



Theme Café Discussion Summaries

Conference participants were invited to join a small group of participants in a discussion around a topic they had pre-selected. A short article was provided to participants as optional pre-reading, in order to provide a general introduction to the selected topic and to help provide context for the discussion. Each table designated someone to take notes of their discussion, which were collected at the end of the session and summarized here.

Please note that these are the views of conference participants and not necessarily those of the Provincial Health Ethics Network.

Environmental Ethics

Article Provided

Environmental Ethics. (2002). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environment>

Identify one or two of the main ethical issues that arise from the reading or from your knowledge of the area

- Water resources are diminishing, especially with the increase of water privatization
- Global warming
- Land use- industry causes pollution, putting farmers out of business

Of the issues you identified, which is the one of most concern and why?

- These issues are inter-dependent and it is very difficult to separate them two to determine which one is most important

What makes the issue you identified an ethical issue, as opposed to, for example, only a political or economic one?

- Land and water are partially controlled by political and economic factors. Distribution of resources becomes ethical

Are these issues being adequately addressed in the field of health ethics, and/or in society? If not, why not?

- No

What do you think we can do as a society to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Lobby government
- Lower our material expectations- less consumerism

- Educate the population as Al Gore and David Suzuki do
- Recycle
- Think green- low energy appliances, etc.
- Support groups that advocate for the environment

What do you think you can do individually to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- See above

Ethics & Animals

Article Provided

Animal Rights. Wikipedia.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal-rights>

Identify one or two of the main ethical issues that arise from the reading or from your knowledge of the area.

- Should animals be treated as moral beings?
- How do you assign rights to animals?
- How does an ethical person treat animals?

Of the issues you identified, which is the one of most concern and why?

- In North America, people spend more on animals and pets than helping the poor

Are these issues being adequately addressed in the field of health ethics, and/or in society?

If not, why not?

- Only perhaps in the area of animal research

What do you think we can do as a society to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Better transparency with animal research
- More education and awareness

Ethics & Disability

Article Provided

Bioethics and Disability: Making Assumptions Explicit. (2001). Gregor Wolbring, Health Ethics Today.

<http://www.phen.ab.ca/materials/het/het12-01h.asp>

Identify one or two of the main ethical issues that arise from the reading or from your knowledge of the area.

- Genetic model of disabilities- prediction of quality of life, implications for insurance, privacy & confidentiality
- The definition of a disability, a disease and quality of life- who makes this definition?
- Often disabled person are not involved in the decision making process
- End of life choices as personal vs. medical vs. political
- Equal access to medical interventions
- Dehumanization of people with disabilities

Of the issues you identified, which is the one of most concern and why?

- Money as a driving force for testing, insurance, access and tax options rather than needs
- Quality of life definitions
- Who decides what is “normal”?
- How do we treat those who deviate from the definition of normal?
- Contradiction between telling kids to be themselves yet trying to fix the disabled

What makes the issue you identified and ethical issue, as opposed to, for example, only a political or economic one?

- Equality of access and opportunity
- Should expense be a factor?
- Rationing of care
- We are making choices for others without their input - we seem to think we can handle things better than our loved ones

Are these issues being adequately addressed in the field of health ethics, and /or in society? If not, why not?

- Must bring awareness of ethical decision-making into field of practice, i.e. nursing, therapists etc.
- Must bring awareness of disability and ethics to the public
- There is more awareness about these issues than in the past
- Physicians are now learning that they are part of a health care team
- The internet has helped patients to ask questions about their care
- Ethical issues related to visible disabilities might not be addressed as those that are being impacted by these issues and related policies are seldom part of the decision-making process
- It seems easier for people to deal with a visible disability rather than an invisible disability, i.e. mental illness

What do you think we can do as a society to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Stop teaching ethical decision making models- every decision should be ethical
- Make disability less of a taboo
- Be less politically correct
- Be open with our kids
- Allow society to talk about disability issues

What do you think you can do individually to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Patient advocacy

- Taking what we learned here at the conference and talking about it in the workplace

Ethics & Marginalized Populations

Article Provided

Ethics and the Stigma of Mental Illness. (2000). Wendy Austin, In Touch.
<http://www.phen.ab.ca/materials/intouch/vol2/intouch2-12.html>

Identify one or two of the main ethical issues that arise from the reading or from your knowledge of the area.

- Marginalized people are excluded from opportunities because of limited choices
- Insufficient resources to assist these populations- i.e. money and time
- Labels and stigmas prevent people from accessing help (often health care professionals are the sources of stigmatization)
- Paternalism among health care professionals
- Cultural differences not considered in diagnosis
- Lack of education about the issues leads society to maintain dysfunctional, unfair reactions to marginalized population

Of the issues you identified, which is the one of most concern and why?

