Ethics for Transfusion Medicine

Mohammad Faranoush, MD
Associate Professor
Pediatric Hematologist Oncologist
Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization
Part I. What is ethics?

- Ethics as the systematic study of human conduct and moral judgement, including:
  - good/bad,
  - right/wrong
  - virtue/vice

- Critical reflection on moral beliefs and practices:
  - What are people’s moral beliefs?
  - What choices should we make?
Ethical judgements & principles

- Ethical judgements involve a dual test:
  - “Are the means acceptable?” AND
  - “Are the ends worthwhile?”

- Consensus principles in bioethics
  - Treat people with respect
  - Do no harm
  - Do good
  - Act fairly
  - Be caring
Ethics

- Ethics are a set of principles dealing with what is morally right or wrong.
- Provide a standard of conduct or code of behavior.
- Allow a health care provider to analyze information and make decisions based on what people believe is right and good conduct.
10 Basic Rules of Ethics

1. Put saving of life and promotion of health above all else
2. Make every effort to keep pt as comfortable as possible and to preserve life when possible
3. Respect the pt’s choice to die peacefully and with dignity when all options have been discussed with the patient and family and/or predetermined by advance directives
10 Basic Rules of Ethics

4. Treat all patients equally
   - Regardless of race, religion, social or economic status, sex and nationality
   - Avoid bias, prejudice and discrimination

5. Provide care for all persons to best of your ability
10 Basic Rules of Ethics

6. Maintain competent level of skill consistent with occupation
   ▪ Stay informed and up to date
   ▪ Pursue continuing education as necessary
10 Basic Rules of Ethics

7. Maintain confidentiality
   - Information about the pt must remain private and can be shared only with other members of pt’s health care team
   - Information obtained from pts should not be repeated or used for personal gain
   - Gossiping about pts is ethically wrong
8. Refrain from immoral, unethical and illegal practices
   - Report illegal actions of others to proper authority
   - Avoid actions that are immoral or illegal

9. Show loyalty to patients, co-workers and employer
   - Avoid negative or derogatory statements
   - Always express a positive attitude
10 Basic Rules of Ethics

10. Be sincere, honest and caring
   - Treat others as you want to be treated
   - “Golden Rule”
   - Show respect and concern for the feelings, dignity and rights of others
Part 2. Ethics & Transfusion

- Clinical practice ethics centres on patient care
- Requires
  - Patient (or guardian) consent
  - Fairness to other patients
- Within institutional parameters
  - Licensing, medical appointment, general health care system authorisation
Transfusion

- Transfusion medicine involves a number of ethical issues because blood comes from human beings and is a precious resource with a limited shelf life.
In 1980 the International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT) endorsed its first formal code of ethics, a revised code of ethics for donation and transfusion was endorsed in 2000.

These codes gave recommendations regarding the ethical responsibilities of the donor, the collection agency and the prescribing authority toward the well being of the recipient and the community at large.
Classification

Ethical issues in transfusion are categorized in three classes:

- Related to Donors
- Related to Patients
- Related to Blood Transfusion Services
Donors’ Ethical Issues

1. Blood donation as a gift

2. Informed consent

3. The donor should be advised of the risks

4. Any procedures during donation should be in compliance with internationally accepted standards.

5. Anonymity between donor and recipient

6. The confidentiality of donor information assured

7. Donor Education
8. Blood donation must be based SOP

9. Donor deferral

10. Donor safety
Patients’ (recipients') Ethical Issues

1. Patients should be informed of the known risks and benefits of blood transfusion and/or alternative therapies (*such as autologous transfusion or erythropoietin*).

2. Patients have the right to accept or refuse the procedure.

3. Patients’ informed consent should be obtained (in the event that the patient is unable to give prior informed consent, the basis for treatment by transfusion must be in the best interests of the patient) and included:
   - consent must be given voluntarily.
   - a patient must have capacity.
   - the patient must understand the nature of procedure.
   - consent must be specific to the treatment.
4. Transfusion therapy must be given under the overall responsibility of a registered medical practitioner.

5. Genuine clinical need should be the only basis for transfusion therapy.

6. As far as possible the patient should receive only those particular components (cells, plasma, or plasma derivatives) that are clinically appropriate and afford optimal safety.

7. Recipients should be informed if they have been harmed.
Blood Services’ Ethical Issues

1. Non profit

2. Blood is a public resource and access should not be restricted

3. Wastage should be avoided

4. Blood transfusion practices according to international code of ethics.

5. Respect to ’right prior to donors’.
6. Improvement transfusion service

7. Quality controls and quality assurance measures (Haemovigilance and Look back).

8. Continuous education and training at the national and international levels

9. Epidemiological and evidence based information

10. Promote new standards and move to achieve agreed standards in transfusion medicine.
**WHO recommendations**

*Blood donation as a gift:*

1. The national blood services should be based on voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation.

2. No one should be forced to donate, for family or economic or any other reason.

3. The trade of human blood and body parts is unethical.

4. The dignity and worth of the human being should be respected.
Thank you for your attention – questions and comments are most welcome!