

The Relationship Between Health Care Professionals and Patients



NSS Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum
Supporting Materials

Personal and Social Issues :
Medical Ethics

Introduction

Ethics and Religious Studies (ERS) is one of the electives in the senior secondary curriculum. It is built on the *Religious Studies (Christianity) Curriculum for Secondary 4-5* (implemented in 1998), *Buddhist Studies* (HKCE Examination Syllabus) and the *Advanced Supplementary Level Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum* (implemented in 2001). It also follows the general direction set out in the *Personal, Social and Humanities Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1- Secondary 3)* (CDC, 2002) and extends the prior knowledge, skills and values and attitudes students developed through the Personal, Social and Humanities Education (PSHE) curriculum in basic education.

The *NSS Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum Supporting Materials: Personal and Social Issues-Medical Ethics* is part of a series of learning and teaching materials being developed by the Curriculum Development Institute for the implementation of the ERS.

Schools are encouraged to adapt the materials for educational use according to their contexts. NO part of the documents shall be duplicated for commercial purpose.

We welcome feedback and suggestions from teachers. Please send them to:

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Issue: Relationship between Health Care Professionals and Patients

Topic: Medical Ethics

Teaching Objectives

Explore the assaults faced by health care professionals and patients concerning the relationship between the two parties using the topic “The Promotion of Breast Milk Substitutes”. Criticize and determine the ethical standpoints of the health workers towards the promotion of breast milk substitutes and the effects of such action on the society, using the viewpoints from medical ethics/ work ethics/ business ethics.



Suggested Time Allocation: 3 Teaching Periods

Teaching Strategy



Period 1

Activity 1: Healing Hands

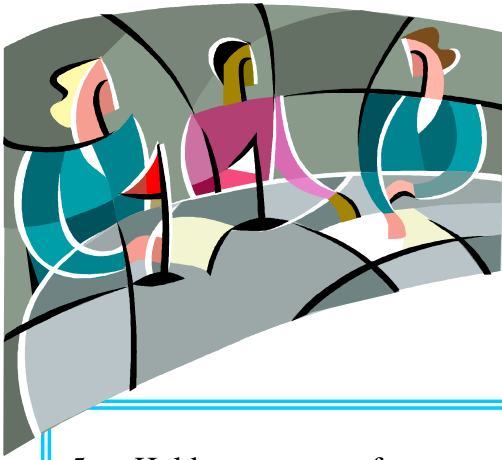
1. Distribute the “Hippocratic Oath” – the regulations every health care professional must bear in mind and ask students to read it. Let students understand the holy missions of health workers and their professionalism.
2. Distribute Worksheet 1: “The Patients Creed”. In groups, students have to write declarations which they think patients would expect from health workers. After that, these declarations will be stuck around the classroom. Students have to vote for the most sensible one, which will be used as the reference during the following periods.



Period 2 and Period 3

1. Distribute the information booklet and ask students to read it:
 - Material 1. "A brief introduction of breastfeeding in India"
 - Material 2. "The rules concerning the sale of breast milk substitutes adopted by the WHO in 1981"
 - Material 3. "A complaint letter written by a patient accusing the hospital"
 - Material 4. "The minutes of the conference held by the administrative commission of Nestle Hospital in India (Excerpt)"
2. Teacher together with students analyse the topic "Health Workers promoting breast milk substitutes" and suggest what ethical, moral and value concepts are related. List the concepts on the board (Teachers can use the concept table in Appendix 2 as notes for students for revision)
3. Assign the roles: Divide the class into halves randomly and decide which group a student will go to:
 - Group A. The spokespersons of the hospital
 - Group B. Journalists (According to students' abilities, consider whether to assign them as journalists working for specific newspaper offices e.g. the Ming Pao, the Apple Daily, the Oriental Daily, the Sun, the SCMP, the Ta Kung Pao and the Hong Kong Economic Journal)
4. Ask students to read different pieces of information in the booklet according to the group they belong and collaborate to prepare short speeches.





5. Hold a press conference on the complaint letter. Either the teacher or a student can be the moderator. The rundown is as follows:
 - i. Moderator announces the start of the press conference
 - ii. Spokesperson of the hospital makes a declaration for the complaint letter received (1 minute)
 - iii. Journalists raise questions (each question should not exceed 30 seconds) and let the spokesperson of the hospital respond (each response should not exceed 2 minutes)

The questions and responses may be prepared during the collaboration. Each student has to speak once, either to ask or to respond to a question
6. Teacher guides the students to sum up the points and arguments.
7. Teacher gives an account of what really happened in the end of the real story:



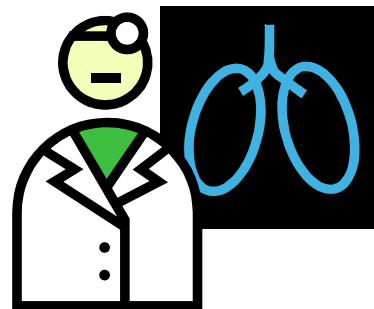
In 1997, the Indian Pediatrics has adopted the proposal of not accepting any form of donations from the milk powder distributors. The Indian Government announced that 1997 was the Year of Breastfeeding.

