

## Abstract

**Background:** Human flourishing is at the heart of healthcare. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle proposes virtue ethics, the idea that humans find and fulfill their purpose through flourishing. Virtue ethics posits that an individual flourishes by forming habits that promote excellence (both moral excellence and excellence in skill) while modeling people who possess the ideal traits. Virtue ethics emphasizes eudaimonia or human flourishing as embodying the highest good and an overall state of wellbeing.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this integrative literature review is to examine how virtue ethics in nursing can promote human flourishing.

**Methods:** Twenty-nine articles were reviewed for content related to virtue ethics, human flourishing, and nursing theory and practice.

**Results:** Virtue ethics may be a useful framework for providing nursing care to improve patient wellbeing.

**Implications:** Virtue ethics as a nursing framework may help the nurse to combat burnout, make ethical decisions, and provide holistic person-centered care through prudence, or practical wisdom. Different tools exist to measure human flourishing. Supporting a patients' ability to flourish can increase quality of life and improve patient outcomes while decreasing cost and length of stay.

**Keywords:** virtue ethics, flourishing, prudence, eudaimonia, holistic, nursing, and healthcare

## Research Question

What is the role of virtue ethics in the context of healthcare, particularly nursing?

## Methods

### Search terms used:

- virtue ethics, flourishing, prudence, eudaimonia, holistic, nursing, and healthcare

### Databases used:

- BioMed Central, EBSCOhost, Frontiers, Google Scholar, Ovid, ProQuest, Pub Med Central

### Inclusion criteria:

- Published in a peer-reviewed journal.
- Discusses virtue ethics, healthcare, and flourishing.
- Articles in English
- Published within past five years

### Number of articles reviewed: (Figure 1. PRISMA )

- 44 records identified
- 29 were included in the literature review
- 21 were within five years

### Level of Evidence and Quality analysis:

- Johns Hopkins Evidence-Based Practice Model for Nursing and Healthcare (JHEBP Model) Evidence Appraisal Tools (Dang et al., 2022). Permission obtained.

### Systematic Analysis:

- A constant comparative method incorporating data reduction, data display, data comparison, conclusion drawing, and verification as outlined by Whittemore & Knaf (2005).

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

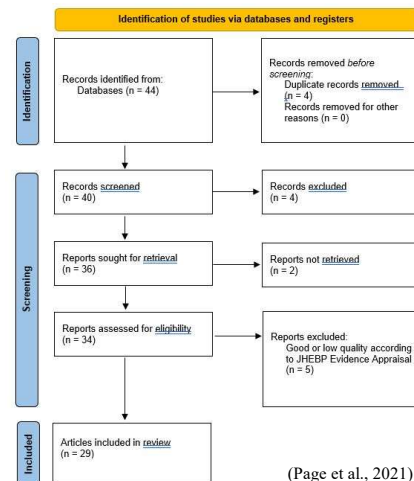


Figure 4. Florence Nightingale



(Retrieved from Library of Congress)

Figure 2. Virtue Ethics: Process of Flourishing

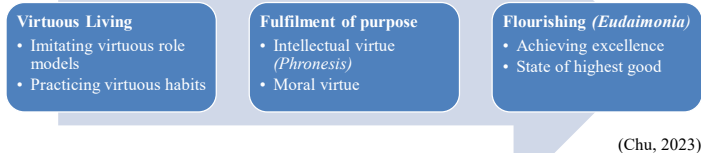
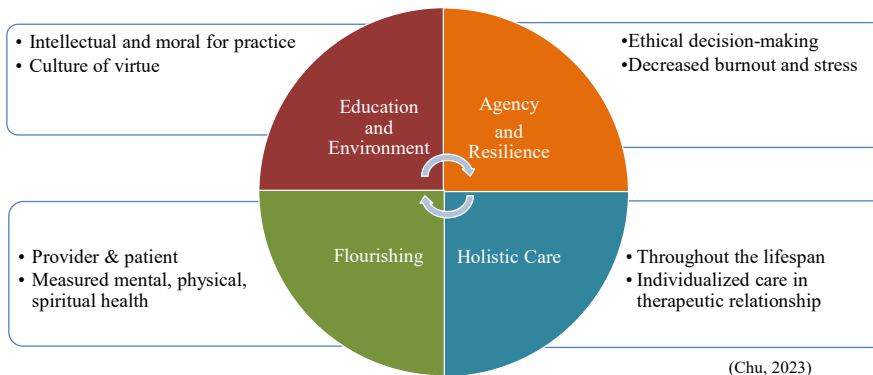


Figure 3. Framework for Virtue Ethics in Health Care



## Results & Conclusion

### Results\*

- **Flourishing can be applied to healthcare.**
  - Nursing should seek the health of the individual to foster flourishing
- **Virtue ethics can address burnout and stress.**
  - Guide ethical decision-making
  - Promote sense of moral agency
  - Support development of resilience
  - Decrease burnout and stress
- **Virtue ethics can promote holistic care.**
  - Promotes excellence in nursing practice
  - Enhancing the therapeutic relationship
  - Recognize a person's potential to flourish
  - Acknowledges the whole person, including psychosocial, emotional, cultural, spiritual, and physical wellbeing

### Conclusion

Implementing strategies that foster practice of virtue ethics will improve quality of life for healthcare workers, and patients and their families

\*See Figure 2. *Virtue Ethics: Process of Flourishing* and Figure 3. *Framework for Virtue Ethics in Health Care*

## Gaps & Future Research

### Gaps in the Literature:

- Much of the literature was theoretical in nature
- Research on virtue ethics in healthcare is scant

### Areas of Future Research

1. Explore qualities of a flourishing nurse
2. Examine correlation between flourishing nurse and patient and family outcomes
3. Identify strategies and processes for health care to promote flourishing among healthcare workers and patients
4. Investigate relationships between virtue ethics and flourishing and incivility
5. Implement virtue ethics in nursing education
6. Determine correlation between flourishing faculty and student outcomes

## References

For Complete list of References & Table of Summaries, Scan the QR Code.

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