

Within Bill Sourour article “The Code I’m Still Ashamed of” Sourour recounts coding a quiz for a pharmaceutical company. As long as the participant did not answer if they were allergic or already taking the prescription. They would be recommended as a possible candidate for the drug. It was revealed afterwards that this drug had serious side effects including suicidal thoughts leading to the death of a female teenager. Although what was occurring was not illegal nor Sourour actions can be perceived as illegal. The fact that the quiz was manipulative with the pharmaceutical company focused more on marketing and sales, with disregarding for possible side effects that could harm consumers can be perceived as morally wrong. Responsibility for this morally wrong quiz primarily falls on the pharmaceutical’s upper management and to some extent Sourour himself. Although Sourour only programmed the quiz to what was specified by upper management, the fact that he did not speak up when it was discovered that all but two of the answers led to the product makes him complicit to a degree. In this Case analysis, with the assistance of the Ethics of Care tool in conjunction with the ACM IEEE, NSPE Code of Ethics and the work of Mary Beth Armstrong. I will demonstrate how the code created was morally inappropriate due to it’s focus on marketing, and how Sourour should have spoken up to management at the first indication that the quiz was morally questionable as opposed to remaining silent as he did.

When we examine the ACM Code of Ethics, the IEEE Code of Ethics, and the NSPE Code of Ethics. Each one of these share a common principle, to avoid harming the public or others in general. The safety of the public and everyone involved is a priority avoiding any actions that would cause harm to another may it be intentional or unintentional. Should concerns or discoveries arise that may result in harm coming to the public, they should be brought to the attention of the appropriate parties. Sourour after completing the code for the quiz was approached by the project manager with concern that the quiz was not working appropriately, although it was working to the parameters the pharmaceutical company had set. This should have been an early indication that something deceitful was occurring. Given the fact that the product was medical related, must receive extra scrutiny. This oversight could be forgiven assuming that Sourour may not know much about the product. However, a concern relating to the product was brought to his attention yet again the same day he was to meet with representatives of the pharmaceutical company. This time it was discovered that the side effects of the product led to the suicide of a young girl. This was his opportunity to raise concerns and directly ask those who tasked him with creating the quiz. Rather than do this he forced a facade and attended the dinner not mentioning his concern. It was also discovered that his own sister had been prescribed the product, which he immediately advised her against taking. Despite the multiple opportunities to raise concerns to management he failed to uphold the principle of avoiding harm towards the public. The tool he created mislead consumers and pointed them to a product with serious side effect.

When examining this main principle shared between the Codes of Ethics and Sourours inaction with the ethics of care tool. The main principle of avoiding harm is an example of how a society should care for one another. The misdirection of young women is not how a society is able to build interdependence amongst each other, a component of the ethics of care tool. As a society we must be able to depend on and care for one another. That is why each code of ethics share this main principle. The younger generation looks towards the older generation for guidance. Young females took this quiz under the assumption that the quiz would provide genuine feedback. Sourour was in a position to

influence the lives of these young women. It was obvious how troubled he was with his reaction to the news article that was brought to his attention, along with his response to finding out his sister was prescribed this same product. Yet he only spoke up with his sister, something he should have done with the representatives from the pharmaceutical company. He should have applied this ethics of care to the public when given the opportunity. By voicing his concern and showing that he cared about the welfare of the community he could have been viewed as someone dependable. Someone the community could look too to be on their side.

Understandably, there are other factors to consider such as the possibility of prior agreement to an NDA or other contract barring him from revealing information to the public. Confidentiality between not only consumers and corporations is important to uphold, but confidentiality within organizations is also just as important. In Armstrong's work, "Confidentiality: A Comparison Across the Professions of Medicine, Engineering, and Accounting" she stresses the importance of confidentiality between professionals. This is important to ensure loyalty and trust are established for instance the trust between a patient and doctor. If it was common amongst doctors to reveal personal information on patients, society would unlikely seek treatment from medical professionals due to the risk of personal information leading to the public. Armstrong does mention certain circumstances where exemptions are made in order to protect the health of others and the welfare of the general public. While confidentiality is important, ensuring that no harm occurs to anyone should take precedence and the proper parties are alerted. With this in mind, examining Sourour's situation the proper parties would have been upper management. After the discovery of the information, he found concerning and the work he had done that could possibly contribute to a risk of society, Sourour should have served the best interest of the publics welfare and spoken to the representatives and his upper management. Armstrong mentions an integral part of the AAES which discusses how employers must formally advise their clients and employers of a future or present public health risks, and if warranted seek out further help if unheard. Being a software engineer creating a quiz putting more patients at risk, Sourour should have followed the appropriate protocols to voice his concern.

With application of the care of ethics tool to Armstrong's work, in order for society to benefit from each other and obtain a mutual flourishing. We must understand there are exceptions to breaking confidentiality when it comes to the concern for the welfare of society. While we must put our trust in medical staff to keep our information private or the staff, we hire in order maintain trade secrets, we must also trust that their care for societies wellbeing, and others is more or at least just as important. I would want that employee to inform me that this company is harming the environment, or this patient is attempting to hurt another. If members of society only remained focused on themselves and not have care for anyone else, then no one would benefit except for the morally unjust. Society would be unable to advance, and we would not be able to rely on others to accomplish their tasks. When you care for something or someone else, you will take those extra lengths to ensure their wellbeing. Sourour cared for his sister and took that extra step to speak out against the product. If Sourour applied that same amount of care and brought his concern to the representatives at the dinner. The risk to society would be mitigated. This would have been reasonable and within the code for an engineer. While upholding ethics is important to any profession within the community, each respective community at the very least acknowledges exemptions to a certain degree. As for the coding of the quiz itself, the fact that the

pharmaceutical company was focused more on the advertising as opposed to the side effects can be perceived as showing little care in society. They had designed this quiz to with the intent of making profit from prescriptions going against the natural ethics of care that all medical staff participate in. For a company in the industry of providing medical goods in order to reenforce the welfare of society, they went against their own industries medical code of ethics in order to profit.

In conclusion, while the actions of the pharmaceutical company and Sourour were not illegal. We can determine that their actions are morally questionable. The pharmaceutical company had designed a quiz with deceitful results, and Sourours inaction to voice concern reenforce my belief that this situation was terribly mishandled. Sourour had the opportunity to speak to representatives to voice concern over the product and how the quiz was designed. He should have spoken up to his management and the representatives proposing a redesign or full disclosure of possible side effects when the quiz recommended the product. The company should have reevaluated the design of the quiz and not be focused on marketing the product. In fact, they should have budgeted more on research as opposed to marketing in my opinion. As mentioned before, there is no question to the concern Sourour had for the product and what he created for the company. His reaction to his sister and departure from the position show this. There may have been alternative ways he could have handled the situation as opposed to what I had suggested. However, it is clear that more should have been done. In order to society to thrive we must care for each other and have those moments to voice our concerns. Perhaps from their perspective at the time they may not have realized this and altered their actions. If everyone abstained from speaking up, we would be unable to learn from our mistakes and would not be able to have a sense of mutual flourishing. Sourour should have displayed the same amount of care he had for his sister with society.