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Cutting the Wire

In *Grey's Anatomy* (season 2 episode 27), Izzy Stephens makes the daring choice to cut her patient's LVAD wire. Her patient, Denny Duckett, was in line to receive a heart transplant but across town, there was another patient waiting for a heart. The other patient was added to the UNOS list 15 seconds before Denny. In order to receive this heart, Denny's condition would have to be worse than the other patients. After hearing this news, Izzy took matters into her own hands and made his condition worse by cutting the wire to a machine that was helping him survive. This episode revolves around a heart transplant and the processes for deciding who should receive the heart. Season 2 episode 27 of *Grey's Anatomy* poses the question: how does *Grey's Anatomy* utilize and manipulate organ procurement to create drama?

Every day people are faced with internal and external struggles. In this episode the interns are faced with deciding if they should help Izzy or save themselves. The heart in question forces each intern to either follow or reject the organ donation procedure. Throughout the show, "Perhaps more than in real life, most of the characters are involved in sexual relationships, and the interactions between interns, residents, attendings, nurses and other hospital staff are characterized by a high level of familiarity and less by professionalism" (Czarny 2). This causes countless problems in the workplace making their own lives harder and the interns' patients sicker in some cases. In this specific episode people in relationships side together when determining if Izzy was wrong for "stealing the heart". The blind trust between another person's

instincts just because you like them leads to many more concerns, “Therefore, the significant deviations from norms of professionalism may not seem as unreasonable as they would in an actual clinical setting. Bioethical issues are frequently set apart, however, and are usually recognized by the characters as an important dimension of medical care that requires attention” (Czarny 2). Izzy also interacts with the patient in a more emotional way than the other four surgical interns do. This only clouds her judgement and ultimately leads her to decide to not follow correct protocol. Some of the other interns constantly try to get Izzy to change her mind moments before she decides to cut the wire but her mind was already made up. Emotions are manipulated in this episode to exemplify the importance of the procedure in place for organ procurement.

Grey's Anatomy gives an exacerbated view of the medical field leading to an unrealistic view of organ procurement. For example, in this episode of *Grey's Anatomy* the patient, Denny Dukett, was in critical condition and only received the heart transplant he needed because his condition was worse than the other patient. As mentioned before, Denny's condition was made worse because one of the surgical interns, Izzy cut a wire helping his heart. By not realistically depicting the medical field the producers gives viewers a dishonest idea about how the hospital operates. By advertising that the simple solution for Denny to get the heart was for him to get worse was a perfect example of the inaccurate or unrealistic depictions of ethical issues and a lack of professionalism by television physicians as told by Czarny . Another insight available from viewing of the organ donation and reciprocation on television. Despite the fact the operation is not real, watching this episode could allow viewers to be concerned with the privacy of their records, considering the surgeons freely discuss Denny's case and the other patient's case with each other. Researchers do agree that there is an abundant amount of information we

can learn by watching someone else; “It is, of course, in accordance with the principles in question that surgical operations should have been presented to the viewer on the television screen” (Mathias 2). In this episode, one of the surgical interns, Izzy Stephens, cuts a wire that is keeping a man alive. Viewers watch as the patients slowly worsens so that he can receive a heart transplant. These actions were procedurally wrong and there was no supervision until the end of the dilemma. Showing a surgical intern intentionally making a patient’s condition worse creates a perfect scandal for the show.

Moral viewpoints overpowers the correct ways to give and receive organs on this episode of *Grey’s Anatomy*. Many debate that morals and ethics should take precedence over procurement regulations; “Care is superior to that of justice and those who argue that the ethics of care needs to be framed by an ethics of justice” (Stensöta 5). Just how far should morals and ethics be relied on? In Izzy’s case should she have cut his wire? Izzy made a choice based on her own feelings that could have drastically changed the outcomes for each patient in question. Who should be the judge on deciding if it was right for Denny to get the heart instead of the other patient? The other patient may have been able to use the heart instead of it going to waste due to the damage Izzy caused. The UNOS, United Network for Organ Sharing, list is in place for situations like this; however, they do not account for much other than order of who was added to the list. Some agree that “Shows demonstrate how the privilege morality and human feeling over narrow the application of the rules” (Hawes 1). With these circumstances, her actions took a heart away from another sick patient who may have lived longer if he received the heart instead of Izzy’s patients, Denny. This situation had a great impact on the student’s resident, Bailey. She struggled with teaching her students the lesson “the responsibility of teaching the small body of law and etiquette which is regarded as indispensable to the practice of medicine” (Boyd 3) after

