

Steps for Resolving Ethical Dilemmas:

YOU - As a rational person with the capacity for moral agency, Ethics is everyone's responsibility.

OBSERVE

1. Identify the Problem:

Name the problem clearly. Where is the conflict?

2. Acknowledge Feelings:

What are the "gut" reactions? Biases? Loyalties?

3. Gather the Facts:

What are the ethically relevant facts?

Have all the relevant perspectives been obtained?

What do the institution's policies or guidelines say?

Consider biomedical factors:

- Diagnosis / Prognosis
- Quality of life
- Patient / SDM wishes
- Contextual features such as religion, culture, relationships.

Consider organizational factors:

- Governance and partnerships
- Resource allocation and revenue sources
- Conscious Objections
- Employer / employee relationships
- Conflict of interest
- Whistleblowing
- Care Provider abuse

DELIBERATE

4. Consider Alternatives

What are the alternative courses of action?

What are the likely consequences?

5. Examine Values

What are the preferences of the person receiving care?

Are other values relevant?

Which of the values conflict?

6. Evaluate Alternatives

Identify appropriate decision makers.

Rank all relevant values as they relate to the values of the St. Joseph's Health Care System and the Catholic Health Association of Canada's Health Ethic's Guide.

Ground ethical values in the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice.

Justify the ranking of alternatives using the following principles:

1. Principle of totality – a holistic perspective of the human person
2. Principle of double effect – cannot intentionally desire to cause harm in order to do good. The benefits must be equal to or greater than the burden of harm.
3. Principle of legitimate cooperation – cannot intend to cooperate with immoral acts
4. Principle of subsidiarity – decisions should be taken as close to the grass roots as possible
5. Principle of informed choice
6. Principle of confidentiality

ACT

7. Articulate the Decision

Which alternative best reflects the ranking of values?

Which alternative best balances more of the values?

Have any other alternatives come to light?

8. Implement the Plan

How should the decision be communicated?

Who needs to know it?

How best to document?

Who needs to act?

9. Concluding Review

What are the feelings of those involved?

Did we resolve the ethical dilemma?

Were other ethical problems created in the process?

Do we need to debrief with care providers?

Would it be helpful to modify and/or create new policies or guidelines?