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ETHICS: THE JOURNEY IN SEARCH OF A SATISFYING LIFE. ÉTICA: EL VIAJE EN BÚSQUEDA DE UNA VIDA SATISFACTORIA.

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Abstract

Background: Health professionals must change the ethics of the "third person", where moral actions carried out by other people are judged as correct / incorrect, for the ethics of the first person oriented to personal excellence, vocation to good and to dignity of a person. **Objective:** To explore the knowledge and ethical training of health professionals working in the field of Nephrology. **Method:** A survey of 37 items on the basic notions of ethics was applied to the participants of the annual IMIN Meeting. **Results:** 85 surveys were obtained, 79% think that the laws enacted today respond to economic

interests; 82% express that we cannot accept moral absolutes, however, 89% think that practical reason that directs our behavior recognizes human good in search of plenitude. 44% feel that it is not possible to act according to justice on a regular basis, and 94% express that virtue ethics look to the integral good of the person. **Conclusions:** The philosophical reflection, so typical of the human being, constitutes an ethical requirement in search of the truth of the good that must be chosen to achieve fullness, in the work of health agents in the field of Nephrology.

Keywords: bioethics, nephrology, personal autonomy.

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INTRODUCTION

In this life and in every relationship we establish with others, we are traveling. The starting point is the day to day of our existence and the goal, slightly clear, is to be happy. If life's journey were by car, who makes a good driver? Ethics gives us the necessary elements to be good drivers, to reach the goal, to facilitate our own and other people's path, to achieve an accomplished life, full of meaning and reality (1). In an ideal situation, conditions must be given to enjoy the trip, avoid accidents and major shocks and reach the fixed destination. What could these conditions be and their comparison with ethics?

The first thing would be for the driver to be healthy (vs. sleep, tired, ill), in addition, the car must be in good conditions, the weather must be favorable (vs. rain, fog, snow, etc.), the road must be familiar and passable, and one must have respect for other travelers and passersby. When one or more of these conditions fails, one's own and others' lives are endangered, in addition, reaching the goal gets compromised.

In the same way, some principles are needed that can direct our actions and give us a certain orientation to achieve our goal and that of others (2). Ethics work as a remedy for a disoriented and corrupted society (3,4).

The clinical exercise and the use of the principles of Bioethics compel us to rethink the paternalistic model with which the doctor-patient relationship has been traditionally addressed

and that allows a greater exercise of patient autonomy in order to ensure greater adherence to treatment and better results of these (5-8).

As discussed by the Spanish Transplant Society there are some principles that govern the clinical act and medical research in Nephrology; these principles are that of autonomy, beneficence, justice, and non-maleficence (9). The purpose of basing clinical practice of these principles is to design strategies that allow better nephrology medical care, accessible to the entire population (10-12). Taking responsibility of one's acts is part of the human nature; this is what gives us freedom (13).

A good driver knows the traffic regulations, has a driver's license, takes out insurance as is usually legislated, the car has a circulation card and verification to alleviate pollution. In the same way, the human being needs to duly comply with the guidelines set by ethics to function properly.

Therefore, our aim was to explore the knowledge and ethical training of health professionals working in the field of Nephrology, carried out among the participants of the annual meeting of the Mexican Institute of Nephrological Research (IMIN) and determine which ethics to choose for bioethics in Nephrology.

METHOD

The present investigation was descriptive and exploratory; an instrument was designed with 37 statements with Likert responses on complete agreement, agreement, disagreement, and complete disagreement for each of them; once the questionnaire was completed, it was revised by Bioethics experts and compared with the bibliographic background, giving it content validity and expert judgment.

The statements were then classified into 6 different categories that allowed a better organization of information for later analysis:

Table 1. Instrument questions grouped by categories.

