Abstract

In this paper, we focus on the contexts of moral decision-making by nurses in the euthanasia programs of Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1945 using Urban Walker's philosophical model. We use the second hypothesis of this model, that morality consists of practices of responsibility, to give an analysis of the understandings nurses had of their responsibilities in the euthanasia programs. The article starts with a brief introduction to the euthanasia programs of Nazi Germany from 1939 to 1945 and nurse participation, to illustrate how the responsibilities of nurses were manipulated. Secondly, nursing as moral practices are analysed in the context of the euthanasia programs that implement commonly shared understandings and practices of responsibility. Thirdly, the reasons that nurses gave for avoiding any responsibilities are examined. Fourthly, it is examined if nurses took any responsibility in the euthanasia programs. In conclusion, this
paper discusses three points of relevance such as reflection on moral responsibility in the context of Nazi Germany has for nurses today who may be confronted with euthanasia.

Keywords
Ethics; Euthanasia; Nazi Germany; Nursing

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