

PERSPECTIVES

Centre for Clinical Ethics
Community Report 2021 - 2022

 **UNITY HEALTH**
TORONTO

cce Centre for
Clinical Ethics



Contents

- 2 Michael's Message
- 4 Guiding Principles
- 6 Our 2020 - 2022 Strategic Objectives
- 8 Raising the Bar in Clinical Ethics
Fellowships in Canada
- 10 Changing Perspectives on Seniors' Care
- 12 What Does a Clinical Ethicist Do?
- 14 A Patient Partner's Perspective on Ethical Care
- 16 Measuring Impact
- 18 Perspectives From Our Partners

Michael's Message

Ethicists generally work in the background, supporting ethical decision-making at the patient and organizational levels. While we are fortunate to have an ethics team at Unity Health and our partner organizations, we are not a resource that everyone knows about. Part of the goal of this community report is to raise awareness about our impact and the resources we provide.

Reflecting on this second year of the pandemic, we succeeded in providing support for COVID-related activities in addition to managing increased consult volumes. As an example of the many pandemic committees and policies we were involved with, many staff Ethicists were members of visitation appeals committees. During most of the pandemic, restrictions were placed on visitation at healthcare institutions. These committees heard appeals from individuals who did not meet the visitation criteria to determine whether an exception should be made. We had to juggle these responsibilities in addition to increasingly complicated clinical ethics cases. While it is difficult to quantify ethical complexity or its root causes, it is not hard to imagine how the disruption in the healthcare system caused by the pandemic is at least partially responsible.

Despite all the challenges this year, we kept building the resources and capacity that is required to meet the needs of all our partner institutions. Staffing is one key resource, and we are excited to have

added two new staff ethicists to our team. Juhee Makkar and Alexandra Campbell were recently hired after they successfully completed an 18-month fellowship in clinical ethics at Unity Health Toronto and the University of Toronto. We also added a new partner and will be providing ethics support to all 10 long term care homes operated by the City of Toronto. This expands our footprint in post-acute and community care, an area with a lot of ethical complexity but historically with fewer resources.

Last year we launched our 3-year strategic plan and we made significant progress on our key priorities. Below are a few of our accomplishments, some of which you can read about in this report:

- We have strengthened our partnerships by adding new sites such as the City of Toronto long term care homes. In addition, we have been able to augment the amount of service we provide to several of our existing partners.
- Our Fellowship program is now a two-year program academically administered by the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Toronto. In addition, we are in conversation with several hospitals in the Greater Toronto Area who are interested in being rotation sites for Fellows.

- We engaged with our community by developing brochures for patients, families, and members of the community on common ethical issues we encounter. These included [informed consent](#), [capacity for treatment](#), and [substitute decision-making](#). This information was put together in collaboration with our Patient and Family Partners and the Department of Patient and Family Education at Unity Health and available through [Unity Health's Online Health Library](#).

- Finally, we disseminated knowledge through grand rounds presentations made available to all partner sites and through hosting a well-attended speaker series on Ethical Issues In Caring for Older Adults.

As we turn our attention to next year, we will be refreshing our strategic plan. Planning for the future will help us to continue to provide a high-quality ethics service for all our partners.

Please stay well,



We have made significant progress on our key priorities.

Michael Szego, PhD, MHSc
Senior Director, Centre for Clinical Ethics & Vice Chair,
Research Ethics Board, Unity Health Toronto

Assistant Professor, Departments
of Family and Community Medicine,
Molecular Genetics and
The Dalla Lana School of Public Health,
University of Toronto

michael.szego@unityhealth.to





“I’ve had the great pleasure of working and collaborating with many members of the Centre for Clinical Ethics. I leave every interaction feeling heard, well-supported, and empowered to provide the best care for my patients. What I value the most with our collaboration is that they not only assist with particular cases, but will review the fundamentals of ethics (principles, laws, acts) in the context of how they approach a particular case and are transparent on how they arrived at their advice and support. I find this extra teaching step invaluable, as it builds ethics capacity in myself, and I feel confident in pursuing future ethical situations with the refreshed fundamentals provided to me by their team.”

Jen Hopfner, MD CCFP (PC)

Division Head of Palliative Care, St. Joseph’s Health Centre, Unity Health Toronto

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the sacred land on which Unity Health Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. The territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still the home of many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory. We are also mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.

