

MORAL Balance

An Ethical Framework to aid Medical Decision-Making

What is the medical decision you are trying to make?

Make sure of the Facts

Outline the facts of the case and decision in question (e.g. diagnosis, prognosis, comorbidities, frailty, all treatment options, verbal or written statements, resources). Include degree of uncertainty if present.

Outcomes of Relevance to the Agents Involved

Agents are anyone who has a moral stake in the outcome (e.g. patient, family, other patients both in the hospital and outside the hospital, hospital staff, and society). Try and outline what outcomes matter most to these agents, especially taking account of any conversations you have had.

Patient

Patient's Family

Other Agents

Level out the Arguments in a Balancing Box

Populate facts and outcomes into a Balancing Box which uses Beauchamp and Childress’s four principles of medical ethics.

<p style="text-align: center;">Autonomy (what outcomes matter to the patient)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Burden (what are the burdens and to whom)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Benefit (what are the benefits and to whom)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Justice (fairness in the distribution of benefits and risks)</p>

Level out the arguments by seeing if you can balance the calls of each principle and judging if each fact or outcome is truly commensurate?

Consider asking three questions of the Balancing Box:

- (i) Anything of particular note?
- (ii) Where is the greatest conflict?
- (iii) Where is the greatest congruence (agreement)?

Document Decision (it can be helpful to use the framework to guide documentation or place this sheet in the medical notes)