



Ethics in Emergency Medical Services

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Objectives

- Define ethics
- Identify the importance and impact of ethics upon Emergency Medical Services providers/organizations.
- Identify the role of the pre-hospital provider in establishing, modeling, and managing ethical behavior.
- Analyze his/her own organizations existing ethical rules and guidelines, and where the gaps might be.
- Demonstrate decision-making involving ethical practices.
- Distinguish between professional, legal, and moral accountability
- Discuss prehospital ethical issues
- Identify specific ethical dilemmas



FROG SOUP



Terminology

- Ethics
 - Standard for honorable behavior
- Morals
 - Social standards/customs
- Unethical
 - Fails to conform to moral principles, values, standards

WHAT ARE ETHICS?

- A given system of conduct
- Principles of honor or morality
- Guidelines for human action
- Rules or standards for individuals or professions
- The character of a group (what behavior is expected)

THE ROOTS OF ETHICS

- Ancient history
- Religion
- Systems of law
- Social customs of a community
- Our personal code of conduct

CODES OF ETHICS

- Guidelines to members of a profession
- Inform members of a common set of standards
- Encourage members to live by those standards
- Protect the integrity and reputation of the group

APPLICATIONS OF CODES OF ETHICS

- Professional life
- Relations with public or society
- Relations with employers
- Relations with other employees/coworkers

Codes of Ethics

The background of the slide is a solid orange color. Overlaid on this background is a collection of medical-related items. In the center, there is a white cloth or paper with the letters 'EMC' printed in large, bold, black font. Above the cloth, a stethoscope is visible, and below it, another stethoscope is partially seen. In the bottom left corner, there is a black, possibly protective, mask or piece of equipment. The overall theme is medical and professional.

- Professional
 - EMT Code of Ethics
 - AMA's Principles of Medical Ethics

Personal Accountability

The background of the slide is a photograph of the interior of an ambulance, viewed from the driver's perspective. The word "EMS" is prominently displayed in large, white, block letters on the wall behind the driver's seat. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter.

- Professional
 - Standards
- Legal
 - Often overlaps with ethical
- Moral
 - Emotion not reliable
 - Rational decision making useful
 - Can't base decisions only on others' opinions
 - Ethical "rules" can guide behavior

Global Concepts



- Provide patient benefit
- Avoid harm
- Recognize patient's autonomy



CURRENT INTEREST IN
ETHICS

Where Are Our Ethics?

- Is ethics in EMS declining.
- The media highlights every instance of public safety personnel involved in substance abuse, sexual misconduct and fraud/theft. Although 9/11 made us all heroes, we are making ourselves fools by our behavior. Each time one of these articles comes out, we lose credibility, and the community loses confidence in us.

U.S. political morality bewilders Europe

**Beech-Nut
Guilty in
Juice Fraud**

**\$2 Million Fine Set
By U.S. Judge After Firm
Admits Liability**

Cheating

**Everybody does it ---
if only because everybody
else does it**

**"...The real issues
your country
faces are not
being discussed."**

SOVIET OFFICIAL

**'Sophisticated Dishonesty'
Why Scientists Can Get Away With Fraud**



Emphasis on business ethics

By RICK GLADSTONE
Associated Press

NEW YORK - From Harvard's ivy-covered halls to the smalltown colleges of the Farm Belt, American business schools are intensifying efforts to instill ethics among students entering a world scarred by sleazy scandals.

Former Miss America indicted

Cash from armored car still missing

Associated Press
COLUMBUS, Ohio

Many of the passers-by who scooped up hundreds of thousands of dollars that fell from an armored truck are holding on to the money, and nearly two weeks later the city was still buzzing with talk of mystery and morality.

Modern morals : Fibs and sex

Lying Is No Big Deal Anymore

Super-powers find honesty is politically inconvenient

Study of Corporations

One Third of Workers Admit Thefts on Job

Washington

One third of the employees in a survey of 47 corporations reported stealing company property and nearly two-thirds reported taking long lunch breaks, misusing sick leave or using alcohol or drugs while at work.

