

The Four Principles

Nursing

Autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice — where they collide.

Four widely used principles that structure an ethical argument without deciding it for you.

COMMON CLASH

Autonomy vs benefit

RESOLVED BY

Deliberation

RECORDED AS

Reasoning

- Autonomy — respect for a person's own decisions
- Beneficence — act for the person's benefit
- Non-maleficence — avoid causing avoidable harm
- Justice — fairness in treatment and in resources
- Real dilemmas are conflicts between two of them
- The framework names the conflict; it does not resolve it

LOOK FOR IT

A capacious refusal of treatment sets autonomy directly against beneficence, and autonomy generally prevails.

Educational reference. Frameworks support reasoning, not conclusions. Escalate ethical concerns through your team and local clinical ethics