- Judgment of populations which leads to stigma and a lack of funding
- Disrespect and disenfranchisement creates multiple barriers to access and delivery of quality care
- Discrimination and misinformation about populations
- Reactive care rather than preventative care
- Fear, ignorance, prejudice

What makes the issue you identified and ethical issue, as opposed to, for example, only a political or economic one?

- Emphasis on elements of relationships, trust, communication, understanding, responding to spoken and unspoken needs
- Paternalistic way of treating marginalized patients leads to a loss of autonomy and voice.
- There is a huge mistrust of healthcare professional by mentally ill and homeless people
- Language used when discussing people from marginalized populations
- People need to develop awareness through the experience of relationships with these populations

Are these issues being adequately addressed in the field of health ethics, and/or in society?

If not, why not?

- Problem of prioritizing and resource allocation due to the lack of funding for programmes to serve these populations
- Insufficient research
- Lack of basic community support and basic needs such as food and housing
- The problem is much broader than health ethics
- There has been improvement but there is room for improvement

What do you think we can do as a society to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Bring in lay people and marginalized people into ethics committees
- We need to broaden our mindset when developing relationships with marginalized people
- Exposure in media- profile people living in community and contributing to society who have mental illness
- Support families and advocates
- Raise public awareness, public concern, increase public education
- Increase resources

What do you think you can do individually to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Be respectful and make conscious choices when using everyday language

Ethics & Population Health

Article Provided

Priority-Setting Ethics in Public Health. (2002). Annie P. Michaelis, Journal of Public Health Policy. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4020/is_200201/ai_n9036503/pg_1

Identify one or two of the main ethical issues that arise from the reading or from your knowledge of the area.

- There is a lack of ethical framework in this area
- Population health decision-making compared to individual clinical decision making
- Inclination to make value judgments- need to be more objective and less simplistic
- Complexities of multiculturalism
- Inappropriate funding for population health programmes
- Inequality vs. equality
- Autonomy vs. paternalism
- Ethical issues related to sexuality and health
- Ethical issues related to community social work

Of the issues you identified, which is the one of most concern and why?

- Standardization vs. substantive approach
- Equality
- Epidemics / immunization
- Difficult resource allocation decisions
- Lack of a framework or model for population-level ethical decision-making – existing models fall short when applied to a group as opposed to an individual - especially a diverse population

What makes the issue you identified and ethical issue, as opposed to, for example, only a political or economic one?

- These are worth-based decisions

- Trying to answer what is right or wrong from many perspectives and then making the best decision based on values held within the population
- Values underlying crisis vs. prevention
- Politics consists of ethical decisions whether or not you agree with them
- We do not recognize ethical, political and economic issues as separable

**Are these issues being adequately addressed in the field of health ethics, and/or in society?
If not, why not?**

- There is a need for paradigm shift away from individual/ acute care toward a focus on health care at the population level beyond hospital walls
- The issues are strongly influenced by social and political structures
- Shortage of medical professionals

What do you think we can do as a society to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Elect new parties to provincial and federal government
- Educate the public about health choices and decisions
- Invoke more citizen participation in decision-making
- Encourage recognition of social responsibility and role in constructing health of others
- More effective use of resources- for example, school health education- provide teachers with resources
- Encourage the media to include more stories about population health ethics issues
- Mandatory education about population health ethics at the clinical field
- Increase focus on population health within field of health ethics

What do you think you can do individually to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Work with the media to include more stories about population health ethics issues
- Get involved with school health education
- Value the informed understanding at the broader level (society) as opposed to specific (individual) often sensationalized cases
- Role modeling
- More attention on healthy living than dealing with resource allocation issues (i.e. educating about the importance of exercise and healthy food choices starting in elementary school)
- Read, research, study information on public health and ethical decision-making

Global Ethics

Article Provided

Move by Indonesia May Force Solution to Vaccine Sharing Inequities. Helen Branswell, Canadian Press, CBC Online.

<http://www.cbc.ca/cp/health/070211/x021111A.html>

Identify one or two of the main ethical issues that arise from the reading or from your knowledge of the area

- Cost of pharmaceuticals is increasing to make profit, jeopardizing the accessibility of health care especially in developing countries
- Disappointing treatments HIV
- Differences between the rich and the poor, the "haves" and "have-nots" - economic inequality
- Brain drain of health care professionals- from developing countries to developed countries
- Inequality of access to health services
- Abuse of positions of power

Of the issues you identified, which is the one of most concern and why?

- Pharmaceutical costs
- Clinical trials in developing countries

What makes the issue you identified an ethical issue, as opposed to, for example, only a political or economic one?

- Treatment vs. prevention
- Fair treatment to all patients

Are these issues being adequately addressed in the field of health ethics, and/or in society?

If not, why not?

- No. Health care is being treated as an investment in many countries such as Australia
- There is awareness, but not enough action.
- It is not in forefront of media.
- There is a disconnection between Western societies and developing countries.