Why Cheating Is on The Rise in U.S.

There are fewer incentives to be truthful — and less punishment for the liar, says a leading psychologist who tells what it will take "to return honesty" to our society.

S.F. Convention

Ethics a Hot Issue As Lawyers Meet

By William Carloon

The American Bar Association opens its 104th annual convention in San Francisco today embroiled in debate over one of the hottest issues — a controversial new code of professional ethics.

"Would I rather have people worry about insider trading or how to sell computer chips to Japan?" US Professor

'Time Thieves' Get \$80 Billion

On the fake

Impostors' little lies

make grand illusions

Fudging on Resumes Is the American Way

IF THERE IS ONE place a person should be allowed to lie, at least to fib a bit, even if he is a presidential candidate, it is on his resume. A resume is your life as seen through rose-colored glasses. It's you, but a whole lot better.

GSA Employee Disputes Fire Safety of U.S. Buildings

Officials must avoid appearance of conflict

Item: With the blessing of the city attorney, Rohnert Park City Manager Peter M. Callinan plans to serve on the board of directors of a bank being organized by one of the city's principal developers, Hugh Coddling.

State studies possibility of bribery

Football ex-supervisor investigated

players off team for drinking

Bank boss charged in kickbacks

**It's hard to watch some volunteer
firefighters act like kids**

Lying Fire Chief Must Take Pay Cut

Stress claims 'rampant'

**Uproar over
firemen's
refusal to
respond to
AIDS baby**

Safety officers end sickout

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) - Weary police supervisors and firefighters headed home today after a new pay offer ended two days of "blue flu," but a dissenting city councilman said the agreement was "capitulation to a hostage situation."

SF fire chief resigns amid allegations of racial strife

Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO-

Embattled Fire Chief

Edward Phipps resigned

Friday in the wake of

continuing allegations of

racial discrimination and

harassment in his divided

department.

Fireman won't be prosecuted

Chief Wise is scheduled to announce disciplinary action against 10 today

The ethics of report writing

Firefighters 'hot'

DEAR ABBY: There is absolutely no justification for the actions of the Salem, Ark., volunteer firefighters who stood around and watched a \$150,000 home burn down because the owner hadn't paid the \$20 annual dues.

Fireman reportedly balks at aiding AIDS victim

McCuthey News Service

SAN FRANCISCO - Alameda County public health officials said Wednesday they are investigating a recent incident in which a firefighter refused to give first aid to a dying woman with AIDS.

Firemen Watch, Victim Burns

Authorities free suspect in fatal arson fire

**Is There
Sexual Harassment
in City Hall?**

**Jury Says Chief, City
Responsible in Hotel Fire**

A recent Superior Court jury decision in California found the city and the fire chief (retired) responsible for damages as the result of a hotel fire. Attorney Jerry Duncan was retained by the City of Marysville's insurance carrier to represent the city and the fire chief as defendants in the case.

**Officials approve
firefighters' delay
in fatal car crash**



A Family Affair

Swampscott's Police Chief is under fire for nepotism. He says his only problem was having too many children.

**Job action shows
in Lawrence
firemen attire**

**Associated Press
LAWRENCE - Firefighters in Lawrence, who haven't had a raise in 2 1/2 years, are growing beards and responding to blazes dressed in street clothes as part of a job action aimed at restarting stalled contract talks.**

**S'scott chief hits
ethics charge**

**The Need for
Political
Courage in
Local Leaders**

POSSIBLE KEY LEARNING

- Ethics are complex.
- There are many conflicting "ethical expectations."
- These expectations have a direct influence on day-to-day decisions.
- Ethical decisions can affect many groups at the same time--each with legitimate but differing needs.

SOURCES OF ETHICS

SOCIETY IN GENERAL
LOCAL COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATION AS A WHOLE

GROUPS:

SUBUNITS OF THE ORGANIZATION
(Career/Volunteer, Firefighter/EMT, Shifts/Platoons, Ranks, Stations, Specialties, Associations/Unions, etc.)

