

## Book Review

### ***Toward a Moral Horizon: Nursing Ethics for Leadership and Practice***

**Edited by J. L. Storch, P. Rodney, and R. Starzomski  
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Nurses are challenged on a daily basis by ethical dilemmas and moral struggles as they strive to foster and maintain healing and to empower their relationships with patients and families. It is becoming increasingly clear that nurses require knowledge and expertise in the domain of ethics in order to contribute to the identification, analysis, and resolution of ethical dilemmas. It is also clear that, as in all areas of nursing education, ethics requires a marriage between theoretical knowledge and the practical application of that knowledge in our complex society and our equally complex health-care system.

The editors of this volume have made every effort to ensure that its contributions are written in a reader-friendly style while not compromising depth or substance. One of the many strengths of *Toward a Moral Horizon* is the attention given to defining concepts and introducing unifying language and terms such as moral agency, moral dilemma, moral distress, and moral courage. This is most useful in creating a common understanding and common grounds for discussion and debate.

The book is divided into three organizational segments: the moral landscape, the moral climate, and moral horizons. The moral landscape comprises a series of chapters devoted to the development of ethics knowledge. The chapters on history and philosophy probe the roots of nursing ethics as it has developed. Those on complementary approaches (i.e., contextualism, cross-cultural ethics, ecology) document the breadth and depth of current thinking, which has pushed us to move beyond traditional approaches. Most impressive in this section is chapter 8, which examines moral agency. A brilliant contribution, it weaves from defining moral agency through the various determinants and barriers to its development. Exploration of the research on moral distress and development of the concept of moral courage are a positive and constructive approach useful for examining factors that foster the development of moral agency.

The second section, devoted to the moral climate, comprises a series of short chapters presenting ethics from different world views. Nursing

ethics is examined in the context of home health care and from the perspective of economics. Readers will be challenged by the chapter on an ecological framework. It poses a series of questions that call on us to examine our personal and professional integrity. The framework will also serve to help professionals expose systemic or environmental factors that can manipulate or influence both how we ask questions and how we hear the answers. Another chapter uses poetry by students and nurses to demonstrate how a narrative approach can result in rich texts that enhance understanding in the exploration of day-to-day moral issues.

The final section, on moral horizons, is a fascinating group of contributions covering myriad topics. The chapters on biotechnology, global health, genetics, and research offer the reader a broader perspective on the world as it is evolving. A chapter oriented towards children is a welcome reflection not on age of consent, which is often the focus in ethics texts, but, rather, on how nurses must understand and empower ethical practice in the care of children. The final four chapters in this section are creatively written to offer nurses knowledge about authentic relationships with themselves, their colleagues, and the patients and families whom they care for.

The editors of *Toward a Moral Horizon* state in the preface that their goal was to offer “a Canadian text in nursing ethics that both provided greater depth in nursing ethics and advanced the field of nursing ethics” (p. xv). The volume is intended specifically for use at the graduate level. My colleague and I have been using it as our primary text for the past 2 years in our Ethics in Advanced Practice course. The students have found it thought-provoking and comprehensive. The book includes comprehensive reference lists and study questions throughout. Many of the examples are clinical vignettes or conversations with practising nurses. Our students have found the clinical scenarios helpful for understanding the complex theoretical material. Appendices present ethical decision-making models, codes of ethics, and research guidelines.

This text fills a gap in the ethics education literature. While there are many texts describing the differences between “principlism” and other traditional frameworks, or focusing on case studies, this book makes an appeal for understanding roots and contexts, for building knowledge as a tool that will enhance nurses’ ability to evolve and adapt in the analysis of our practice and our profession.

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