INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ETHICS

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WHAT IS A PROFESSION?

Characteristics of a profession:

1. A generally accepted body of knowledge;
2. Long and intense academic preparation;
3. Taking an independent and rigorous testing and demonstrating knowledge through certification;
4. Equiring continuing education for life;
5. Conforming to ethical standards with a mechanism for enforcement; and
6. Requiring the whole body of persons engaged in a calling.
WHAT IS A PROFESSION?

- Firstly established through certification – later licensed or regulated.

- Certification involves self-regulation - licensing involves government regulation.
WHAT IS A PROFESSION?

An occupation becomes a profession when individuals organize to work in a morally permissible way and when members set and follow special standards for their work.

These special standards are morally binding to members of a profession.
WHAT IS A PROFESSION?

If the majority of members of a profession follow the standards, the profession will have a good reputation and members will generally benefit.

If the majority of members violate these voluntary standards, professed members of a profession will be at a disadvantage, or at the least, receive no benefit from declaring a profession.
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PROFESSIONAL

A professional is a member of an occupational group who:

1. see other members as peers or colleagues;
2. exercises judgment in the performance of occupational tasks and follows relevant professional standards; and
3. accepts the profession's agreement to work in a morally permissible way (often expressed as a code of ethics) as determining in part the obligations of the role.
A code of ethics is a guideline which sets out acceptable behaviours.

A code of ethics can increase confidence in an organisation.

A personal code of ethics

Professionals try to uphold a good reputation.
ETHICS

- Respect and honesty are the two main components of professional ethics.
- Be respectful and honest in your personal dealings as well. Unethical to be a criminal in time off the job.
- Not getting involved in conflict of interest, i.e., personal goals as a result of being in a certain profession.
• Ethics can be defined as the rules governing the conduct, transactions, and relationships within a profession and among its publics.

• A code of ethics is a solution to a coordination problem.
Impossible to develop a complete set of ethical prescriptions for the EH profession. They have to work out for themselves what action can best be defended ethically. This requires ethical reasoning.
12 CORE ETHICAL VALUES AND STANDARDS FOR GOOD EH PRACTICE

1. Respect for people
2. Best interests or well-being
3. Human rights
4. Autonomy
5. Integrity
6. Truthfulness
7. Confidentiality
8. Compassion
9. Tolerance
10. Justice
11. Professional competence and self-improvement
12. Community
HOW TO RESOLVE ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Step 1: Formulating the problem
Step 2: Gathering information
Step 3: Consider your options
Step 4: Make a moral assessment
PRESCRIBED ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL RULES (HPCSA)

- Allowed to advertise
- May not canvass for clients
- Use of words like “hospital”, “clinic” or “institute” not allowed
PRESCRIBED ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL RULES (HPCSA)

- May not share your room with a person not registered in terms of the Act.
- May not cast reflections on the professional reputation or skill of another practitioner.
- Must cooperate and comply with instructions of the HPCSA, Prof Board, committee and official.
PRESCRIBED ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL RULES (HPCSA)

- A student EHP and EHP must report impairment in another student or EHP to the Board

- Report any unprofessional, illegal or unethical conduct to the Board

- If registered with more than one statutory council or professional board you must ensure that:
  - no conflict of interest arises
  - no dual capacity consultation and fees are charged
MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES OF EHP’s

An EHP shall at all times:

1. Act in the best interests of his or her clients;
2. Respect client confidentiality, privacy, choices and dignity;
3. Maintain the highest standards of personal conduct and integrity;
4. Keep his or her professional knowledge and skills up to date;
5. Maintain proper and effective communication with his or her clients and other professionals.
RULES OF CONDUCT PRESCRIBED BY THE PROFESSIONAL BOARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

● An EHP may practice only in the field in which he/she was educated and trained.

● An environmental health assistant and food inspector may perform professional acts only under supervision of an EHP - may not conduct a private practice.
A student in environmental health may perform professional acts only under the supervision of an EHP.
Purpose: To show how strongly you prefer one or another of two major styles for recognizing and resolving ethical dilemmas.
I THANK YOU