THE PATIENT’S RIGHT TO PRIVACY IN THE EMERGENCY UNIT

ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The right to privacy is increasingly more demanded in societies labelled as “technical-scientific”. This may be so because people's privacy has never been under such a threat as nowadays. Acknowledged as an individual's direct demand and as a basic human need, privacy presents itself as a relevant concept in all human activity spheres and is considered to be a fundamental right which is included in the most diverse documents of ethical and juridical nature.

Not solely subject to aspects of mere descriptive nature, invasion of privacy implies the violation of individuality, of liberty and of an individual's dignity. In the health field these concerns are raised more vigorously, since the satisfaction of the care needs always implies, in a greater or lesser degree, an "invasion" of the individual's privacy in different ways. It is our intention to debate in this work the way that information focused on details of a personal nature are generated due to an individual's state of health/illness, which are also consolidated as sensitive details, and the way that, physically speaking, the need arises for an individual's corporal features to be exposed.

**Objectives:** Thinking over a very important bioethical subject of present times and define some changes in order to gain a higher respect for the right to privacy within healthcare, especially in emergency units.

**Material and Methods:** We have used as methodology the bibliographic search. We analysed this issue by presenting theories, authors, concepts, studies, legislation, and statistical data, in different perspectives.

**Results and Conclusions:** Flitting this problematic area to particular units such as the emergency and casualty units, which are characterised by a very large affluence of users, de-personalised and agitated spaces, shared by a multiplicity of people, from users to professionals, where we witness a lack of respect for this fundamental right, manifesting itself in the way that present legislation is ignored, the lack of respect for the rights of users, the lack of concern for professional deontology and even the apathy from those responsible for hospital institutions and other entities.
It is our intention to present in this work some suggestions for change, which may bring a higher respect for privacy within healthcare, particularly, in emergency and casualty services. However, we are aware that the implementation of a great number of these suggestions does not depend directly or exclusively on health professionals, but on society as a whole. However, it is clearly necessary to carry on reflecting on this bioethical issue which concerns everybody and within which human dignity is an ethical foundation.