

Ethical dilemmas: A case study approach to engage the medical and biomedical students and early career researchers

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Many young doctors are getting involved in basic research and scholarly activities outside their usual territory of “clinical/patient-based medicine” involving in vitro/animal research, and data handling. Likewise, several basic scientists are carrying out in vivo medical research involving patients. Whilst there is a greater emphasis of incorporating ethical education to medical students, it is not clear whether the research scientists are being taught about ethics, ethical behaviour and the consequences on intentional or unintentional misconducts. Many medical schools and other institutions use traditional lecture-based delivery on ethical principles. Which are often seen as “boring” and not always linked to day-to-day practice. Teaching curriculum in many universities are fully “saturated” with course specific contents which often makes it difficult to incorporate ethical education into their delivery. Innovative types of learning strategies such as “case study-based delivery” are employed.

In this workshop, medical students and early career scientists were presented with a variety of case studies highlighting the issues in biotechnology, clinical medicine, food technology, stem cell therapy, biomedical science etc. Students were grouped to discuss/debate each scenario. This was followed by a plenary session, where each group presented their arguments for (or against) the scenarios they have analysed. Finally, the underlying principles linked to each scenario were discussed. Although this approach is time consuming, it usually generates full attention and engagement amongst the students.

Similar sessions have successfully been delivered in institutions and conferences within Europe. The session is suited for students/graduates undertaking medical and/or biomedical career options.