

# Analisi etica del processo decisionale nella pratica professionale del medico del lavoro

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## KEY WORDS

Ethics; evidence based occupational health; quality

## SUMMARY

**«Ethical analysis of the decision-making process in occupational health practice».** **Background:** *Changes in workplaces and work organizations represent a challenge for governments, social partners and occupational health professionals whose aim is to appropriately satisfy emerging requirements and needs. An increasing number of occupational health problems requires a high-quality standard practice supported by ethically consistent decisions. The ethical aspect of the practice is strictly linked to that of appropriateness, involving requirements of effectiveness, efficiency and respect of ethical principles of the individual, community and society.* **Objectives and Methods:** *The paper aims at focusing the ethical components of the quality of an occupational health program by taking a systematic approach to the ethical problems. The approach consists of a 2-step process. The first step consists of appraising the basic ethical principles of the dilemma ("to do good": to prevent or to remove evil and to do or to promote good; "not to do evil", implying not to inflict evil; to do no harm; autonomy implying respect of other's freedom and self-determination; justice implying equity, solidarity and non discrimination). The second step consists of detecting the stakeholders involved or interested in the decision. The alternatives are discussed according to the assessment of ethical costs (violating the consistent principle) and ethical benefits (fulfilment of the consistent principle) for the stakeholders.* **Results:** *Systematic analysis of the ethical components of the dilemma according to ethical principles and their discussion within a framework involving different stakeholders makes it possible to recognise ethical costs and ethical benefits of the alternative decisions. The decisions may have different costs and benefits, which should be considered and weighed to take a proper decision. Although there is no certainty about the suitability of the decision, the assessment of the ethical components may be a valuable tool in decision-making based on the awareness that any ethical aspect has been considered.* **Conclusion:** *Occupational health professionals are requested to act with respect for general ethical principles and preferences of the individual, groups and setting. A high-quality practice will take into account the ethical content and the ethical conduct and any intervention will include analysis of ethical principles to compare alternative decisions and their consequences for the different stakeholders. This approach guarantees a practice based on, in addition to scientific evidence, the assessment of ethical costs and ethical benefits to favour decisions preventing conflicts.*

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