



## Centre for health Systems Research & Development

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### Nurses and the 2010 public sector strike in South Africa: some ethical considerations

#### CITATION

Janse van Rensburg A & Van Rensburg HCJ. 2013. Nurses and the 2010 public sector strike in South Africa: some ethical considerations. *Nursing Ethics*, 20(7): 819-837.

#### ABSTRACT

Several important ethical dilemmas emerge when nurses join a public-sector strike. Such industrial action is commonplace in South Africa and was most notably illustrated by a national wage negotiation in 2010. Media coverage of the proceedings suggested unethical behaviour on the part of nurses, and further exploration is merited. Laws, policies and provisional codes are meant to guide nurses' behaviour during industrial action, while ethical theories can be used to further illuminate the role of nurses in industrial action. There are, however, important aspects to consider before judging whether nurses act unethically when striking. Following Loewy's suggestion that the nature of the work, the proceeding commitment of the nurse to the patient, the prevailing situation when the strike is planned and the person(s) who stand(s) to benefit from the strike be considered, coupled with a consideration of the South African historical socio-political context, important aspects of the ethics of nurses' behaviour in industrial action transpire.