PLUS INDIVIDUALS

HAVE:

Beliefs	Standards	Economic
Cultures	Policies	Requirements and
Principles	Rules/Regulations	Needs
Values	Laws	Preferences
Missions	Training/Education	

LEADING TO:

EXPECTATIONS ABOUT BEHAVIOR

**WHICH
CREATES:**

**Group, Organizational, and Individual
ETHICS**

Standards

Unofficial

Values

Official

Requirements

Expectations

Parts of the Ethical Puzzle

AN ETHICAL DECISION WILL:

- Honor formal department decisions and documents.
- Not violate laws, rules, etc.
- Reflect what are reasonable and positive cultural characteristics.
- Reflect the interest of all parties as much as possible.
- "Feel" right!

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ETHICAL ORGANIZATION

- Senior management defines and clarifies standards, values, and ethics.
- Senior management demonstrates a commitment to those ethics, and expects a similar commitment of all organizational members.
- The organization supports and rewards ethical behavior and ethical solutions to problems.
- The organization gives consideration to all stakeholders--the community, policymakers, employees, and special interest groups.
- The organization as a whole prides itself on its ideals and on striving toward them.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ETHICAL LEADER

- Models ethical behavior after others.
- Attempts to balance personal ethics with those of the organization.
- Considers impact of decisions on all others who will be affected.
- Operates with integrity, honesty, and courage.
- Approaches ethics from a positive point of view, guided by his/her own "ethical compass" or conscience."

TESTS OF AN ETHICAL DECISION (ORGANIZATIONAL OR PERSONAL)

- Do I feel unembarrassed, unashamed, not guilty, not defensive?
- Do I object to my decision being published openly?
- Am I willing to risk criticism for my decision?
- Could I justify and defend my decision to my greatest critics and "enemies?"
- Have I considered all who would be affected by the decision and given them proper priority or weight?
- Does it feel right "in my gut"--is my conscience clear?

Ethical Tests in Health Care

The background of the slide is a solid orange color. Overlaid on this background is a collection of medical-related items. In the center, there is a white cloth or paper with the letters 'EMC' printed in large, bold, black font. Below the cloth, a silver stethoscope is visible. In the bottom left corner, there is a black protective mask with two clear rectangular lenses. The overall aesthetic is professional and medical.

- What is in the patient's best interest?
- What does the patient want?
- Balance both

Resolving Ethical Dilemmas

The background of the slide is a photograph of the interior of an ambulance. The walls are a light beige color and feature the letters 'EMT' and 'EMS' in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The 'EMT' is positioned above the 'EMS'. The ambulance's interior is dimly lit, with some equipment and a steering wheel visible in the lower right corner. The overall color scheme is a warm, orange-brown hue.

- Health care community
 - Establish standards of care
 - Research/treatment protocols
 - Review decisions/educate
- Public
 - Passing laws
 - Public policy
 - Self-determination documents

Contemporary Ethical Issues

- Paramedics will face ethical issues
- These often relate to
 - Right to self-determination
 - Obligation to provide patient care
- Provider must answer:
 - What is in the patient's best interest?
 - What are the patient's rights?
 - Does the patient understand the issues at hand?
 - What is the paramedic's professional, legal, and moral accountability?

Prehospital Ethical Issues

The background of the slide is a warm, orange-toned photograph of emergency medical services (EMS) equipment. In the center, a white stethoscope is prominently displayed. To its right, a pair of black gloves is visible. In the lower-left corner, a portion of a black EMS helmet with orange accents is shown. The overall aesthetic is professional and medical.

