

Education framework and experiences in bioethics: 3rd meeting of the group of professors of Bioethics in Dentistry of ABENO

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ABSTRACT

The importance of Bioethics for the ethical-humanistic improvement of dentists is widely recognized. However, professor training limited to Dentistry implies significant problems for this interdisciplinary theoretical-philosophical reflection course. In this context, a group of professors of Bioethics in Dentistry was created within the scope of the Brazilian Association of Dental Education in 2017. Two years later, the group met for the third time to share education references and experiences. The purpose of this article is to expand the scope of that debate to professors who were unable to attend. The Core Curriculum is initially presented, based on the principles of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. It is a pedagogical proposal from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for teaching Bioethics, which can be adopted in undergraduate programs in Dentistry in a comprehensive or complementary manner. Subsequently, the experience of teaching Bioethics that has been developed at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina is presented, based on a comparison of the elements that structure the teaching plans of the undergraduate and graduate programs. Likewise, the proposals defend teaching in one's own course; the indispensability of professor training in Bioethics; the consideration of its interdisciplinary nature; the expansion of the theoretical framework far beyond Principlism, seeking appropriate frameworks and themes relevant to each social context and each educational level; the centrality of the teaching-learning process for the student, fostering his/her critical-reflexive humanistic competence; and the commitment to the ethical training of students by the entire faculty.

Descriptors: Bioethics. Ethics. Dentistry. Education, Higher.

1 INTRODUCTION

The importance of the course of Bioethics for the ethical-humanistic improvement of professionals and future health professionals is already well documented, including in the context of higher education in Dentistry¹⁻⁵. Notwithstanding, not all undergraduate programs in Dentistry offer this course in their curricula, even without any other approach that can account for the training elements that this area allows future professionals. Its insertion became more significant from the year 2000 onwards¹. In 2010, the course was present in approximately one-third of active undergraduate programs in Brazil².

One of the essential explanatory characteristics refers to the gap in specific training in Bioethics by professors responsible for such content in different health programs¹. Although almost half of these programs have a master's and doctorate degrees, such academic training is restricted to the different areas of Dentistry². For this course of theoretical-philosophical reflection with its specificities and is, in essence, interdisciplinary, professor education limited to Dentistry implies significant problems in its teaching-learning process. Thus, overcoming the lack of qualified professionals for teaching Bioethics in Dentistry is a crucial challenge^{1,6}.

In this context, a group of professors of Bioethics in Dentistry was created within the scope of the Brazilian Association of Dental Education (ABENO). The group began its activities during the 52nd ABENO Meeting, in Juiz de Fora (MG), Brazil, in 2017. The group maintains constant contact and in-person gatherings during the association's meetings to discuss demands specific to this course's teaching.

In her first meeting, prof. Mirelle Finkler (UFSC) presented an overview of Bioethics teaching in Brazilian undergraduate and graduate

programs in Dentistry. With the mediation of prof. José Thadeu Pinheiro, the group, shared the difficulties experienced in teaching, especially those resulting from the lack of specific Bioethics training and the frequent indistinction between Bioethics and Dental Ethics⁷. In "Training x Education, Deontology x Ethics: rethinking concepts, repositioning professors"⁸, we seek to deepen the analysis of the central themes that emerged.

At the following meeting (53rd ABENO Meeting), with the mediation of professors Leandro Brambilla Martorell (UFG) and Volnei Garrafa (UnB), the group portrayed teaching the course from their practices and indicated the need for continuity in exchange of experiences, suggesting the collective construction of appropriate syllabus for teaching Bioethics in Dentistry.

The third meeting (54th ABENO Meeting) was planned to provide subsidies to the demand. To this end, members of the group and researchers on the topic shared their framework and experiences in teaching the course: Fabiano Maluf - doctor in Health Sciences from the Universidade de Brasília (2015), with a thesis on Education in Bioethics⁹, and Mirelle Finkler - doctor in Dentistry from the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (2009) with a stage doctorate in Bioethics at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), thesis on ethical training of dental surgeon¹⁰ and program for trainers in Bioethics by the Fundación Ciencias de la Salud (Madrid/Spain).

