

# The war on COVID-19 and vaccination mandates: *Ethical code of conduct*

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*"In loving memory of my beautiful sister, Estelle Salters, who passed away from COVID-19 (1965-2021). Rest in Love..."*

**Mandatory Employee Vaccines – Coming to A State Near You?** (Mendelson, 2021). Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, vice provost for global initiatives at the University of Pennsylvania, organized the statement, "Employer vaccine mandates are effective and lifesaving, and they are especially appropriate in health care and long-term care settings." He posits that healthcare professionals have an ethical responsibility to the health and well-being of society, vulnerable communities, and immunocompromised patients. Therefore, getting vaccinated for COVID-19 is integral to the ethical code of conduct and integral to their duty. Your patient should not worry that their healthcare worker will infect them, and no healthcare professional should risk the health of their patients. With COVID-19 case counts rising amid the spread of the Delta variant, over 50 health care professional societies and organizations called for all health care employers to require their employees to vaccinate against COVID-19. These societies and organizations represent millions of workers throughout health and long-term care—from doctors and nurses to pharmacists and physician assistants, public health workers and epidemiologists, long-term care, home care, and hospice workers (Association of American Medical Colleges [AAMC], 2021).

Globally, there have been 205,338,159 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 4,333,094 deaths, reported to the World Health Organization [WHO] as of 13 August 2021 (WHO, 2021). Over 15 years before we recognized SARS-CoV-2 as a human pathogen, researchers were doing ground-breaking work that led to the concept of the mRNA and adenovirus vaccine platforms, which resulted in the rapid development of effective and safe vaccines

(Emanuel & Skorton, 2021). Would you mind refraining from conspiracy theories without substantive evidence to support your theory about the "rapid development" of the vaccine? You have an ethical responsibility to the health and well-being of your patients. Ethical awareness entails more than identifying situations in which ethical challenges arise. Robbins (2018) assert that Provision 5.3 of the American Nurses Association (ANA) Code of Ethics identifies the duty of nurses to engage in "sound ethical decision-making" when there is a conflict of values (para.1). Is a moral community in healthcare necessary for the ethical practice of nursing?

Milliken (2018) focuses on four ethical principles:

1. Autonomy (self-determination).
2. Beneficence (the promotion of good).
3. Maleficence (to avoid or minimize harm).
4. Justice (fairly or equally distributing both benefits and good).

Ethical awareness is necessary to avoid a conflict with one of these principles that would cause the nurse to act unethically (Milliken, 2018). The Nurses Association [ANA] Code of Ethics states: "Nursing encompasses the protection, promotion, and restoration of health and well-being; the prevention of illness and injury; and the alleviation of suffering, in the care of individuals, families, groups, communities, and populations" (ANA, 2015, p. vii).

*"COVID-19 is a Beast we can all fight collaboratively in the spirit of Ubuntu! Let us continue the good fight, Amandla!!!"*

## Keywords

COVID-19; vaccination; nursing; ethics; vaccines; health personnel; public health; United States

## Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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