragg.com

HOSTED BY: THE DEPT. OF BIOETHICS & HUMANITIES, UWSOM
http://depts.washington.edu/bhdept/index.html
bhinfo@uw.edu, 206.543.5145

The University of Washington School of Medicine is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education to provide continuing medical education for physicians.
The University of Washington School of Medicine designates this live activity for a maximum of 6.0 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity. (Each session 1.0 credit.)
To request disability accommodation, contact the Disability Services Office at least ten days in advance at 206.543.6450/V, 206.546.6452/TTY, 206.685.7264/FAX, or email dso@uw.edu.