HEALTH CARE PHILOSOPHIES & ETHICS UNIT REVIEW ANSWERS

9. GERD (gastro-esophageal reflux disorder) is a disorder where acid from the stomach enters the esophagus and causes burning. It is very uncomfortable, and left untreated causes esophageal cancer.

A woman goes to see a practitioner with recurrent heartburn. The practitioner asks pertinent questions and diagnosis GERD. The practitioner offers pantaloc, an acid producer cell antagonist. The practitioner explains that, in trials, it decreases or eliminates symptoms for 95% of people afflicted, but he provides no other information regarding the side effects of the drug. The man refuses the medication, and asks if there is anything else he can do. The practitioner tells him he could raise the headboard end of his bed, and that he has heard of wheatgrass being helpful, but can’t vouch for that.

Questions:

a) What is the dominant medical knowledge system being used? What evidence did you use to determine what the dominant framework was?

**Evidence based framework: the prescribing of a drug suggests this as does offering specific numbers from controlled trials.**

b) What relevant rights, of the patient, are incorporated/ignored?

**Consent to treatment. The person has chosen to refuse treatment.**

**Full disclosure: Is somewhat ignored. The doctor offered the patient evidence of the effectiveness of the treatment but did not discuss side effects**.

c) Explain which, of the four areas of ethical decision making, are being met/ignored?

**Autonomy** **– the person has refused treatment so the doctor must respect his wishes.**

**Beneficence / Non-maleficence —the doctor does give the patient other options other than medication, however again limited information on the risks and side effects of wheatgrass is given.**

**Justice – Patient rights are respected**

d) What evidence is there of an integrative approach being offered (are there other knowledge systems being used besides the dominant one)? What are some potential conflicts/misunderstandings that could develop from this integrative approach?

**Although an integrative approach is not being used, wheatgrass (Alternative Medicine) is offered as a possible treatment which could lead the patient to seek other advice.**

**Potential Conflicts/ Misunderstandings: Patient may choose to try wheatgrass without finding out more information which could result in allergic reactions, drug interactions, overdose, etc.**