

Ethics Committee Report

ST. JOSEPH'S GENERAL HOSPITAL

Committee:	Ethics
Chair:	Joan James, Board
Committee Members:	Cynthia Davies, Board Michael Pontus, Board Ron Philip, Board Barb Kinnon, Staff Gordon Carter, Staff Anne Roberts, Staff Barb Fehlau, MD Don Fockler, MD Deb Theriault, Staff Doug Anderson, MD Gabrielle Wolfe, Staff Janet Fletcher, Staff Jonathan Reggler, MD

The Ethics Committee has had a productive year. To raise the profile of ethical discussions and to more accurately reflect his role with the Committee, Gordon Carter's official title was changed to "Director of Pastoral Care, Mission and Medical Ethics." His efforts to engage staff more deliberately in ethical reflection have been commendable.

Many meetings focused on ethical issues arising from case studies brought forward by doctors and staff. Some examples were:

- family wishes vs medical advice: supporting doctors and staff in a difficult situation
- resource allocation and human dignity regarding MRSA positive Alternate Level of Care patients who are isolated in acute care
- confidentiality and autonomy of teenage patients vs the parents' right to be informed
- shortage of family physicians, difficulty in changing physicians, responsibility toward a dismissed patient
- patient autonomy vs our responsibility to care for their well-being and the autonomy of the caregiver
- medical paternalism; full disclosure of errors vs the patient's best interest
- a patient's refusal to eat.

Feedback to the committee indicated that the discussions were helpful and the people involved felt supported. Several recommendations were made and have resulted in some positive outcomes.

Reports from committee members who attended various ethics conferences were appreciated. Dr. Don Fockler reported on "The Role of the Ethics Committee." Gordon, Toby and Joan reported on "Clinical Ethics Consultation Process."

Several video-link conferences were available at our hospital and open to the staff and public. Numerous articles of interest were circulated and some were discussed in detail, including: Death of an Infant, Review of Legislation Regarding Substitute Decision Makers, Principles of Biomedical Ethics and Flu Vaccinations.

Other work of the Committee included updating The Organ Donation Policy and Procedure document. The following research proposals were reviewed and found to be ethically sound:

- BC Reproductive Care Program Perinatal Database Registry collection of baseline data on health issues in pregnant women
- Canadian Institute for Health Information's reabstraction study to evaluate the quality of acute care data contained in the Discharge Abstract database for fiscal year 2005-2006
- Progress Report and renewal of BC Cancer Agency's project "Can Telehealth Offer Practical Alternatives to the Delivery of Health Care Services"

As is usual there were several changes to the membership of the Committee. Barb Kinnon and Cynthia Davies were welcome additions, but we were sorry to lose the faithful participation of Toby Krell and Lisa Murphy.

I would like to thank all those who brought ethical concerns to the committee and all the committee members who contributed so willingly to the thoughtful discussions.

A special thank you to Gordon Carter, who continuously strives to make the Ethics Committee more accessible and relevant. His dedication is greatly appreciated. Thank you also to Corrie Marles for her faithful work as recording secretary.

Respectfully submitted,



Joan James
Chair