Applying the Four Principles: Case Study

# Part 1: Chart (60 points)

Based on the “Healing and Autonomy” case study, fill out all the relevant boxes below. Provide the information by means of bullet points or a well-structured paragraph in the box. Gather as much data as possible.

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| **Medical Indications**  Beneficence and Nonmaleficence | **Patient Preferences**  Autonomy |
| James requires a kidney transplant from a matching donor because of end stage failure of the organ.  The kidney failure is a result of complications linked to a strep throat infection that James suffered. The acute state of James necessitated immediate interventions. Due to delayed treatment and contrary suggestions from James’ parent the condition exacerbated leading to the urgent need of a transplant.  James’ prognosis is not good as the only treatment available is to have a transplant from a matching donor. His twin brother is the only matching donor. However, the physician can only carry out the transplant with consent from James’ parents. Conversely, the parents are staunch Christians who believe in healing miracle. | The doctor played his role by explaining to the family james’ condition and the need for fast interventions. I believe that the physician provided all the required vital information; including the risks involved in treatment delays. Therefore, he exercised autonomy by allowing James’ parents to make independent decisions on his behalf that entailed taking the minor to a faith-based healing intervention (Christen, Ineichen & Tanner, 2014). The physician never coerced them to go with his recommendations despite the potential risk of treatment delay.  As such, the parents utilized their autonomy or independent to make the decision to go for faith healing instead of the medical advice. Again, when it failed, they came back based on their personal decisions and independent opinion.  James is a child who cannot make independent decisions concerning his treatment and the parents have to decide on his behalf on the most appropriate care that he can get.  The parents have a right to their faith and the physician respected that right by allowing them to go to the healing service in their church. |
| **Quality of Life**  Beneficence, Nonmaleficence, Autonomy | **Contextual Features**  Justice and Fairness |
| James’ quality of life has been impacted greatly in a negative manner because of delayed treatment after the infection that led to kidney failure which requires immediate transplant.  James’ twin brother is still a minor and the only one with a matching kidney. Therefore, his quality of life will be reduced too if the parents consent to the donation. This option is the only one to save his life but with long-term or future medical concerns for Mike in later life. Samuel will have reduced quality life.  The entire family will suffer in the event that James fails to receive the required treatment and passes on. The father is trying to come to the realization that his faith has not offered the much-needed intervention and healing. He does not understand how his faith is not enough for God to heal his son from the devastating condition as soon as possible. | James is a child who cannot make medical decision and this duty is reserved to the parents. I believe that the parents were not just and fair when they denied the minor the requisite life-saving treatment and instead took him for healing service in their church.  Samuel is also a minor with no legal capacity to make medical decisions concerning the need to donate his matching kidney to his brother. I believe that he would be devastated in the future if he learns that his kidney could have saved his only brother from dying. it will never be fair and just for him to accept the truth if the parents do not consent to the transplant and donation.  The parents have the autonomy to make decision as per the physician’s recommendations. Further, they are independent to choose praying for a miracle to occur to save their son and continue risking James’ future life. They are confused because they do not to cause any harm but do good to both their sons based on their faith. They are not sure if believing in God to heal James or allowing Samuel to donate his kidney is the right decision (Christen et al., 2017).  The doctor is keen on treating James in the best medical way but understand that he or she must respect the independent decisions made by the parents. |

# Part 2: Evaluation

Answer each of the following questions about how principlism would be applied:

1. In 200-250 words answer the following: According to the Christian worldview, which of the four principles is most pressing in this case? Explain why. (45 points)

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| I believe that the case is a delicate balance among the players in relation to the four principles of medical ethics. The physician and the parents must have the best interest of James and ensure that he can survive. Consequently, they should not do any harm but good to James so that he can live a quality life. Therefore, the most pressing medical principle is beneficence on all parties involved; especially the parents of the minor. I believe that they should focus on what the doctors are recommending because of the seriousness of the child’s health situation. The risks of not attaining the treatment or delaying it are fatal. However, the parents are more concerned about their independence or autonomy (Church of England, 2017). They have at one time ignored the physician’s advice and relied on their faith but with no tangible results.  The couple loves their children and has no intention to cause harm. However, their increased focus on autonomy is delaying treatment for James and worsening his condition. This delay in seeking treatment has led to the current state and will obviously affect Samuel if they decide that he donates a kidney to his brother. The remaining kidney may also face the risk of failing at one point in Samuel’s life. I believe that while the couple wants to be beneficence to their son, their choices have resulted in malificence and an injustice to the two sons. The implication is that they must focus on the beneficence as the main ethical principle in this situation as opposed to their autonomy. |

1. In 200-250 words answer the following: According to the Christian worldview, how might a Christian rank the priority of the four principles? Explain why. (45 points)

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| Christian should rank the four principles based on their aim and impact. I believe that beneficence is a critical principle because in any medical situation; doing what is good should prevail above all the issues. Beneficence is a primary duty for a Christian. More importantly, Christian ethics go beyond the morality and moral standards of beneficence. All people are expected to practice beneficence as it comes from the greatest commandment of love; especially the love for a neighbor as one loves themselves (Mathew 22: 39 NIV). As such, if possible, beneficence entails showing benevolence. The foundation of good deeds is the teaching of Jesus Christ. Goodwill is a value in God’s kingdom. We should not constrain ourselves to doing what is needed legally but going beyond and ensuring that our actions are based on genuine love. An individual should take another mile and demonstrate their love that exceeds the legal duties.  Secondly, nonmaleficence follows beneficence because it implores on an individual not to do harm. It follows that when beneficence is attained, then those involved are safe and believe that good should always prevail in any action that a Christian undertakes. Justice is third in this priority list since it shows that one is fair and does not want to cause undue harm at the expense of others (Church of England, 2017). Lastly, autonomy is a principle that focuses on increased independent choice and decisions. It follows that we can only exercise autonomy if the benefits from such independence do not harm others in any situation. The implication is that beneficence and not causing harm are the most important from a Christian worldview. |

# References:

Church of England (2017). Medical Ethics: A Christian Perspective. Retrieved from

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Christen, M. Ineichen, C. & Tanner, C. (2014). How “moral” are the principles of biomedical

ethics? A cross-domain evaluation of the common morality hypothesis. *BMC Medical* *Ethics*, vol.15, No.47.

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