Category	Questions
1) The role of law in bioethics (14, 15)	1. Nomocracy (governed by laws) imposes the force of law to live in society. 2. Laws enacted today respond to the economic interests of the strongest. 35. The natural moral law invites you to do good and avoid evil, not to do to others what you do not want them to do to you. 17. What unites today's society are scientific and technological advances, a new version of the law of the strongest.
2) Ethical behavior (16)	4. The practical reason that guides our behavior recognizes the human good in search of fullness. 34. Practical reason is nothing other than the natural moral law inscribed in what one is. 36. Moral conscience is the judgment of practical reason about the morality of our actions.
3) Notion of good and evil (17)	3. We cannot accept moral absolutes because the only permanent thing is change. 6. Doing good, doing well, aiming for the best is a utopia. 13. Accepting a human nature requires recognizing an order superior to man. 14. Speaking of moral absolutes creates distrust and even fear. 16. To speak of moral absolutes would be to create spaces for religions that divide people and communities. 20. Requests for money from a patient and his family to privilege them on a waiting list for a transplant is always inadmissible. 21. There are acts of corruption in professional practice that are understandable. 22. Modifying a research quote for a personal benefit is inevitable. 23. Neither in ethics nor in bioethics are there moral absolutes that guide professional practice. 37. From a rational point of view, the human being tends towards his integral good.
4) Habits (18)	5. It is not possible to act according to justice on a regular basis. 24. The freedom of the human being invents its own truth on a daily basis. 25. Man is freedom and therefore a useless passion. 26. The freedom of the human being has no limits. 27. Freedom needs guidance to choose well.
5) Freedom and responsibility (19, 20)	28. Freedom is enriched when chosen well. 29. Only the human being is capable of responding to his own actions. 30. Responsibility limits the exercise of freedom. 31. The foregoing responsibility looks carefully before acting. 32. To grow in responsibility one must assume the successes and failures of the performance itself. 33. Consistency and the desire to transcend are other forms of responsibility.
6) Ethics and science (21, 22)	7. The ethics of virtue looks to the integral good of the person. 8. The ethic of care makes visible and gives voice to the most vulnerable population in the physical, psychological and / or social. 9. Even if you don't want to, scientific rationality chooses to do evil because there is no other possibility. 10. All ethic postures are equally valid, depending on the culture and the moment in which it is lived. 11. Personal ethic is independent of professional ethics; they may be different or opposite. 12. Personal ethics manifest where an individual seeks full fulfillment and happiness. 15. Scientific knowledge has supremacy in the ways of knowing of the human being. 17. What unites today's society are scientific and technological advances, a new version of the law of the strongest. 18. Scientific research is exempt from cases of corruption and bad practices. 19. Moral absolutes contradict scientific rationality.

An intentional sampling was carried out, where the participants of the Annual Meeting of the Mexican Institute of Nephrological Research (IMIN) who chose to participate, answered the survey aforementioned; sociodemographic data was collected on the area and type of work and sector to which they provide their services, as well as 37 questions on the basic notions of ethics, its implications in professional activity and an exercise to identify six current trends of ethics. Data obtained was

protected by the Mexican NOM-012-SSA3-2012 for the criteria for the execution of research projects for human health, that establishes that no informed consent letter is needed in cases of research without risk or with minimal risk. For the results analysis, the answers were marked with: complete agreement, agreement, disagreement and complete disagreement, and they were combined respectively to obtain

the percentage of responses recovered. A frequency analysis was carried out in Excel.

RESULTS

85 surveys were obtained, with an average age of 36 years (S.D = 9.65 years), 42% (36) female and 25% (21) male, and 33% (28) who did not answer. His field of work is 56% (47) Medicine, 8% (7) Nursing, 2% (2) Nutrition, 1% (1) of others, 33% (28) did not answer. 2% (2) work in research, 45% (38) in clinic, 18% (15) in both and 35% (30) who did not answer; from the private sector 8% (7), public 35% (30), both 25% (21), and 32% (27) did not answer.

Below are the results obtained from the survey, for the questions that made up each category of the instrument.

1) What is the role of law in ethics for bioethics?

We all need orientation because we experiment with a fragile nature and prone to disorder, which we experience in each moment.

With the syneresis we discover that we must do good and avoid evil, not do to others what we would not like them to do to us, do good without looking at whom, to avoid any form of discrimination that is unfair and propitiate equity.

Table 2. Percentage of responses for "law in ethics" category

Statement	Complete agreement		Agreement		Disagreement		Complete disagreement	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Nomocracy (governed by laws) imposes the force of law to live in society.	16	19	49	58	16	19	4	4
2. Laws enacted today respond to the economic interests of the strongest.	34	40	33	39	15	18	3	3
35. The natural moral law invites you to do good and avoid evil, not to do to others what you do not want them to do to you.	39	46	42	49	4	5	-	-
17. What unites today's society are scientific and technological advances, a new version of the law of the strongest.	9	11	29	34	36	42	11	13

Most respondents recognize the description of the natural law (#35 = 95% agreement), but also consider that we are victims of legal positivism (#2 = 79%). Whereas, opinions are divided in relation to accept that technocracy governs us (#17 45% vs 55%).

2) Is compliance with laws enough to have ethical behavior? Certainly not.

The human being can intuitively capture the reality that circumscribes him; but, he also has that discursive ability oriented both to theoretical or merely speculative and practical knowledge. That is the task of practical reason that judges the morality of human acts.

