ETHICAL CONCERNS AMONG OUTPATIENTS NURSES, PHYSIOTHERAPISTS AND PHYSICIANS: A SCOPING REVIEW

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Background

• Nursing, physiotherapy and medicine are inherently morally loaded practices.
• Western countries are facing a worrying qualified healthcare professionals’ (HcP) shortage. The improvement of their wellbeing and their engagement in the profession should become a priority among stakeholders.
• Not properly addressed ethical concerns can lead to moral distress and in the worse case to a premature abandonment of the profession (Jameton 1984).
• Understanding these situations and if there are any commonalities can offer a broader insight into the phenomena and possibly offer some recommendations among HcP.
• Ethical concerns are strictly related to the professional setting; therefore, we focus on ethical issues experienced by healthcare professionals working with outpatients.

Results

Based on the results of the literature review we identified four main categories of ethical concerns:

- Patients refusing care
- Lack of confidence in nurses
- Life prolonging treatment and tests vs. quality of life
- Lack of knowledge resulting in inadequate care
- Disagreement about care evaluating practices or interventions with other colleagues
- Truth telling
- Issues with management
- OWN limitations

Discussion

• Bringing to light the commonalities between moral issues experienced by the three HcP can be seen as a mean for reducing the distance between them.
• The way these issues are experienced is deeply shaped by the different perspective each profession has on the same issue. These issues are experienced with different intensity among the professions.

Conclusion

• This scoping review opens new insights into commonalities and differences among ethical concerns experienced by physiotherapists, physicians and nurses.
• Given the alarming situation of qualified healthcare professionals, and given the fact that unaddressed moral issues can influence the wish of abandoning the profession, it could be suggested that efforts should focus on finding measures, which aim at addressing these issues possibly on an interdisciplinary level.