The purpose of this article is to disclose what was presented and discussed at the meeting, to democratize the discussion to other professors who teach Bioethics in Dentistry Programs across the country. By learning about the experiences of colleagues, we can rethink our courses - an ethical and pedagogical exercise to which we intend to contribute. Therefore, the presentations prepared for the third group

meeting are presented below.

2 CORE CURRICULUM AS A PEDAGOGICAL PROPOSAL FOR TEACHING BIOETHICS IN DENTISTRY – Prof. Fabiano Maluf

The fast pace of science in the 20th century contributed to the social acknowledgment of health professions and caused a gap between technical-scientific and ethical-humanistic training. The emphasis given to the former neglected to resolve the moral and ethical issues that arose with the advancement of knowledge in the biomedical field, which lacked an increasingly necessary reflection^{11,12}. The Flexner report, considered responsible for the technical-scientific character in health sciences professionals' training, recommended the fragmentation of knowledge and indicated a technical training to the detriment of desirable humanistic characteristics, having hospitalocentrism biologicism, and early specialization and technification of clinical actions as framework^{12,13}. Although technical-scientific training is essential for professional practice, true education is also necessary. In other words, much more is required than the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and training a few skills¹⁴.

The neologism "Bioethics" emerged in the early 1970s given the advances achieved by scientific knowledge and the limited ethical reflection to accompany them. It emerged as a reaction of society to the progressive growth of the power of technologies over man, where "bio" represents biological knowledge, the science of living systems; and "ethics" is the knowledge of human value systems¹⁵. In this sense, Bioethics aims to promote the exercise of the acknowledging moral conflicts, the critical-reflexive analysis of the implications of the incorporation of new technologies and social responsibility, and studying the moral duty

regarding decision-making related to human life.

Although a few higher education institutions began inserting Bioethics as a course in the 90s, it was only recognized as necessary to develop the new skills required in the training of professionals in 2001, with the new National Curriculum Guidelines for Undergraduate Health Programs.^{16,17} However, because it is a complex and recent field of knowledge, it does not yet have a specific or consolidated pedagogical tradition¹⁸. Thus, improving its teaching is a significant challenge.

There is often a very theoretical approach to Bioethics and the absence of themes related to the practical application of values regarding specific cases, with the prevalence of technical learning and paternalistic conduct of teachers and students. Furthermore, as an isolated course, Bioethics cannot provide the desired changes¹⁹. It is essential to problematize the course compared to others in the program and the practice of future dental-surgeons.

UNESCO's Core Curriculum (CC) is a pedagogical alternative for teaching Bioethics. This document is based on the 15 principles of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (DUBDH)²⁰, presenting theoretical elements, indications of instructional material, and complex cases with questions for discussion that aim to facilitate the organization of the teaching practice, enabling a better understanding of students regarding conflicting situations that often occur in Bioethics. The document proposes three general learning objectives, (1) to enable students to identify ethical issues in biomedical practices; (2) provide theoretical elements for students to present rational justifications for making ethical decisions; and (3) to train students in the application of DUBDH principles.

The CC's methodological approach provides essential didactic subsidies, such as general guidelines for professors, the indication of

minimum study hours, and the program content appropriate for each theme. It is indicated not only for students in the biomedical and health fields but also for human sciences programs that interface with the course, such as philosophy, law, anthropology, and sociology. Its essential characteristics include the possibility of innovation and the flexibility of application to teaching in different contexts. Thus, the CC is not a closed proposal and can be used as a complementary source to other teaching approaches in Bioethics²¹.

The program structure has a workload of approximately 60 hours and consists of 17 thematic units. Thematic units 1 and 2 provide a general approach to Ethics and Bioethics and are followed by another 15 sequential units that address and discuss the 15 articles of the DUBDH. UNESCO's proposal suggests that some units can be taught together, but each develops a specific theme. Each unit has fundamental theoretical elements for understanding the theme, with current and relevant examples that can be adapted to cultural contexts' diversity concerning the reality where they are being presented²¹.

