Ethical Analysis: PRINCIPLISM

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The Case of Dolores
What are the moral obligations of the formal hospice care team to Dolores in this case?
What about the moral obligations to Jill?
On Principles and Principilism
Some Key Concepts:

Moral Principles

Common Morality

Principlism
Some Key Concepts:

Moral Principles
Common Morality
Principlism
Some Key Concepts:

Moral Principles

Common Morality

Principlism
Two Forms of Principlism

Monistic Theories
(e.g. utilitarianism)
Two Forms of Principlism

Pluralistic Systems--employ a number of basic moral principles drawn from common morality
Some Basic Principles of Bioethics
Nonmaleficence (not harming)
Beneficence (benefitting)
Respect for Autonomy
Justice—(*Distributive Sense*)
Principlism in Practice (Four Step Process)
1. Identify Moral Norms
2. Specify Norms in Context
3. Make Balanced Judgments
4. Aim for Coherence
Principlism

Four Step Process

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The Case of Mr. Smith
Specifying “Do No Harm”

FIRST DO NO HARM
1. Health care professionals should not harm patients intentionally. (general moral principle)
2. Providing aggressive life-sustaining treatments to dying patients that generate significant burdens for them without significant corresponding benefits causes harm. (specification of general norm to end-of-life care)
3. The case of Mr. Smith is an instance of providing aggressive life-sustaining treatment in a dying patient that generates significant burdens without significant corresponding benefits. (judgment as to the application of the specific norm to the case)
4. Therefore, aggressive life-sustaining treatment should not be provided for Mr. Smith. (ethical conclusion)
Limitations of Principles:
Necessary though not *Always* Sufficient
Avoiding Two Extremes

Principles are the only Adequate Feature of Ethical Justification

Principles are Unnecessary
Limitations of Principles in Ethical Analysis

1. They suffer from a degree of vagueness.

2. Conflicts of principles are not resolved by appeal to a more fundamental one.

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2. Conflicts of principles are not resolved by appeal to a more fundamental one.
3. Principles don’t appear to be epistemically basic.

4. They do not capture the full scope of morality.

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The Indispensability of Principles
1. Necessary appeal to them when seeking ethical justification.
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2. Help with satisfying universalizability criterion.

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2. Help with satisfying universalizability criterion.

3. Help identify what is ethically important.

Concluding Thoughts on Principles and Principlism
Sources:


