

Professional Ethics and Personal Identity in EMS

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Some objectives ...

- ...locate EMS as a professional practice within the community of other professional practices
- ...identify for yourself three (3) personal character traits that enhance your sense of practice in EMS
- ...explore one (1) further trait to enhance your personal sense of identity as an EMT or paramedic

Personal introduction ...

- A little about myself ...

“Professional”

- Technically debated in 1950s as social work emerges as a profession
- Clergy, Law, Medicine
- Specialized, technical and socially oriented skills
- Self-directed and compensated
- Apprenticeship and membership in a “guild”
- Self-regulating discipline

”Professional” – What do we normally mean?

- Skilled
- Responsible
- Collegial
- Self-correcting
- Open-ended advancement of knowledge and practice

Ethics (vs. Morals)

- “What is the right thing to do?”
- Morality: justified by authority
- Ethics: justified by reason
- Professional ethics: pulls a community of practice together

Identity ...

- Sense of self
- Created over time
- Corrected and allowed to develop
- What we bring with us into every moment of decision
- Individual, but also understood in the relationship to other people
- Who you are because of what you do, but also ...
- What you do because of who you are.

Are EMTs and paramedics “professionals”

- Some might say “no” ...
- As a subset of medical practice EMS is too new
- Act under the direction of another professional, a licensed physician
- Not enough self-direction as a “guild”

But, YES!

- Skills are technical and difficult to master
- Partner relationships, station/company organization and community volunteer organizations
- Paid vs. unpaid? Sacrifice for communal benefit, at the service of others
- *You* must apply protocols

Self-direction and applying protocols

- Protocol: carefully crafted guide-to-action
- Four Principles:
 - 1) Do no harm (Beneficence)
 - 2) Do some good (Non-maleficence)
 - 3) Respect for persons (Autonomy)
 - 4) Justice
- Who applies them in practice? You do!

Rendering care to a patient ...

- Called
- Arrive
- Assess
- Begin making treatment decisions based on ...
- The Rules: protocols
- Your judgement: identity
- Who do you bring with you into this call?

NYSVARA and NAEMT words ...

- Association
- Unselfish

- Conserve (life)
- Alleviate (suffering)
- Promote (health)

Some character traits ...

- Virtues: habits that bring about good
- Character: the whole collection of values, virtues and vices
- Being a “fixer”
- Courage
- Precision
- Detached compassion
- Humility
- Curiosity

How to develop my own personal virtue ...

- Who do I look up to as a good EMT or medic?
- Case reviews and reflection with other EMS practitioners when not under pressure
- Taking stock of in-place personal resources: religious, spiritual, familial, ethnic, relational, psychological
- Allowing multiple parts of your life to come together in one place
- Crafting a “guiding idea”

Thank you, and questions/comments ...