

Assisting Teams with Ethical Issues in Patient Care: the UF Health Ethics Consult Service

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Ethics Consultants at UF

- Consultants are subset of UF Health ethics committee members
- Ethics committee:
 - Laurence Solberg, MD is Chair
 - Shands committee that provides guidance and education on ethical issues arising in patient care
 - Meet once per month (2nd Thursday)
 - Discuss past or ongoing ethics consult cases
 - Advise on hospital policy issues

UF Ethics Consultants (cont'd)

- Program in Bioethics, Law & Medical Professionalism Faculty:
 - Lauren Solberg, JD, MTS
 - William Allen, JD, MDiv
 - Ray Moseley, PhD
- Other Faculty:
 - Marie-Carmelle Elie, MD (Emergency Medicine)
 - Robert Guenther, PhD (Clinical Psychology)
 - Rohit Patel, MD (Critical Care Medicine)
 - Laurence Solberg, MD (Geriatric Medicine)

What is Ethics Consultation?

“A set of services provided by an individual or group in response to questions from patients, families, surrogates, health care providers, or other involved parties who seek to resolve uncertainty or conflict regarding value-laden concerns that emerge in health care”

Tarzian, A. J., & Force, A. C. C. U. T. (2013). Health care ethics consultation: An update on core competencies and emerging standards from the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities' Core Competencies Update Task Force. *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 13(2), 3-13.

AMA Code of Medical Ethics

10.7.1

“The goal of ethics consultation is to support informed, deliberative decision making on the part of patients, families, physicians, and the health care team. By helping to clarify ethical issues and values, facilitating discussion, and providing expertise and educational resources, ethics consultants promote respect for the values, needs, and interests of all participants...”

Ethics Consults at UF Health

- Available 24/7
- Team-based approach to helping providers resolve ethical issues in patient care
 - Some but not all ethics consults will involve a team of ethics consultants here
- Nonbillable service
- Length/extent of consultation depends on circumstances of case and needs of the team consulting the service

The Consult Process at UF

In general...

- Clarify ethical issue(s) in the case
- Gather information by reviewing the medical record, having conversations with relevant stakeholders
- Analyze and offer possible resolution – or range of options
- Note will be left in EPIC as appropriate

An Objective Approach

- Role of ethics consultant is not to find reasons to do what physician wants
- Also not the role to pressure a physician to do what the patient/family wants

Reasons for Ethics Consults

- Resolving conflict
 - E.g. among team members, between team and patient/family, between family members/patient
- Difficult patient, family, decision-maker
- Planning care
 - End of life care planning a commonly cited reason
 - Withdrawal or withholding of care questions
 - Code status
 - Advance directives

Reasons for Ethics Consults (cont'd)

- Fear, frustration, discomfort with a case
 - Concern that patient is suffering
 - Threats of legal action, worry that action will violate law or policy
 - Belief that further care is futile
- Patient autonomy issues
 - Can patient make own decisions?
 - Who is the correct decision-maker?

Swetz, K. M., Crowley, M. E., Hook, C. C., & Mueller, P. S. (2007). Report of 255 clinical ethics consultations and review of the literature. *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, 82(6), 686-691; Orlowski, J. P., Hein, S., Christensen, J. A., Meinke, R., & Sincich, T. (2006). Why doctors use or do not use ethics consultation. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 32(9), 499-503; DuVal, G., Sartorius, L., Clarridge, B., Gensler, G., & Danis, M. (2001). What triggers requests for ethics consultations?. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 27(suppl 1), i24-i29.

Benefits of Ethics Consults

- Facilitate shared decision-making
- Provide different points of view
- Helps patient's family to have outside objective review
- Helps assure patients and families that review of options has been thorough
- Facilitates communication with patients/families
 - Also facilitates communication among health care team members

Please Note

- Ethics consult service does not provide capacity evaluations
 - Consult Psychiatry, Clinical Psychology, Geriatrics, Palliative Care or other appropriate service (or perform evaluations on own)
- Ethics consult service does not provide legal opinions
 - But we sometimes work with legal services (Shands and UF) on consults

Request An Ethics Consult

- 24/7: check Spok for on call consultant
 - Call the listed phone number for on-call consultant or send Spok text message
- Call 352-273-5155 during business hours (BLMP main number)
- Anyone can call for an ethics consult
- Consults available for inpatient, outpatient care
- Physician's order not required but you can place order in EPIC
 - Instructions in EPIC are to follow up order with phone call