

## Chapter 6

# Business Ethics in Healthcare: The Case of Greece

**Vaitsa Giannouli**

*Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece*

### **ABSTRACT**

*Over the last few decades, healthcare business and ethical values have been the focus of legal changes, especially in the Greek Healthcare System. The purpose of this chapter was to examine in both a quantitative and qualitative way what the Greek healthcare experts think and feel about ethics and healthcare services and to present the factors that shape attitudes towards ethical values from the viewpoint of the healthcare professionals. For this reason, 34 semi-structured interviews, accompanied by the administration of perceived cohesion scale, generalized immediacy scale, job affect scale, state anxiety inventory, Maslach burnout inventory, and the attitude towards business ethics questionnaire revealed that healthcare professionals in Greece do have knowledge of ethical values and moral responsibility, but no connections with specific emotional aspects were found. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications, and future directions on how business ethics can be further examined and applied.*

### **ETHICS AND ETHICAL VALUES**

Regardless of social, historical, spiritual, cultural and economic contexts, ethical values dominate people's lives (Smith, 2017; Weber, 2008). Values can be defined as the sum of the positive properties that reflect the importance of a good person or thing, which people recognize that they should try to acquire and recommend them to others, and thus values have to do with being 'good' or doing the 'right' thing

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(Mayo, 2017; Philosophical and Sociological Dictionary, 1995). Although the concept of ethical values has taken the form of various definitions in philosophy and social sciences, a fairly common approach is the separation in values related to 1) material and economic dimensions of things (e.g. material goods, technical goods, work, money), 2) political values (e.g. individual freedoms, democracy, egalitarianism, rule of law), 3) social values (e.g. love, friendship, cooperation, peace), 4) aesthetic values (coming from the different art movements), 5) natural values (e.g. life, health, nature), and 6) moral values (such as responsibility, honesty, conscientiousness, self-awareness, self-control, dignity) (Diamantopoulos, 2002). The hierarchy of these values largely depends on the cultural environment (Mohammadi et al., 2019), and may present differences both in terms of understanding the concepts of different values, and the importance given to each one of them by the individuals (Jackson, 2015; Pletz, 1999).

Ethical values as a term was originally used in the field of economics not directly linked to financial and business matters, but today it's spread as a basic concept both in theoretical writings and in daily use, regarding all employees (Harris, 1990; Kanungo, 2001). Of course, there is a hierarchy of values based on (ir)rational or explicit rules of the group in which a person belongs (Landau & Osmo, 2003). So, it is understandable that historically there have been numerous ethical value systems, which generally may have differences among them (Jackson, 2015). The differences can be found in the varying degrees of importance that specific values may have in the system-society-culture, but most of the times (not without striking exceptions) special attention is given to the values that are positively linked to human life, freedom and justice regardless of the frame (Donnelly, 2013; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001).

## **Healthcare Business, Ethical Values and Modern Societies**

Business activities render necessary the achievement of prosperity for the maintenance of societies across the world (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2014; Crane et al., 2019; Wartenberg, 2011). Thus, business organizations of all sizes depend on the attitudes, values and the internalized and externalized behavior of their shareholders, their employees, investors, consumers and the government(s) of the country or countries in which they operate, which could lead to diversity in terms of attitudes and perceptions of ethical values (Biron, 2010; Liu & Lin, 2016; Peppas & Peppas, 2000; Segon & Booth, 2013; Valentine & Barnett, 2003; van Auken, 2016; van Wart & Denhardt, 2019).

There is a tendency to consider that there exists a generalized crisis of ethical values in healthcare not only in Greece, but worldwide (Kavali, Tzokas & Saren, 2001; Miles & Asbridge, 2014; Williams & Elliott, 2010), which along with the latest

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