- Allocation of Resources
- Limiting Resuscitation Efforts
- Informed Consent
- Duty to Provide Care
- Confidentially

Allocation of Resources

- Access to health insurance
 - May define which medical services are covered or excluded
- Treatment decisions made when resources are inadequate to meet needs
- When rationing of care is required, it should be based on ethically oriented criteria

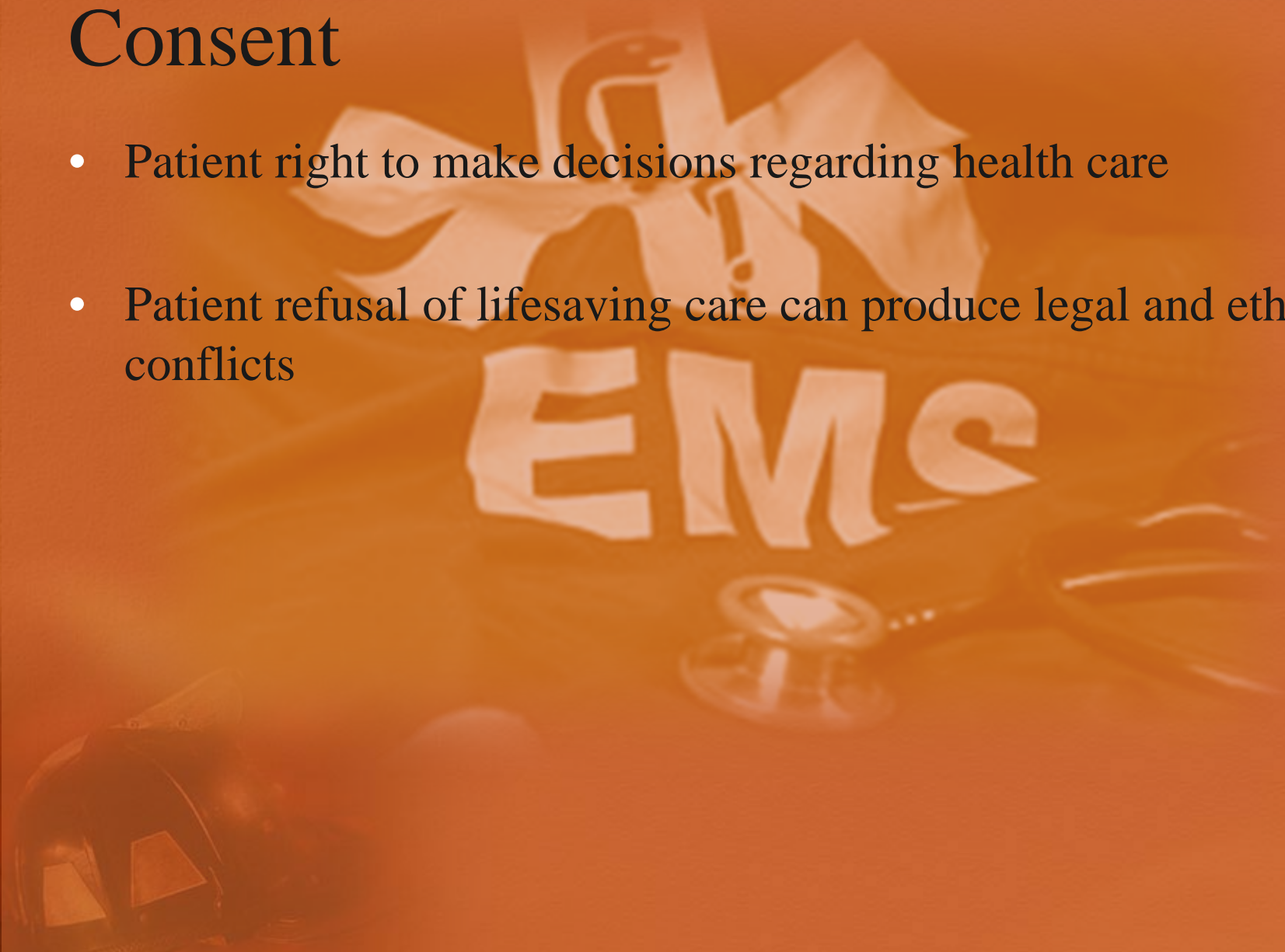
Decisions Surrounding Resuscitation



- Available documentation
 - Advance directives
 - Living wills
 - Other self-determination documents
- What does patient want?
- What does family want?