The following questions are about **moral conscience**:

Table 3. Percentage of responses for "Ethical behavior" category

Statement	Complete agreement		Agreement		Disagreement		Complete disagreement	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
4. The practical reason that guides our behavior recognizes the human good in search of fullness.	36	43	39	46	9	10	1	1
34. Practical reason is nothing other than the natural moral law inscribed in what one is.	17	20	50	59	14	17	4	4
36. Moral conscience is the judgment of practical reason about the morality of our actions.	28	33	49	57	7	9	1	1

The majority expressed agreement to accept that moral conscience is the judgment of practical reason about the morality of human acts.

3) But both natural moral law and moral conscience appeal to the notions of good and evil. Could there be an agreement in its definition? Is it the same that something is relative to those who adopt relativism as a way of life?

It should be noted that not all activities have an ontological goodness. The human being, with his creative intelligence, selects the best means to achieve his objectives, with the possibility of choosing an apparent good, when there is the

false belief of helping and in reality, damage is being caused. Moral good, which is always true and appropriate, should guide all medical procedures

Then, it is understandable that when the human being acts according to his rational and free nature and comes close to its end, that is: good doing, we speak of moral good. Under these conditions, we understand that evil is the absence of a good due to nature, whether physical or moral. The human being has the possibility of acting against his nature or that of his peers and moving away from his ultimate end.

Table 4. Percentage of responses for “notion of good and evil” category

Statement	Complete agreement		Agreement		Disagreement		Complete disagreement	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
3. We cannot accept moral absolutes because the only permanent thing is change.	36	42	34	40	10	12	5	6
6. Doing good, doing well, aiming for the best is a utopia.	9	11	28	33	31	37	17	19
13. Accepting a human nature requires recognizing an order superior to man.	16	19	30	35	30	35	9	11
14. Speaking of moral absolutes creates distrust and even fear.	11	13	29	34	38	44	7	9
16. To speak of moral absolutes would be to create spaces for religions that divide people and communities.	13	15	37	43	28	33	7	9
20. Requests for money from a patient and his family to privilege them on a waiting list for a transplant is always inadmissible.	57	68	18	21	4	4	6	8
21. There are acts of corruption in professional practice that are understandable.	5	6	5	6	40	47	35	41
22. Modifying a research quote for a personal benefit is inevitable.	2	2	12	14	36	43	35	41
23. Neither in ethics nor in bioethics are there moral absolutes that guide professional practice.	4	5	36	42	30	35	15	18
37. From a rational point of view, the human being tends towards his integral good.	29	34	46	54	9	11	1	1

Moral absolutes create a certain discomfort. The argument could be, if in science something is true until proven otherwise, why people speak on the ethics of absolutes when everything is relative? The ambiguity we think comes from confusing what is relative of falling into relativism. Never, for anyone, is torture, exploitation, abuse, violence or abuse justified and that constitutes a moral absolute: the dignity of every human being.

4) However, good or bad habits influence a person's life. In the following section, the ethics of virtue was reviewed as one of the current systems that should be privileged; however, it is striking that only 56% of respondents see it possible to act in accordance with justice.

Table 5. Percentage of responses for “habits” category

Statement	Complete agreement		Agreement		Disagreement		Complete disagreement	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
5. It is not possible to act according to justice on a regular basis.	10	12	27	32	31	37	17	19

5) Fear, violence, ignorance, passions also affect our behavior, but we always have the choice. These conditions can powerfully influence the person, but we continue to preserve our freedom, with the consequent responsibility.

Table 6. Percentage of responses for “freedom and responsibility” category

Statement	Complete agreement		Agreement		Disagreement		Complete disagreement	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
24. The freedom of the human being invents its own truth on a daily basis.	12	14	37	43	24	29	12	14
25. Man is freedom and therefore a useless passion.	5	6	9	10	53	62	18	22
26. The freedom of the human being has no limits.	16	18	24	28	32	38	13	16

27. Freedom needs guidance to choose well.	35	41	45	53	5	6	-	-
28. Freedom is enriched when chosen well.	38	44	43	51	4	5	-	-
29. Only the human being is capable of responding to his own actions.	34	40	43	51	8	9	-	-
30. Responsibility limits the exercise of freedom.	21	25	24	28	29	34	11	13
31. The foregoing responsibility looks carefully before acting.	28	33	49	58	8	9	-	-
32. To grow in responsibility one must assume the successes and failures of the performance itself.	46	54	32	38	4	5	3	3
33. Consistency and the desire to transcend are other forms of responsibility.	33	39	41	48	11	13	-	-
24. The freedom of the human being invents its own truth on a daily basis.	12	14	37	43	24	29	12	14

Without freedom there is no ethics. Self-determination of behavior could be characterized, in operational terms, when I seek to do what I want because that is what I should do, which gives great peace and serenity. On the other hand, the vital anguish occurs when I want what I should not or I do not want to do my duty. A well-educated person will know that he has a task, a mission to accomplish and knows how to choose the greatest of two goods, without being confused by appearances. Another great issue of ethics is not to lose freedom of responsibility, before, during and after acting to transcend and reach a fulfilled life.