The ethical foundation necessary for a good professional practice encourages the search for new forms of approaching reality and contributes to professionals' education committed to citizenship and capable of acting with social responsibility and a humanistic perspective^{10,22}. Therefore, Bioethics teaching must abandon the traditional model, in which knowledge is centered on the professor, which means that students are not always encouraged to reflect²³. New teaching strategies and methodologies must be validated in different contexts to improve its structure and effectiveness. Modifying traditional and deficient teaching models requires flexibility and creativity from those dedicated to teaching, an openness to the new arising from negotiations between all those involved in the

teaching-learning process.

The ethical training of health professionals depends on not only the teaching of Bioethics but its insertion in the most different spaces, from undergraduate to graduate programs. Therefore, the use of CC as a guiding model for teaching²⁴ is an interesting and recommended alternative.

3 HOW I HAVE TAUGHT BIOETHICS IN UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN DENTISTRY? A BRIEF REPORT ON MY EXPERIENCES AT UFSC – Prof. Mirelle Finkler

Before sharing a synthesis about my pedagogical practices in Bioethics, I think it is necessary to indicate a few assumptions on which it is based. One of them is the insufficiency of what could be denominated "ethics in training" instead of something much bigger and more complex that constitutes a true "ethical dimension" of higher education. This starting point indicates two fundamental questions: the role of the university as an educational locus (and not simply of professional training) and, therefore, its responsibility in the moral/ethical education of its students⁸; and the insufficiency (but not indispensable) of teaching Bioethics, which should represent the core of a pedagogical project of ethical awareness and criticality, supported by other courses and the commitment of the entire faculty^{1,10}.

A second assumption concerns a few specificities of Bioethics teaching and learning. Specific training is needed to teach Bioethics since it is a transdisciplinary and philosophically based field, although this training does not require a specific degree (although recommended). It is necessary to teach Bioethics in subjects appropriate to each undergraduate program in Health Sciences. As much as the bioethical themes are very interesting and always teach, each program has its specificities and can benefit more from the course if it is directed.

There is no point, for example, in discussing cloning if the illegal trade in human teeth has no space or discussing euthanasia and leaving topics such as conflicts of interest or the use of social networks outside the content. It is also necessary to teach Bioethics in courses appropriate for each educational level - undergraduate and graduate, as each fulfills different objectives: to prepare future dental surgeons or future professor-researchers to deal ethically with aspects of biological and specific social problems, be it their patients as clinicians or their students in teaching.

A third assumption considers the character of Bioethics teaching since it is not exactly a matter of teaching ethics but of promoting the ethical-humanistic improvement of students by developing their attitudes and building knowledge and training skills. Such a task requires an adequate theoretical and methodological foundation and appropriate strategies, preferably problematizing, interdisciplinary, and small groups of students¹⁰. One of these methodologies is the Moral Deliberation Method, recovered from Aristotle and recommended by bioethicist Diego Gracia²⁵. It is a method based on Responsibility Bioethics²⁶, which occupies a central position in the teaching that I have been developing²⁷ for being a powerful instrument for resolving ethical conflicts and a valuable means of personal development.

The information presented in Chart 1 summarizes the main structuring elements of the Bioethics courses that I have taught in recent years: in the *stricto sensu* graduate program in Dentistry, until 2019, and in the undergraduate programs, where teaching continues in a fruitful partnership with a colleague who is, besides a dental surgeon, a sociologist. Such courses were conceived from a formative trajectory and performance in the interface between Dentistry and Public Health, Education, and Bioethics. In

the case of a graduation program, with a sociological perspective, that enhances its interdisciplinary characteristic.

This trajectory and the sharing of many other professors' teaching plans allowed me to outline the subjects as indicated below. Their experimentation and evaluations with the students each academic semester enabled me to redefine them, seeking constant improvement. I hope that its sharing can be useful to colleagues as their teaching plans were previously important to my teaching.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The elaboration of a guiding syllabus for the Bioethics courses for undergraduate programs in Dentistry by the group of professors at ABENO may come to be collectively matured and built. However, it presents a complexity regarding the interdisciplinary nature of Bioethics and the process of training professors in the field that would need to be considered.