8. Assignment:
Ask students to share their opinions towards this real ending of the story.

Extensive Activity:

Students can choose one of the following questions according to their preference, so as to examine how different standpoints are supported by various ethical principles:

1. If you were a **Utilitarian**, how far would you agree to the case which health workers are encouraging mothers to feed new-born babies with breast milk substitute?
2. In 1997, the Indian Pediatrics has adopted the proposal of not accepting any form of donations from the milk powder distributors. If you were a **Pluralist**, how would you comment on a further proposal to adopt such decision in all Asian countries?



The Hippocratic Oath

I swear by Apollo Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panacea and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfil according to my ability and judgment this oath and this covenant:

To hold him who has taught me this art as equal to my parents and to live my life in partnership with him, and if he is in need of money to give him a share of mine, and to regard his offspring as equal to my brothers in male lineage and to teach them this art - if they desire to learn it - without fee and covenant; to give a share of precepts and oral instruction and all the other learning to my sons and to the sons of him who has instructed me and to pupils who have signed the covenant and have taken an oath according to the medical law, but no one else.

I will apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment; I will keep them from harm and injustice.

I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy. In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my art.

I will not use the knife, not even on sufferers from stone, but will withdraw in favor of such men as are engaged in this work.

Whatever houses I may visit, I will come for the benefit of the sick, remaining free of all intentional injustice, of all mischief and in particular of sexual relations with both female and male persons, be they free or slaves.

What I may see or hear in the course of the treatment or even outside of the treatment in regard to the life of men, which on no account one must spread abroad, I will keep to myself, holding such things shameful to be spoken about.

If I fulfil this oath and do not violate it, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and art, being honored with fame among all men for all time to come; if I transgress it and swear falsely, may the opposite of all this be my lot.

Translation from the Greek by Ludwig Edelstein. From The Hippocratic Oath: Text, Translation, and Interpretation, by Ludwig Edelstein. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943.

Material I

A Brief Introduction of Breastfeeding in India

Breast milk not only contains all the nutrients essential for the growth of an infant, it also contains growth factors which help the development of body tissues and antibodies that prevent infections. Until this moment, there isn't yet a "hi-tech" invention (milk powder) that can completely replace breast milk.

In India, the national education level is low. A lot of mothers believe what they are told, that milk powder contains various factors (DHA, AA, ARA...) and is more nutritious than breast milk. Aiming for the best for their children, these mothers are willing to pay far more than they can afford for the milk powder. Some families even borrow money for that. What is more unbearable is that the sources of water in most villages are contaminated. Due to the lack of information, knowing not to sterilize the drinking water and poor economic ability which doesn't allow the families to purchase sufficient milk powder for the babies, a lot of infants who could have grown healthily, suffer from different allergies, various illnesses, malnutrition or even death.

You may ask why don't the mothers redeem immediately and feed with breast milk instead of milk powder.

The reason is that the first few days after the birth of the infant is the critical period of breastfeeding. If a mother doesn't feed her child with breast milk right after the labour, her body cannot produce any more breast milk. Once giving up breastfeeding, the mother can only feed her child with milk powder.

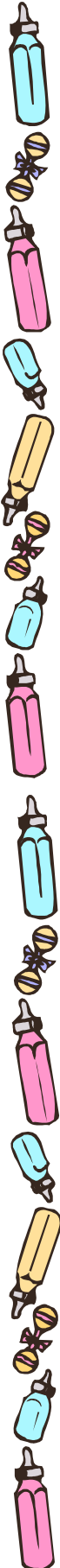
In India, some hospitals are sponsored by milk powder producers in organizing activities and improving the facilities in the hospitals. In exchange, the producers are allowed to distribute gift bags to new mothers, with milk powder packs inside. Some producers even send promoters dressed in doctors' uniforms to sell milk powder to the lowly-educated mothers. Please note that breastfeeding is very demanding for mothers who are new to it. They have to feed the infants once every 2 hours. Sometimes, the infants do not cooperate and cry nonstop. Other times, care from other members from the family creates stress as well. All these force the mothers to give up breastfeeding and use milk powder instead.

Once the mothers have used up the sponsored milk powder and leave the hospital, bad luck follows.