she felt differently about what was the morally right thing to do. Shows like *Grey's Anatomy* put more emphasis on the feelings of someone than the procedures set in place. Acclaimed journalist Deshpande explains ethical behavior of coworkers, ethical optimism, and education in ethics all specifically correlate with ethical behavior of self in page 5 of his journal. Izzy's friends ended up helping her "steal the heart" because they wanted her to succeed and not get kicked out of the program. This gives the readers a better understand of why her friends helped her and what morals they chose to honor over the law and protocol in place. The compassion and help from her fellow interns adds more drama to the show.

Debates also explain how *Grey's Anatomy* accurately depicts medical scenarios, like with the other patient in this episode. Season 2 episode 27: *losing my religion* showcases some excellent doctors with the right understanding of management and morals. Staff from the other hospital, Mercy West, fight for their patient to receive the heart. When they have evidence that Denny is really worse off than their own patient they back down from the fight and assume proper UNOS regulations were in place. Within this episode the difference between the types of workers also showcases the moral implications and each staff's ability to make a sound and comprehensive decision. "Hospitals can expect those with personal skills like empathy, honesty, and self-management are more likely to make ethical decisions." (Deshpande 3). If the show has staff that have empathy, honesty, and self-management, there will be more positive ethical decisions. This is clearly exhibited by the Mercy West staff and Christina Yang. When Christiana Yang refuses to help Izzy to ensure she is not putting herself in danger of losing her spot in the program. Critic says, "No doubt, the iteration above does not exhaust other justice, policy or efficiency factors that might be relevant" (Nwabueze 2) when referring to the choice Christiana made to stay out of the situation. Nwabueze is saying that even though it may be

morally correct to perform some action it is more important to procedurally do the right thing. However, each situation is different with every person involved. In this episode, if it was another intern, the situation would be completely different. Some episodes may be more realistic than others but when looking at the entire episode (Season 2 episode 27) the majority is greatly manipulated to stir up drama.

Grey's Anatomy makes it difficult to determine if the events happening are meant to manipulate the show for drama or if the scenario is real. Some say it is simple, "because they describe a particular experience rather than general truths, they have no need to justify the accuracy of their claims." (Dahlstrom 3). There is a cost to every decision made, dramatized or not, but some are greater than others. In season 2 episode 27: *losing my religion* Izzy was in charge of making the decision, should it have been someone else? "Without a sensibility attuned to what people's lives are outside the auspices of medicine the best efforts of physicians to heal the sick are likely to be morally compromised" (McPhail 11). In season 2 episode 27 : *losing my religion* Izzy Stephens disregarded what she knew was going on around her to "steal" this heart in order for her patient Denny, who she is in love with, to receive the heart transplant. Every person understands and experiences challenging situations differently. What Izzy so easily did may not have been the same amount of ease for another intern like Alex Karev. If we analyze the situation at hand, we can determine how much of this situation was just for show.

This episode of *Grey's Anatomy* mislead today's viewers about organ procurement. Each situation is different, but should viewers put compassion and humility before rules and regulations? Izzy decides to "steal a heart" out of love but ultimately her actions didn't help her patient for long. This is one of many ways the show manipulates and utilizes the organ procurement process to formulate drama. Season 2 episode 27: *losing my religion* highlights how

dramatic the show really is. The title of the episode alone infers that this episode is a key factor into character development. This poses many questions about how the surgical interns on the show handle rules and protocol for the rest of the show in they can't follow UNOS protocol.

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