The proposals presented in this paper can be regarded as a starting point for this task whenever considering its suitability to achieve the objectives to which the subject is proposed and the necessary teaching autonomy in planning and developing its teaching.

Other issues indicated by both proposals are the consideration of the interdisciplinary nature of Bioethics, from which derives the need for specific professor training; the need for teaching to occur in its own course, that is, dissociated from other courses since, even though Dental Ethics and Deontology have common complementary analyzes, the association in a single course tends to place Bioethics on the margins of the others; the expansion of the theoretical framework far beyond Principlism, seeking theoretical frameworks more appropriate to each social context; the selection of themes that are relevant to Dentistry and appropriate to the teaching objectives at each educational level;

Chart 1 – Structuring elements of the Bioethics courses at undergraduate and graduate levels

	UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM	GRADUATE PROGRAM
Curricular insertion	36 hours/semester 1 st semester of the program Classes with approximately 50 students	54 hours/semester Mandatory course Classes with approximately 25 students
Professors	Professor with a diploma in Dentistry and a formation in Bioethics and professor with diplomas in Dentistry and Sociology	Professor with a diploma in Dentistry and a formation in Bioethics
General objective	Educate for the autonomous management of moral values, contributing to the formation of humanistic, ethically competent, and socially committed citizens and health professionals.	Educate for the autonomous management of moral values, contributing to the formation of professor and researchers ethically competent and committed to a socially relevant science/university
Specific objectives	Stimulate sensitivity concerning the ethical aspects of everyday and professional life in the field of health and specifically in Dentistry ; Provide information and share experiences that favor the construction of knowledge and the development of skills and attitudes necessary for an ethical experience ; Promote reflection, the capacity for argumentation/justification, and ethical deliberation.	Stimulate sensitivity concerning the ethical aspects of everyday and professional life in the field of health and specifically in the scope of education and research ; Provide information and share experiences that favor the construction of knowledge and the development of skills and attitudes necessary for the ethical-pedagogical task ; Improve the capacity for reflection, argumentation/justification, and ethical deliberation.
Theoretical framework	Basis of ethics; Social Bioethics: Declaration of Bioethics and Human Rights, Intervention Bioethics, Critical Feminist Inspiration Bioethics, Protection Bioethics, Public Bioethics, Clinical-Amplified Bioethics; Narrative Bioethics; Deliberative Bioethics	
Syllabus	<p>Introduction to the study of Bioethics and university life: The history of Bioethics, definition of the term, characteristics, objectives, and applications; University prank</p> <p>Philosophical foundations: morals, ethics, religion, law, beliefs, facts, values, moral pluralism, ethical conflicts, perfect and imperfect duties, responsibility, excellence, virtue and vice, objectivity and intersubjectivity, moral absolutism and relativism, fundamentalism and fanaticism, autonomy and heteronomy, legality and legitimacy.</p> <p>Models of Ethics/Bioethics: Deontological ethics. Utilitarian ethics. Ethics of responsibility; Types of arguments: dilemma x problem; The Moral Deliberation method.</p> <p>Citizenship, Duties, and Human Rights: The Declaration of Bioethics and Human Rights and human dignity; Society, power, politics, and democracy.</p> <p>Bioethics and Public Health: Vulnerability and vulneration, justice and equity; Equality, difference, and gender; Sexism, racism, and other discriminations.</p> <p>Ethics in daily practice: Primary ethical issues in dentistry training and work: paternalism and autonomy, beneficence and maleficence, secrecy and confidentiality, consent and assent, patient objectification, use of social networks by students, and health professionals.</p>	<p>Introduction to the study of Bioethics: historical reasons for its emergence and consolidation; scope and coverage; philosophical foundations; the role of beliefs and values in moral life; moral theories; theory of Moral Development; Types of arguments: dilemma x problem; The method of moral deliberation; Principlism and Social Bioethics.</p> <p>Bioethics applied to Dentistry: the history of medical ethics; principles, values, and devaluations in the professional-patient relationship; veracity, confidentiality, and secrecy; facts and values in clinical decision-making; objectives and limits of the Dental Code of Ethics; hidden curriculum; ethical dimension of professional health training; ethical problems and challenges in undergraduate courses; ethical conflicts in the practice of Dentistry; scientific and social responsibility of the profession.</p> <p>Research ethics: the history of ethics in scientific research; the Helsinki declarations and CNS Resolution 466/2012; research ethics committees, National Research Ethics Committee and Plataforma Brasil; Free and Informed Consent - procedure and term; integrity of scientific research; ethics in publicizing scientific production; ethical problems in dental research; Biobanks and the use of teeth in teaching and research; conflicts of interest; the health industrial complex; animal rights and their use in teaching and research.</p>
Methodologies	Expository and dialogic classes Reading recommended texts Dramatization Moral deliberation sessions Reflective observation of hospital and clinical environment Use of the Moodle platform	Expository and dialogic classes Reading recommended texts Lectures by guest professors Narrative bioethics Moral deliberation session Preparation of a written paper Presentation of seminars Use of the Moodle platform
Evaluation	Student: Attitude evaluation (formative) (1/3) Knowledge and skill evaluation (somative 2/3)	Disciplinary: General course evaluation Self-evaluation (students) Evaluation of the professors