Consent

- Patient right to make decisions regarding health care
- Patient refusal of lifesaving care can produce legal and ethical conflicts



Obligation to Provide Care

- Paramedic's obligation is seldom an issue



Confidentiality

The background of the slide is a warm, orange-toned photograph of an EMS uniform. The letters 'EMS' are prominently displayed on the chest area. A stethoscope is visible around the neck area, and a portion of a helmet is seen in the bottom left corner.

- A fundamental right to privacy
- Conflict may arise between ethics and confidentiality if public health at stake

Other Ethical Principles

The background of the slide is a warm, orange-toned image. It features a white lab coat with a stethoscope draped around its neck, positioned centrally. Below the coat, the letters 'EMS' are printed in a large, bold, white font. In the lower-left corner, a portion of a black EMS helmet is visible. The overall aesthetic is professional and medical.

- Care in futile situations
- Advocacy and accountability
- Role as physician extender

Care in Futile Situations

- An action is considered *futile* if it serves no purpose or is completely ineffective
- When emergency care is being provided in situations that may be futile, consult with medical direction
- It is generally agreed that CPR is futile for patients with obvious signs of death:
 - Decapitation
 - Rigor mortis
 - Tissue decomposition
 - Extreme dependent lividity

Patient Advocacy and Paramedic Accountability

- Educate patients to effect system change
- Base decisions on medical, not financial, considerations
- Inform patients of health care reform initiatives
- Promote patient access to information about state-of-the-art technologies and treatment
- Promote fairness and equality in health care

Role as Physician Extender

- The paramedic must generally follow the orders of the medical director or the director's designee



Ethical Responsibilities

- Make patient's needs a priority.
- Maintain skills and knowledge.
- Critically review performance.
(Quality Improvement)
- Prepare honest and accurate reports.

More than Medical Care!

- Prehospital medicine has undergone impressive growth.
- The prehospital provider must frequently:
- interact and negotiate with reluctant patients;
- counsel those patients who ask for advice or refuse care;
- address requests for limitation of resuscitation;
- assume some degree of personal risk in the care of agitated, uncooperative, or infectious patients;
- deal with social and psychiatric challenges;
- and respond to a variety of unusual requests which may not be medical in nature.
- Each of these situations presents potential ethical conflicts.

The Systems Obligation!

- When an emergency medical services (EMS) system holds itself out to the community as an emergency response network, it is assuming an important ethical obligation. It has the duty to respond regardless of the patient's income or social position. Care must not be limited unfairly to any specific group or class of people.

Generations

- Is this a "me generation"?
- Do pre-hospital providers have a very different point of view coming out of school than we did 25 years ago.
- Perceptions – Clock Watchers?
- Passion?
- Our Leaders - Jim Page and others!
- What are you doing to shift the paradigm?

We Have All Been There!

- What legal/ethical issues does this situation present?
- Would the nature of the call influence your thoughts?
- Are there any strategies that you can use to help you determine the best approach to take in this situation?

Case 1

You are at your station, 2 weeks into your first paramedic job, when you notice a paramedic from another crew looking through the patient reports. He says he just wants to check out a call that your crew ran on his ex-wife.



Case 2

You arrive at the site of a single-vehicle mva. A man in his 80s was driving, his wife in the passenger seat. You assess the man as emergent and requiring transport. The man seems unconcerned about himself but keeps asking about his wife, who is dead. What do you tell him?

Case 3

An elderly man collapses in front of a local coffee house. While he is being assessed for a probable myocardial infarction, a woman runs up and says she's the man's caregiver, though she's not a family member. She has no documentation proving her claim. She demands to know the patient's condition.