Material II

The International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes

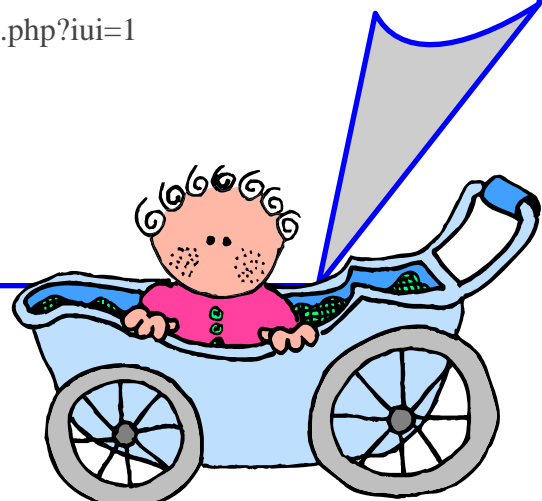


1. Promotion of breast milk substitutes, baby bottles or teats to the general public is forbidden.
2. Provision of free breast milk substitute samples to mothers is forbidden.
3. Usage of such products at health care centres is forbidden.
4. Promotion of such products to mothers is forbidden.
5. Distribution of gifts and samples to health workers is forbidden.
6. Promotion of bottle feeding either in texts or in graphics is forbidden. Baby pictures may not be shown on baby milk labels.
7. Any information provided to health workers must contain only scientific and factual matters.
8. All bottle-feeding-related information including labels on products should explain the advantages of breastfeeding and the disadvantages of bottle feeding.
9. Promotion of unsuitable baby food products, such as sweetened milk, to mothers and health workers is forbidden.
10. All kinds of food provided to the babies must possess high quality. Climate conditions and storage conditions of the countries must be considered.

Reference:

http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/global_strategy/en/index.html

<http://www.ibfan.org/site2005/Pages/index2.php?iui=1>



Material III

A complaint letter written by a patient accusing the hospital



To: Indian Nestle Hospital
From: Mrs. Gandhiny

Complaint letter

(Since I am illiterate, this letter is written by the village head according to my narration)

My 6-month-old baby died an early death due to cholera yesterday.

Six months ago, I gave birth to my baby in your hospital. A lady dressed in white uniform (I once believed that she was a nurse working in your hospital) gave me a valuable gift bag. Inside the pack there were 2 cans of 500g milk powder and 4 baby bottles. Several towels and garments for babies were also included. The “nurse” told me that the milk powder had high nutritional value and a lot of local and foreign babies were fed with that brand. I was told that if I didn’t feed my baby with the milk powder, he would not grow up as strong, as healthy and as smart as other kids. I didn’t understand a word on the instructions leaflet. So the “nurse” explained to me how I can make milk using the milk powder. She also told me where I could buy more cans of the milk powder from the stores.

I mistrust the lady and I didn’t feed my baby with breast milk.

After I was discharged from the hospital, I sterilized the baby bottles using boiled water as I was told. Later, however, I discovered that the drinking water in our village was not clean enough for making milk. We used all our savings to pay for the treatment for my baby, and to buy expensive brands of milk powder and distilled water from the city.

Now my child is gone. My money is gone and I have a lot of debts to meet. But the most bitter is that the best food for my child was once a part of me!

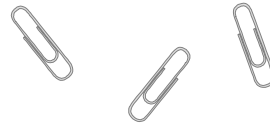
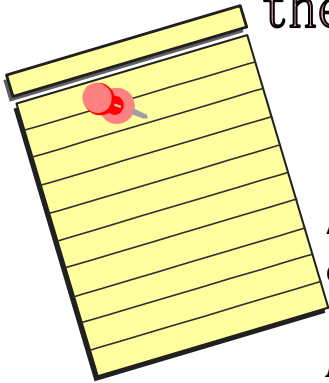
I’d like to complain:

- You never told me about breastfeeding and its value
- You let an outsider dressed in your uniform promote products to your patients
- You accepted the sponsor from the milk powder producer
- You let down your patients

I demand your compensation, self-review as well as improvement.

Material IV

The Minutes of the Conference held by the Administrative Commission



Attendees: the President of the Nestle Hospital (President), the Chief of the delivery room (Chief), the public relations officer (Spokesperson)

President: We are in need of funds. Or else we can't handle various operations, including the Cesarean Section...

Chief: It wasn't us who told the salesladies to dress in white! It was their uniform. It had the Nestle logo on it for sure. I wonder why people couldn't recognize it...

Spokesperson: But that's the name of our hospital as well. People might mix up the two...

President: This name earns us a billion donations. We can't afford to change the name...

Chief: Unclean drinking water out there was never our business, wasn't it? And it was never our responsibility to teach the mothers how to feed and take care of their babies. We don't have enough staffs. We can't teach them everything...

President: If we lose the donations from Nestle, we may have to reduce our staff by half...

Spokesperson: Medically speaking, can all mothers feed their babies with breast milk?

Chief: Theoretically, yes, except for those who suffer from serious hereditary illnesses, such as the AIDS. Besides, a lot of people are too busy to feed breast milk. They are likely to make milk using milk powder.

Spokesperson: How are we going to respond to the questions concerning the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes?

President: Those are just codes, not laws. There are millions and millions of codes in this world and who really cares?...

