Learning curve homework assignment  Prof. Lohmann 1-6-2020

On the class website, in the section titled “Learning curve,” you will find posted Atul Gawande’s essay “The Learning Curve” (2003). On page 97, Gawande refers to an article published in the *British Medical Journal* in 2000; the *BMJ* article is posted alongside Gawande’s essay.

First, conduct an issue spotting exercise.

Print out Gawande’s essay, enter an X next to morally troublesome elements of the case, and write next to the X the ethical principle you believe has been violated: utilitarianism, rights, justice-fairness, virtue ethics, or other (the latter if you feel none of the four ethical principles is a good fit). Shoot to identify about a dozen morally troublesome elements.

 Optionally, you can look up the ethical principles online (Wikipedia, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Here are some rough definitions to get you going:

—**Utilitarianism** is about maximizing the sum of the individual happiness levels, or the aggregate welfare of the group. It is attentive to budget constraints and opportunity costs, and it accepts tradeoffs. The focus is on the consequences of an action, and not on the inherent rightness or wrongness of the action.

—**Rights** is about respecting people’s various rights: legal, contractual, moral, civic, human, and so forth. The focus is on the rightness or wrongness of an action, and not on the consequences of the action.

—**Justice-fairness** covers various kinds of justice: retributive, compensatory, distributive. It promotes the equal treatment of equals and the unequal treatment of unequals. It calls for people to be treated fairly, as determined by their abilities, needs, or merits. It rejects extreme deprivation or poverty.

—**Virtue ethics** is about doing the right thing simply because you are the kind of person who does the right thing. The focus is on the moral character of the person acting, and not on the consequences of the action. The question is not, “what should I do?” but “who am I?” or “what kind of person should I aspire to be?”
Second, use data on page 97 of Gawande’s article along with data provided in the *BMJ* article to **sketch a graph of the learning curve** that is the subject of Gawande’s essay. Handwriting is fine.

Write your name in the upper right hand corner of the essay printout and the upper right hand corner of the sheet with the handwritten graph. Hold on to these materials during class, as we discuss the learning curve, and submit them at the end of the class.