

Medical Ethics is a

system of moral principles that apply values and judgments to the practice of medicine. As a scholarly discipline, medical ethics encompasses its practical application in clinical settings as well as work on its history, philosophy, theology, and sociology.



An aspiring magician as well as a top-notch surgeon, Dr. Curmbott always tried the old tablecloth trick after each operation.

Values in Medical Ethics

- Autonomy—the patient has the right to refuse or choose their treatment. (*Voluntas aegroti suprema lex*)
- Beneficence— a practitioner should act in the best interest of the patient. (*Salus aegroti suprema lex*).
- Non-maleficence— “first, do no harm” (*primum non nocere*)
- Justice— concerns the distribution of scarce health resources, the decision of who gets what treatment (fairness and equality).
- Dignity— the patient (and the person treating the patient) have the right to dignity.
- Truthfulness and honesty—the concept of informed consent has increased in importance since the historical events of the Doctors’ Trial of the Nuremberg trials and Tuskegee Syphilis Study.

Values such as these do not give answers as to how to handle a particular situation, but provide a useful framework for understanding conflicts. Born this way? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRvVFW851cU>



What is an Ethics Consult?

A process managed by the Ethics Advisory Committee (EAC) to provide the CHW community with guidance to identify and facilitate resolution of ethical issues through careful dialogue and shared decision-making. The process may deal with either specific patient care or a general educational question.

How do I request an ethics consultation?

Requests are made by calling the CHW operator at 266-2000 at any time. The operator will contact the Consult Team Leader on call. The Team Leader may also be paged directly via the on-call list under "Ethics Consultation" on the CHW Intranet.

Who can make a call?

- Any clinician, patient/family member, student, or other individual may call with a concern about an existing or potential ethical issue.
- Persons who want to remain anonymous should contact their supervisor who will act as the contact to the EAC.

What happens in an Ethics Consult?

- The Team Leader is responsible for organizing the consultation meeting. He/she will solicit assent from the attending MD and obtain consent from the patient/family if not already obtained. The Team Leader will organize a review of the medical record; gather information from the requestor, care team, and patient/family; visit at a patient's bedside; secure a 3-person on-call consult team from the EAC to attend; reserve a meeting place; and inform the patient's nurse of time and place of the meeting.
- A patient care issue requires the consent and participation of the patient/patient's family. The on-call consult team meets with the gathered persons to facilitate a discussion of the issues. If an issue remains unresolved, another similar meeting may be scheduled later to have another discussion. After the meeting, the on-call team meets to discuss, make recommendations, and document in the patient's chart.
- The consultation team reports to the entire EAC at the next monthly meeting and forwards any other suggestions from the EAC to the attending physician. Rarely, a family asks to meet with the entire EAC.

What is an Educational Consult?

Educational consults may involve the on-call team or the entire committee to address a general question. No specific identifiable patient information is discussed, and nothing is written in a patient's medical record.

What other resources are available?

Administrative Policy: Policy-Ethics-Consultations/Code of Ethics Statement, Committee: Ethics Advisory