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Abstract Submission Form – Papers

Please contact John Tuohey at ethics@providence.org with any questions.

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Proposed title of paper: The performative and hermeneutical role of the ethical principle of “respect for autonomy”: lessons from clinical ethics consultations in the French context

Abstract with 3 clearly stated objectives in 250 words:

Since the “Principles of biomedical ethics” by Beauchamp and Childress has been enshrined as one of the major references in medical ethics, the principle of respect for autonomy has never ceased to raise questions about its place, role, importance, and the way it should be applied in practice. Several influential voices today call its justification and viability into question both on the basis of the unrealistic nature of personal autonomy and the unappealing individualistic values it promotes. Drawing on our experience of clinical ethics consultations, we would like to show that, despite the difficulties and uncertainties encountered in trying to give this principle normative force, it plays a crucial role in the decision-making process, when we are confronted, from one case to another, with hard issues surrounding its definition, value and use. Our conclusion is that its role is more performative and hermeneutical than prescriptive. We will illustrate our point on the basis of some real cases and show that in clinical ethics, autonomy should better be understood as authenticity rather than as self-control, independence or integrity. As a general lesson, we will suggest that although its ethical significance has to be redefined, its political importance remains intact. As it was true at the time of the creation of the first clinical ethics centre in France in 2002, respecting autonomy helps enhance and protect the place of the patient in the decision-making process.

If you have or will publish on this topic, please cite reference:

Are you planning to or will you be willing to submit a poster along with your paper?

Yes No