What do you think we can do as a society to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Awareness, lobbying
- Engage youth to assume civic/ social responsibility

What do you think you can do individually to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Talk, talk, talk! Dialogue is very important
- Change the world one person at a time; find your passion, work on it and spread the word.
- Acknowledge that results do not/ may not happen immediately

Impacting Change Through Dialogue in Health Ethics

Article Provided

Featured Dialogue & Deliberation Models and Techniques. The Learning Exchange.
http://www.thataway.org/exchange/categories.php?cid=105&hot_topic_id=1

Do you feel that there is a need for greater dialogue around ethics? Why or why not?

- Ethics is a broad topic and we do not realize that it has a big impact on us at all times
- Ethics are discussed in institutions but not in the community
- Ethics can be a means of bringing people closer together through listening, understanding and exploring
- Must try to avoid being only reactive, dealing with issues at the moment- rather, we should try to find time to think through the issues in advance

What do you feel that you could do (as an individual or part of an organization) to engage others more and to promote more meaningful discussions? Please be specific if you can.

- Give everyone a chance to express themselves
- Give power to people at the bottom
- Take complex issues and simplify them to make them more accessible to the community
- Give people ownership to act on their ideas
- Include ethics within the elementary school curriculum
- Increase education and awareness of the ethics infrastructure and resources
- Better use the resources we have, i.e. share them with other ethics committees as well to the wider community
- Talk about broader aspects of care and their impact on the patient and family

Choose three methods from the list in the article provided and suggest in what setting/circumstance you could see each of these being used.

- Dynamic facilitation- following heart rather than pre-existing agenda to follow issues
- Civic reflection- preparing for a crisis or pandemic. We often set ethics aside when in crisis mode; we need to develop relationships in order to have the necessary discussions. Our plan around treatment might be different in crisis situation.
- Targeting small groups within the community and asking for their needs. For instance: cleaning your neighborhood; senior walking groups; children activities; cultural differences- connect them with others in their neighborhood

Most of the techniques listed speak of the need for a more inclusive, empathic and collaborative approach to discussing controversial issues. What are the barriers to holding such open and understanding discussion?

- Getting people to speak up when they have something to say
- Reaching out to those who would not be otherwise heard
- A decreased sense of community
- Fear of silence
- Majority of the people within this field come with their title/ authority

How can we overcome such barriers and facilitate change?

- Leadership
- How does it lead to change? What kind of change? How does it lead to action?
- Need include the people who can make change
- Need to develop courage to speak out when seeing unethical practices

Organizational Ethics

Article Provided

It's a Business Decision. (2003). The Park Ridge Center for Health, Faith and Ethics.
http://www.parkridgecenter.org/ethics_october03.html

Identify one or two of the main ethical issues that arise from the reading or from your knowledge of the area.

- Resource allocation
- Private health care vs. public health care system
- Corporate social responsibility
- Making decisions based on mission statement

Of the issues you identified, which is the one of most concern and why?

- Debate over what ethical decision-making framework to use
- Resource allocation, since it affects and impacts a community's overall health

What makes the issue you identified and ethical issue, as opposed to, for example, only a political or economic one?

- It is both an ethical and an economic issue
- Do you have the right to decline certain patients?

Are these issues being adequately addressed in the field of health ethics, and/or in society? If not, why not?

- No- look at large influx of for-profit organizations into healthcare

What do you think we can do as a society to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- It is important to provide charitable services which is mandated by the government
- Make values of the organization clear and operate with them in mind
- Raise awareness of the issues and the impact to those affected when decisions are made on their behalf

What do you think you can do individually to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Get involved in dialogue with groups who support a similar cause

Relational Ethics

Article Provided

Relational Ethics/ Care Ethics. The Values Divide.
<http://www.thevaluesdivide.com/blog/WebPages/RelationalEthics.html>

Identify one or two of the main ethical issues that arise from the reading or from your knowledge of the area

- The need to explore the context of the ethical relationship between the health professional and clients/ families
- Relationships are an integral part of patient care
- Relational ethics has no global outlook
- The need to look at problems from different perspectives

Of the issues you identified, which is the one of the most concern and why?

- Global health - how can we aid developing countries if it means a reduction in care at home? Is this ethical?
- The importance of care and empathy to others regardless of who they are

What makes the issue you identified an ethical issue, as opposed to, for example, only a political or economic one?

- Relational ethics exists not only in clinical situations but also in organizational ethics, policies making, administration etc.
- It challenges people to conceptualize ethics

Are these issues being adequately addressed in the field of health ethics, and/ or in society? If not, why not?

- Our society focuses putting self above the other

What do you think you can do individually to encourage more constructive dialogue and action around this issue?

- Focus on broader relationships to explore needs
- Relational ethics needs to be complemented by other ethical frameworks within the health care profession