



How to deal with difficult consultations using 'Ethical Principles'

Many difficult consultations are difficult because there are conflicts in some principles; besides, some consultations might feel challenging when, for example, patients have specific 'expectations' or, in other words, they 'want' something that is not something they really 'need'.

You might feel uncomfortable whenever you try to oppose to what patients want, as this might sound like opposing their **autonomy**, but considering other principles at the same time would help you describe the situation to the patients and reassure them that your priority is their **best interest**, meaning **no harm**, and considering **justice**, using the resources available in the best way possible.

A common example is when patients present with viral upper respiratory infections, requesting antibiotics, as they have this idea that this is the only way they can be treated. You might feel uncomfortable to oppose patients' request, but with an objective approach, you can explain to the patients the harms that could potentially accompany the use of antibiotics, the fact that antibiotics would not benefit them in such situations, and the issue that inappropriate use of antibiotics would conflict with justice, in terms of lack of necessity and high likelihood of bacterial resistance (leading to potential desperate situations).

I hope that you find this helpful, and you feel more confident in dealing with your future consultations.