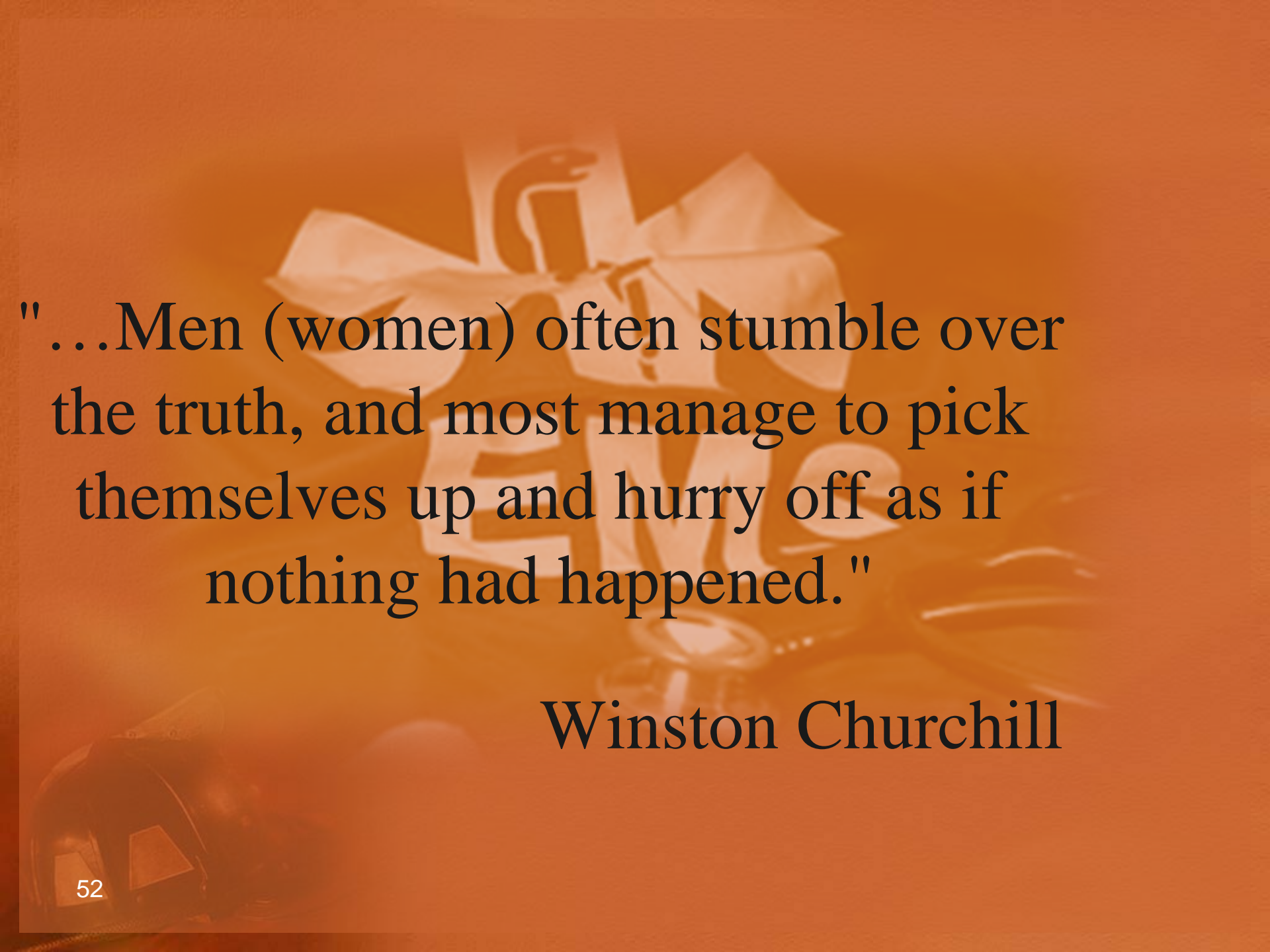
Ideals are like stars--

We never reach them.

