



Evolving Medical Decision-Making in China: The Impact of Enhanced Patient Autonomy and Self-Awareness from the 1980s to Today: Opinion

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Opinion

In China, medical decision-making has undergone substantial transformation from the 1980s to the present, characterized by enhanced patient autonomy, improved legal frameworks, advancements in medical technology, and shifts in social and cultural perspectives. Self-awareness plays a pivotal role in this evolution, significantly influencing patient autonomy, ethical considerations in the decision-making process, and the implementation of personalized medicine.

Enhanced Patient Autonomy

As self-awareness has increased, patients have developed a better understanding of their physical conditions, health needs, and personal values, enabling them to express and safeguard their preferences in medical decision-making. This heightened awareness allows patients to make decisions that align more closely with their life goals, religious beliefs, and social contexts (SpringerLink).

Effective Implementation of Informed Consent

The growth in self-awareness has improved patients' capacity to comprehend medical information, allowing them to more clearly and effectively analyze relevant details and evaluate treatment options, including potential risks and benefits (AMA Ethics).

Significant Changes in Social and Cultural Perspectives and Legal Frameworks

In the 1980s, doctors were viewed as the primary authorities in medical decisions, with family opinions heavily influencing the process, particularly in rural areas or regions with strong cultural traditions. In some cases, especially in end-of-life care, family preferences could override the patient's wishes in favor of collective interests (BioMed Central). However, as self-awareness has increased, there is now greater emphasis on respecting personal autonomy and legal protections. Legal frameworks have been continuously strengthened to ensure patient autonomy, with family intervention limited to situations where the patient is unable to make decisions. Moreover, advance directives, such as living wills, have gained acceptance in China, enabling patients to specify their treatment preferences while still conscious, ensuring their wishes are honored during critical moments.

Highlighted Ethical Considerations in Decision-Making

The enhancement of self-awareness allows patients to more effectively consider their moral responsibilities and social roles in medical decision-making. Consequently, they can balance personal, familial, and societal interests, contributing to more ethically sound decisions in complex medical situations (academic.oup).

Improved Management of Emotional and Psychological Factors

With the awakening of self-awareness, patients are better equipped to manage and address emotional and psychological challenges, such as fear, anxiety, and stress, in the decision-making process. This improvement facilitates more rational and informed decision-making (AMA Ethics).

The emergence of self-awareness has significantly influenced medical decision-making. It has not only strengthened patient autonomy and improved the effectiveness of informed consent but has also advanced the development of personalized medicine. Moreover, it has enhanced the

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management of ethical and emotional factors in the decision-making process. These developments have made contemporary medical decision-making more patient-centered, aligning more closely with individual needs and ethical standards.