

UNIT 1: APPROACH TO THE PATIENT

Educational Topic 6: Legal and Ethical Issues in Obstetrics and Gynecology

Rationale: Recognizing and understanding the basis of legal and ethical issues in obstetrics and gynecology will promote quality patient care and patient safety.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

A student should be able to:

- Explain the following legal/ethical issues:
 - Informed consent
 - Confidentiality
 - Advance directives for healthcare
 - Screening and reporting of suspected child abuse, sexual abuse and intimate partner violence
- Discuss the legal and ethical issues in the care of minors
- Apply a systematic approach to ethical dilemmas based on ethical principles
- Describe issues of justice relating to access to obstetric-gynecologic care
- Recognize his/her role as a leader and advocate for women
- Recognize the ethical issues of other specialties and disciplines as they relate to women's healthcare

TEACHING CASE

CASE: A 33 year-old G2P1 woman presents to your office at 33 weeks of gestation for her scheduled prenatal visit and discussion of mode of delivery. She reports no problems. Her psychosocial history is significant only in that her husband is a well-known baseball player. Her prior pregnancy resulted in a Cesarean delivery with a transverse uterine incision. There were no complications associated with the delivery. Her physical examination reveals normal blood pressure and weight. Fundal height, fetal position, and heart rate are unremarkable. Her diagnostic test results show Hgb: 12.4 g/dL; WBC: 11,000; Urinalysis: negative for bacteria and leukocytes; and urine drug screen: negative.

COMPETENCY-BASED DISCUSSION & KEY TEACHING POINTS:

Competencies addressed:

- Patient Care
- Medical Knowledge
- Interpersonal and Communication Skills
- Professionalism
- Systems-Based Practice

1. What would you tell this patient regarding her options for delivery?
2. How does the underlying ethical principle of autonomy impact your counseling of this patient?
3. How does the underlying ethical principle of beneficence/non-maleficence impact your counseling of this patient?
4. How does the underlying ethical principle of justice impact your counseling of this patient?
5. What is the role of the physician in informed consent?
6. What topics might be included in an informed consent at this time
7. What should be done if the patient declines a trial of labor after a history of low-transverse Cesarean delivery (TOLAC)?

REFERENCES

Beckman CRB, et al. Obstetrics and Gynecology. 7th ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, 2013.

Hacker NF, Moore JG, et al. Essentials of Obstetrics and Gynecology. 5th ed. Philadelphia: Saunders, 2010.

ACOG Practice Bulletin 115, Vaginal Birth After Previous Cesarean Delivery, August 2010.

ACOG Committee Opinion Number 390, Ethical Decision making In Obstetrics and Gynecology, 2013.

ACOG Committee Opinion Number 439, Informed Consent, 2012.

NIH Consensus Development Conference on Vaginal Birth After Cesarean: New Insights

<http://consensus.nih.gov/2010/vbacstatement.htm>

Copyright © 2014 by Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO).

For permissions: apgoadmin@apgo.org