But like mariners at sea,

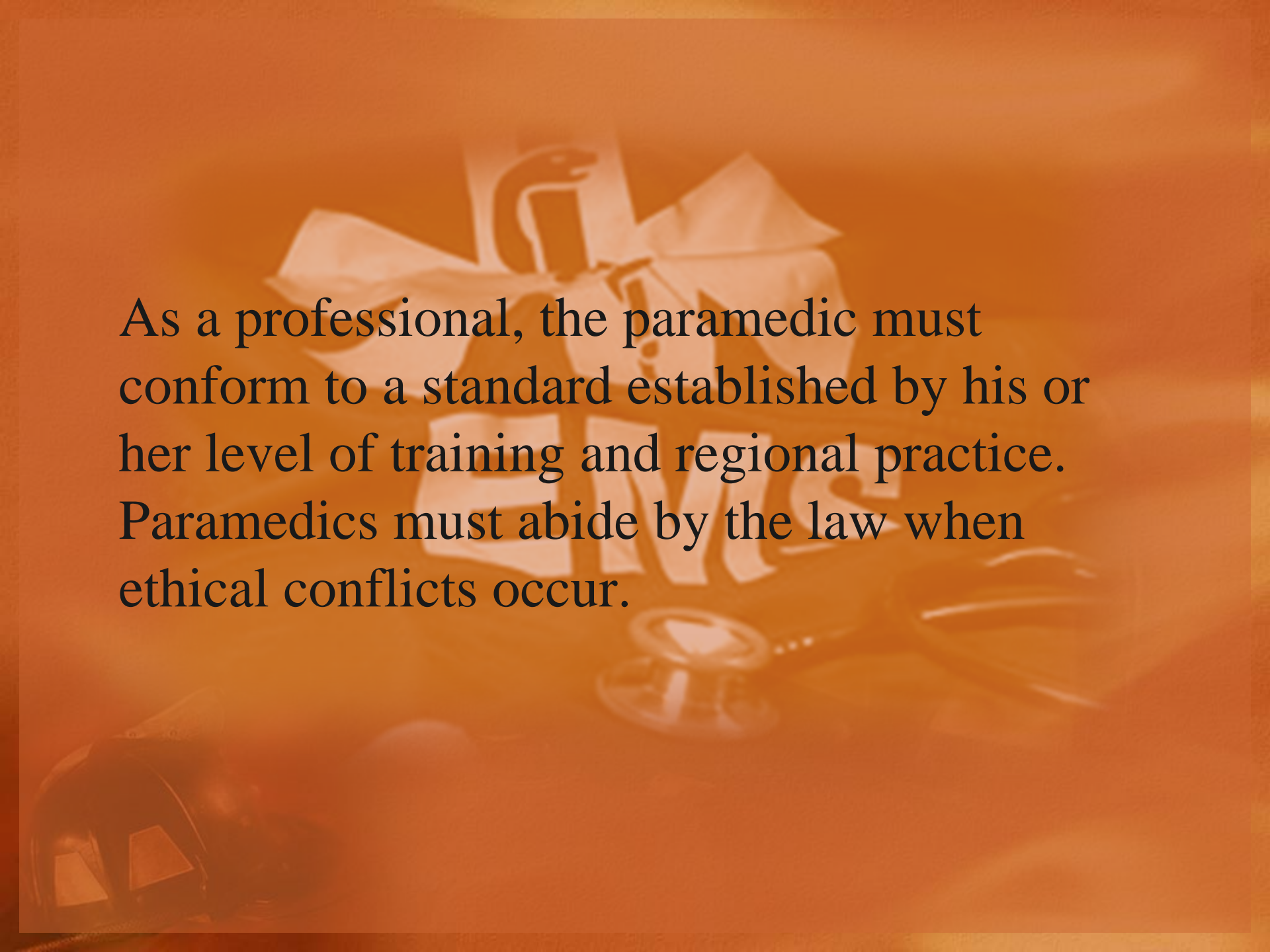
We chart our course by them.

--Author unknown



"...Men (women) often stumble over the truth, and most manage to pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing had happened."

Winston Churchill



As a professional, the paramedic must conform to a standard established by his or her level of training and regional practice. Paramedics must abide by the law when ethical conflicts occur.

EMS – What Does it Really Stand For:

- Ethical
- Moral
- Service

If each of us considers potential ethical and moral perceptions of our actions before we act, together, we will put the S (SEVICE) back in EMS.