

Bioethics in Neurology

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The bioethical convention is based on the declaration of Helsinki 1964 and its several amendments. Ethical consciousness begins with the philosophy of Socrates and Plato, Aristotle developed it into a science. Attainment of happiness was the main objective of Greek ethics. Thomas Aquinas incorporated Christian ethics with a god-given natural order. Kant's categorical imperative demands for every human person. "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law". In the last century various European schools created different interpretations of ethical principles: existentialistic ethics, the value ethics, the Marxist ethics, etc. The so called Western bioethical principles do not include the ethical rules of Buddhism and Confucianism, which stress the well being of the community and not the well feeling of the individual.

Ethical guidelines for all of mankind have to respect biological surroundings, traditions and culture as well as national and regional laws. "Western ethics" follow the demands of modern technology strictly observing the basic principles of human rights. The bioethical principles influence the obligations of physicians as well as medical research involving human subjects.

Ethical guidelines for neurologists and psychiatrists have to include the rules for clinical trials and also the advice to present the project to Ethics Committees with the decision between the benefit for the patient and a patient community against the risk of an individual. The Ethic Committee has to check whether there is an adequate insurance.

Guidelines for the rights of patients not able to consent and for the end of life decision (withdrawal or withholding of treatment), for brain death have to be prepared as well as for implantation of embryonic tissue or stimulating devices. The Helsinki declaration has to be interpreted in a practical way.

Most neurologists and psychiatrists have only a rough knowledge about the Helsinki convention and its different amendments as well as of the rules for good clinical practise (GCP) etc. It is the obligation to educate in Neurology and Psychiatry in pre- and post-graduate teaching programs.



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