6) Scientific progress must continually deal with ethical systems. It is catastrophic to think and act without ethical or moral reflection. Experience shows that science without consciousness only leads to the ruin of man: not everything technically possible is morally permissible. What does a person tell us about his ethics? Without a doubt, where that individual is looking for happiness. The fact that there are various ethical systems do not contradict their objectivity. Just as reality is complex, it requires different epistemological planes to take care of it.

Table 7. Percentage of responses for "Ethics and science" category

Statement	Complete agreement		Agreement		Disagreement		Complete disagreement	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
7. The ethics of virtue looks to the integral good of the person.	32	38	48	56	5	6	-	-
8. The ethic of care makes visible and gives voice to the most vulnerable population in the physical, psychological and / or social.	23	27	51	60	8	9	3	4
9. Even if you don't want to, scientific rationality chooses to do evil because there is no other possibility.	2	2	8	9	40	48	35	41
10. All ethic postures are equally valid, depending on the culture and the moment in which it is lived.	13	16	46	54	24	28	2	2
11. Personal ethic is independent of professional ethics they may be different or opposite.	9	11	17	20	34	40	25	29
12. Personal ethics manifest where an individual seeks full fulfillment and happiness.	33	39	37	43	13	16	2	2
15. Scientific knowledge has supremacy in the ways of knowing of the human being.	12	14	43	51	27	32	3	3
17. What unites today's society are scientific and technological advances, a new version of the law of the strongest.	9	11	29	34%	36	42	11	13
18. Scientific research is exempt from cases of corruption and bad practices.	3	3	7	8	45	53	31	36
19. Moral absolutes contradict scientific rationality.	6	7	32	38	43	51	4	4

89% of respondents do not accept that scientific rationality chooses to do evil because there is no other possibility and another 89% acknowledge that scientific research is not

exempt from corruption and bad practices. However, 70% consider that all ethical trends are equally valid according to the

culture and the moment in which they live. 46% of respondents think that moral absolutes contradict scientific rationality. From the ethical trends indicated, 39% of respondents recognized hedonistic ethics, 15% pragmatic ethics, 14% utilitarian ethics and less than 10% virtue ethics, axiological ethics and care ethics. Being able to have a discussion table on the subject could have a very positive impact.

Discussion

According to the results, 79% of respondents think that the laws that are enacted today respond to the economic interests of the strongest segment of society. 82% express that we cannot accept moral absolutes because the only permanent thing is change; however, 89% think that the practical reason that directs our behavior recognizes the human good in search of fullness. According to the theory of natural law, good is that which perfects the way of being properly human; from these inclinations some basic goods are derived, specifically life stands out, whereas bioethical principles emerge from these goods. Our results seem to reinforce the idea that human beings are inclined to seek good and the need to do good in clinical practice (23).

44% feel that it is not possible to act according to justice on a regular basis. They think that doing good and tending to do the best is a utopia. It is striking that 94% express that the ethics of virtue looks to the integral good of the person; and, 88% express that the ethics of care makes visible and gives voice to the most vulnerable population in the physical, psychological and/or social aspects. Despite the fact that it is found that about half of the doctors evaluated consider that it is not possible to act according to justice on a regular basis, there is also

evidence that the majority of these doctors try to act in accordance with ethical values and do so as a permanent exercise, consistent with what was described by Drane, where health systems face the permanent challenge of applying justice and equity in clinical practice, while maintaining high technological quality (24).

89% do not accept that scientific rationality chooses to do evil because there is no other possibility, but 70% affirm that all ethical currents are equally valid, depending on the culture and the moment in which they live. 69% do not accept that personal ethics is independent of professional ethics, 82% state that personal ethics expresses where the individual seeks his full fulfillment and happiness, and 54% states that accepting a human nature requires recognition an order superior to man. However, according to Ayerbe García-Monzón, et al. seem to consider that being a good doctor and having a good practice, is naturally related to being a good person. The medical community also has a place in society, therefore, ethical excellence in clinical practice will have a positive impact beyond the health field (25).

The philosophical reflection, so typical of the human being, constitutes an ethical requirement, in search of the truth of the good that must be chosen to achieve fullness, in the work of health agents in the field of Nephrology. The best medical practice depends on the constant search for ethical excellence (25).

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