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 |
| Since James’s blood pressure had elevated and enough fluid buildup, the attending physician suggested immediate dialysis as the best solution to prevent James from going into kidney failure, which is in his best interest. Also, when James health deteriorated due to lack of temporary dialysis, the physician forced the family into putting dialysis to save his life. Therefore, these two incidences imply application of the principle of beneficence by the physician.  Although putting James on immediate dialysis is the best choice by the physician, forcing Mike and Joan could be harmful to their Christian faith. This indicates the physician’s application of nonmaleficence | Mike and Joan’s initial preference is to place their faith in God, as they had witnessed a close friend’s healed from a serious stroke after being prayed for. Hence, they prefer taking James for a healing prayer instead of subjecting him to rounds of dialysis, but promise to go back for dialysis if prayers fail.  The principal of autonomy requires the attending physician to work with Mike and Joan and respect the fact they put their faith in God for James’ healing ahead of temporary dialysis.  Also, the principal of autonomy applies when the physician respected the family decision to search for the kidney donor, before suggesting donation from James’ brother Samuel. |
| **Quality of Life**  Beneficence, Nonmaleficence, Autonomy | **Contextual Features**  Justice and Fairness |
| The Doctor recommended dialysis to improve James’s quality of life, which implies application beneficence principle. Failure of James’ kidney implied he could not do without dialysis, hence the principle of normaleficense and autonomy could not apply.  Also, the principle of beneficence applies when James’ nephrologist suggested kidney transplant, and obtaining it from James’ brother Samuel as the best treatment for James. However, the nephrologist had to work with the family and respect their desire of Samuel retaining his two kidneys and their God’s faith (autonomy). Although obtaining kidney from Samuel is the best option, forcing the family would harm their desire of Samuel retaining his two kidneys and their faith in God (Nonmaleficence). | Initially, the attending physician needed to consider the impact of Mike and Joan’s choice of healing prayers, rather than temporary dialysis, which could have reduced fluid build and prevent kidney failure. This is because kidney failure meant permanent dialysis, which could affect other patient competing for the same treatment facility.  Also, justice and fairness required the doctor to consider the impact of James not undergoing Kidney implant, which could cause death if dialysis failed. Hence, if the doctor would be convinced that Samuel quality of life would not be affected significantly by donating his kidney, then the choice would be to arrange for James Kidney transplant using Samuel’s kidney. |

# 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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| Form a Christian worldview, the four principles of ethics care may be applied to solve cases involving moral dilemma. Nevertheless, a Christian physician should thoroughly evaluate a case to decide the best choice to maximally benefit the patient and the society. In James’ case, beneficence appears to be the most pressing principle from a Christian perspective. Although the physician initially applied the principle of autonomy, it did not work since James’ condition worsened, even after the healing prayer. Nevertheless, dialysis has stabilized James’ condition, but he requires a kidney transplant within a year, not only to save his life, but also to improve the quality of his life.  The Christian worldview considers life as sacred, and therefore, Christians should endeavor to save life (Kovac, 2013). Consequently, the principle of beneficence may be applied in carrying out kidney transfer for the benefit of James. Furthermore, the bible suggests that it is the greatest love to lay down one’s life for friends (John 15:13). This implies that Christians should always act in a manner that promotes the wellbeing of others. Thus, kidney donation by Samuel to James is a demonstration of love, since both may survive with a kidney each. Hence, a Christian physician may apply beneficence principle, and justify James’ kidney transplant as a demonstration of love. |

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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| According to Christian worldview, Christian health workers may rank the principles based on their faith. For instance, Christians are guided by biblical commandments in their daily relationship with other people, where they are commanded to love their neighbor as they love themselves (Mathew 22:39). Therefore, the principle of beneficence should rank first, since a Christian health worker should do all he/she can to benefit the patient in every situation. This would be an indication that the health worker loves the patient as self. The second principle in ranking from a Christian perspective should be nonmaleficence. This is because harming others is a sin (Proverbs: 16-19). Thus, a Christian health worker should avoid taking decisions that that can harm a patient and the society. It is against the commandment to harm others.  Moreover, the third principle from a Christian worldview is justice. Justice requires a Christian health worker to treat like cases alike, and distribute resources fairly (Reilly, 2006). Thus, patients whose situations are similar should be given the same level of quality health care. Also, the bible teaches Christians to practice justice for it brings joy (Proverbs 21:15). Therefore, Christian health workers should uphold justice when making health decisions. Moreover, the fourth principle in ranking is autonomy, which requires a Christian health worker to respect his/her patients’ choices. For instance, the bible gives people the freedom to make choices, and be prepared for consequences (Genesis 2:16-17). Therefore, a health care worker may allow patients to give their opinions regarding treatment. |

# References:

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