

An ethical play:

The Players

- ❖ Alice : afflicted by her apron
- ❖ Graham: General Practitioner
- ❖ Paul: PCT member
- ❖ Leslie: Lay member / Daily Mail reader
- ❖ Tumtuk a cosmetic surgeon in Brighton
- ❖ Tumtak a cosmetic surgeon in thailand
- ❖ Imogen: Intensive care Consultant

Act One

Alice 35yr, recently divorced mother of five goes to her GP with a problem



She thinks surgery will answer all her problems.

Her divorce settlement has given her £15,000 cash.

Exercise:

Have the Pt / GP consultation

Rank the four pillars of ethics in order of importance in this case and discuss briefly their application at this stage.

Assume the decision to see a surgeon has been made. Alice sees Mr Tumtuk in Brighton



Exercise:

Are the ethical issues different for the surgeon?

Alice is quoted £8,000 for her operation, and she goes away to consider.

ACT TWO



A year has gone by. Alice has had to spend some of her nest egg on a replacement car to get her five children to school.

Meanwhile a potentially pleasant relationship has gone sour because of the apron and Alice is feeling very low. She would love to go for the operation but no longer has the cash



Local rules state that abdominoplasty can be performed if the patient has lost at least 25kg in weight and have a BMI <30

Alice has lost only 22kg but her BMI is now 29.

Exercise:

Have the Pt / GP consultation

Rank the four pillars of ethics in order of importance in this case and discuss briefly their application at this stage.

Have they changed? And if so WHY?

Should Dr Graham refer?

ACT THREE



In a PCT meeting room. Paul has to balance the budget. PLP [procedures of Low Priority] had cost the PCT £490k last year. He only needs to ban all PLPs and he will have achieved a balanced budget.

He is told that abdominoplasty is always cosmetic, and the rules should only allow those with an associated medical problem such as ventral hernia. He brings this to the PLP committee.

Exercise:

Rank the pillars in importance in this scenario

Are the ethical issues different for the committee?

Do you pass the recommendation?

Meanwhile:



Alice has persuaded either Dr Graham or a partner to see Mr Tumtuk in Brighton on the NHS. She has still lost only 22kg and BMI is 29. She has no hernia.

Exercise:

Does Mr Tumtuk perform the operation?

Does this decision change if the recommendation about “hernia” was different?

ACT FOUR – a hacking holiday



Alice has discovered that she can have a holiday in Thailand and have her abdominoplasty at the same time with the money she has left over.

She decides to see Mr Tumtak

Exercise:

Does Mr Tumtak perform the operation?

Ranking the pillars again are they different in this scenario?

Alice does not need her GP to know. If word filtered back via an anonymous source wuld you act upon it??



Alice has her operation...



Alice makes it back to the UK but her scars hurt and there is something bad going wrong....

She collapses hypotensive and in septic shock as she gets off the plane at Gatwick and is admitted to ESH ITU



Alice makes it through because of the dedication of a large team.

Her treatment has cost over £50,000

Exercise:

Miss Imogen Ice consultant in ITU medicine feels her bed has been unnecessarily taken. Her own opinion is that Alice should be charged the cost of her stay.

Using the pillars of ethics has she a valid argument?

Alice's emergency treatment is 10x the cost of the original NHS abdominoplasty.

Does this change the arguments ??

There are seldom any absolute answers in ethics. It is all about balance.