

All About Hospital Ethics Services

Session 1

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What Does an Ethics Service Do?

- Helps identify, analyze and solve ethical problems in the clinical setting
- Does not evaluate or penalize physicians, nurses or staff
- Does not make a judgment about who is a good or bad person



What Are the Services?

- Education
- Policy creation and review
- Consultation



Types of Ethics Services

- A wide range of services are often lumped under the title of “ethics committee.” These range from being minimally functional, in an attempt to meet Joint Commission requirements, to a comprehensive hospital ethics service.
- This leads to serious misunderstanding of the role and value of an ethics service by hospital administration, physicians, nurses and other health professionals.
- There is a direct relationship between the administrative commitment to an ethics service and the ethics services which should be offered.



Membership

- Who (and who should not) be on the Service?
- For how long?
- In what role?

The answers to these questions depend in part on the scope of the Ethics Service.



Administrative Support

Ethics committees are NOT ordinary hospital committees. They are a component of a comprehensive Ethics Service and entail:

- Special training for members
- Time commitment
- Expertise and skills
- Continuing education
- Etc.

Institutional Benefits

- Administration
- Physicians, nurses, social workers and staff
- Patients and families
- Risk Management
- General Counsel
- Accreditation
- Positive community regard
- Etc.



Education

- Ethics Service providers / committee members
- Ethics consultants
- Clinicians and staff
- Patients
- General public
- Others



Policy Creation and Review

- Policy “ownership”
- Frequency of review
- When a new policy is needed
- Collaboration with affected services
- Managing disagreement
- Compromise and re-review
- Institutional policies made public

Policy Examples

- DNR; perioperative DNR
- Advance Directives
- Withdrawing/
withholding
- Surrogates, proxies
- Transplant and DNC
- Abortion
- Religious accommodation
- Privacy
- COVID and allocation
- Information blocking
- Minors' access to records
- Posthumous gamete
acquisition and use
- Artificial Intelligence
- ECMO
- Genetics, genomics

Consultation

- 24/7 availability?
- Facilitation and expert consultations
- Working with guardians, surrogates, proxies and social-worker proxies
- Do health care professionals know what an ethics consultation is and how to request one?
- Consult frequency and coverage
- Charting ethics consults the EHR
- Consultant, team or committee?

Next Sessions

May 13

May 20

Please complete the evaluation.

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