Ethical Challenges Encountered by Clinical Trials Nurses: A Grounded Theory Study

Sheryl G. Forbes, PhD, MEd, RN, CCRP, and Carolyn A. Phillips, RN, PhD

OBJECTIVES: To investigate the ethical challenges experienced by oncology clinical trials nurses (OCTNs) during the management of CTs and to examine how they resolve those conflicts.

SAMPLE & SETTING: 12 licensed RNs who had been practicing as full- or part-time OCTNs for a minimum of two years at various academic medical centers in the United States.

METHODS & VARIABLES: Classical grounded theory (CGT), an inductive methodology used to explore a social process in which little is known and to develop a theory grounded in the data, was used, in addition to CGT data analysis strategies.

RESULTS: CGT data analysis revealed the OCTNs’ main concern (implementing an undefined job) and the way in which the OCTNs resolve this concern through the process of figuring it out. Figuring it out consists of learning as they go, utilizing their assets, standing their ground, and managing hope.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING: Although some nursing research provides examples of ethical challenges OCTNs might encounter in practice, there is little information regarding how nurses manage those encounters. A theoretical understanding of the OCTNs’ experiences managing ethical challenges fills a gap in the nursing literature and provides a framework for how OCTNs manage and respond to challenges in professional practice.

KEYWORDS classical grounded theory; clinical trials nurse; ethics; ethical challenge; clinical trial

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