the centrality of the teaching-learning process for the student, fostering his/her critical-reflexive humanistic skill, which implies active teaching methodologies; and, the commitment to the ethical formation of students by the entire faculty since Bioethics teaching dissociated from an ethical intentionality transversal to the educational process would always be insufficient.

The importance of expanding the group was acknowledged at the end of the 3rd Parallel Meeting of professors of Bioethics in Dentistry, and of working on identifying the different perspectives of possible analysis - bioethics and deontology - of the various ethical themes pertinent to Dentistry, in the following meeting. Such an exercise would be one more step on the road to collectively building specific guidelines for teaching this course in our field of expertise.

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Resumo

Referenciais e experiências de ensino em bioética: 3ª reunião do grupo de professores de Bioética em Odontologia da ABENO

A importância da Bioética para o aperfeiçoamento ético-humanístico dos cirurgiões-dentistas é amplamente reconhecida. No entanto, para esta disciplina de reflexão teórico-filosófica interdisciplinar, a formação docente limitada à Odontologia implica problemas significativos. Diante deste contexto, criou-se um grupo de professores de Bioética em Odontologia no âmbito da Associação Brasileira de Ensino Odontológico, em 2017. Dois anos após, o grupo se reuniu pela terceira vez para compartilhar referenciais e experiências de docência. O objetivo deste artigo é ampliar o alcance daquele debate aos professores que não puderam estar presentes. Inicialmente apresenta-se o *Core Curriculum* que está baseado nos

princípios da Declaração Universal sobre Bioética e Direitos Humanos. Trata-se de uma proposta pedagógica da *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) para o ensino de Bioética, que pode ser adotado nos cursos de graduação em Odontologia de forma integral ou complementar. Na sequência, apresenta-se a experiência do ensino de Bioética que vem sendo desenvolvida na Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, a partir de comparação dos elementos que estruturam os planos de ensino das disciplinas de graduação e pós-graduação. Em comum as propostas defendem: o ensino em disciplina própria; a imprescindibilidade da formação docente em Bioética; a consideração da sua natureza interdisciplinar; a ampliação do referencial teórico para muito além do Principialismo, buscando-se referenciais adequados e temáticas relevantes a cada contexto social e a cada nível educativo; a centralidade do processo ensino-aprendizado no estudante, fomentando sua competência humanística crítico-reflexiva; e o compromisso com a formação ética dos estudantes por parte de todo o corpo docente.

Descritores: Bioética. Ética. Odontologia. Educação Superior.

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