#### A REJECTION OF THE HIPPOCRATIC ETHIC Robert Vector

Ethics: Bioethics (Fall 2014) Laura Guidry-Grimes

# For Your Consideration

House, M.D.: "Three Stories" (S1E21) (28:55-34:14, 37:10-42:10)



Do you think House is making a decision about his leg that is informed and voluntary? What are some problematic features of his decision?

Who has House's best interests at heart? Should that person be empowered to make the decision, even at the objection of the others?

How would you judge his doctor, Dr. Cuddy, in her decision to offer a "middle ground" solution secretly and to follow through with Stacy's decision?

## Challenge 1: What Will Benefit?

Medical goods traded off for other goods

- Medical goods complex (not merely preserving life), controversial, experts can disagree
- Other goods complex, weighed differently by different people affected, outside medical expertise

Balancing benefits and harms

- Competing views of well-being
  - Satisfaction of considered preferences? Objective elements of human flourishing?
- Patients generally know their own interests, better than even the most well-informed and well-intentioned physician

# Challenge 2: Sacrificing Benefit

EVEN IF a physician knows what will benefit, does not settle the issue of what should be done

- Consequentialism: An act is right only insofar as it maximizes net positive consequences and minimizes net negative consequences.
  - Which consequences are notable, positive/negative? How should you weigh different types of consequence?
  - Hippocratic Ethic: consequentialist, individualist (on traditional interpretations)

Other duties matter, regardless of consequences
Otherwise, e.g., respecting autonomy does not mean much.

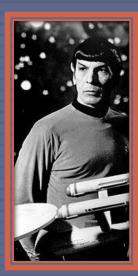
### Challenge 3: Societal Interests

Duties to the public, other patients, the profession can all compete with Hippocratic Ethic to the patient in front of him/her

Can draw principled lines for when promoting societal interests over individual interests of a patient are morally permissible

# Worries About Social Utility

WARNING ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE. I HAVE BEEN ASKED BY SOCIETY TO ABANDON YOU AT THE MARGIN AND SERVE SOCIETY AS ITS COST-CONTAINMENT AGENT.



"The good of the many outweigh the good of the few"

### Conclusion

Importance of preserving integrity, trust of patientphysician relationship

Duty of loyalty with limits (see challenges, respectively)
Patients as experts on their own interests in most cases
Consider strong moral reasons to override duty to promote good of patient
Consider moral reasons to serve societal interests

instead of individual interests

### **Discussion** Groups

Each group will be assigned one of Veatch's challenges.

- Discuss some refutations or problem cases for each challenge.
  - Consider *implications* of his view
  - Would he be forced to analyze certain cases in problematic ways?
  - Lingering difficulties
  - Objections you can borrow from Pellegrino or Ackerman?