Guiding Principles

Our guiding principles are grounded in our Catholic tradition and values.

Human dignity

Respect the sacred value of each person.

Inclusivity

Care for all who need us.

Partnership

Collaborate with patients, families, caregivers, communities, healthcare providers, learners and leaders.

Trust

Foster and develop relationships of trust.

Reflective leadership

Bring creativity and innovation to healthcare settings and the field of bioethics.

Our 2020 - 2022 Strategic Objectives & Priorities

Objective

Integrate into our healthcare environment to grow our impact



Priorities

- 1. We will strengthen relationships with our partners.
- 2. We will be proactive in supporting organizations and decision-makers in ethical decision-making.
- 3. We will invest in our team members to support their continued growth and development.

Objective

Enhance patient care and ethical decision-making through education and scholarship



Priorities

- 1. We will engage in collaborative research to shape policy and continuously improve our offerings.
- 2. We will disseminate knowledge and best practices through an active presence in the academic community.
- 3. We will advance our fellowship education model to provide differentiated learning experiences.

Objective

Raise awareness and broaden understanding of the role of ethics in healthcare



Priorities

- 1. We will collect and share our stories with our community including patients, families, caregivers, and leaders.
- 2. We will engage with our community to disseminate information to help build their own awareness about the role of clinical ethics.



We continue to focus our efforts on advancing the following objectives and priorities for our team. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we noted that our objectives and priorities continued to be on point for what our partners want and need from us and what we expect from ourselves. We noted areas that needed strengthening for our team such as improving our measurable commitment to diversity and inclusion. While we approach all our work with openness, we believe we can and will do better. This will be an area of renewed focus for us as we enter our new fiscal year.

“The ethics service has been tremendously valuable to both the dialysis and transplant units. As a social worker, I frequently consult them for a wide range of challenging cases. I feel that it is a total privilege to have access to a team of individuals that can help us break down ethically complex cases, counsel our staff on moral distress, and offer direct support to our patients. Their team is thoughtful, intellectual, and hugely impactful considering the nature of our work.”

Courtney Sas, MSW, RSW, MBE
Social Worker, Renal Program
Unity Health

Raising the Bar in Clinical Ethics Fellowships in Canada

In 2021, Unity Health’s Centre for Clinical Ethics (CCE) Fellowship Program marked a major achievement as it was recognized for the work it does in advancing ethics training and leadership in Canada.

Our program became Canada’s first university-sanctioned Clinical Ethics Fellowship Program through the University of Toronto’s Department of Family and Community Medicine. “This recognition is very significant to us because it distinguishes the CCE as a national leader in clinical ethics training,” says Dave Langlois, PhD Clinical Ethicist and Director, Fellowship Program. “To our knowledge, we have become the first program in the country whose trainees are University-appointed postgraduate Fellows and now our Fellows have academic affiliation with the University.”

Over the past two decades, the CCE’s program has graduated over a dozen Fellows who have gone on to do work in clinical ethics across the country and around the world. According to CCE

Senior Director and Clinical Ethicist, Michael Szego, PhD, “For years the program has been attracting candidates from across the US and Canada. They come to us to get experience working in a variety of healthcare settings and with a vast array of stakeholders including clinicians, families, patients, caregivers.”

Jeremy Butler, former Unity Health CCE PhD Fellow of 2019-21, is now a Clinical Ethicist at Providence Care, Kingston. He was very pleased to hear the news of the affiliation. He knows that this only strengthens the great work the CCE already does. “When you’re working with Unity Health’s CCE team as a Fellow, you’re not just working in one place with one ethicist. You get the chance to work with different team members with different backgrounds, in different settings, so you learn different perspectives.”

As part of the fellowship program, ethics trainees will teach ethics to family medicine residents. The program currently

has two Fellows. Recent Fellow, Alexandra Campbell, JD, says, “It has been wonderful, as part of my Fellowship, to collaborate with the University of Toronto Family Medicine program and support the ethics education of family medicine residents at Sunnybrook. The train-the-trainer model of teaching has allowed me excellent exposure to curriculum development, and I hope that I have been able to help the instructors feel confident in their mastery of the course content.” The University’s Department of Family and Community Medicine will continue to have Ethicists and Ethics Fellows teach clinical ethics in their program.

This recognition represents a very important step forward for the program. It underscores the great work that has been done for years while setting the stage for the future. The University affiliation will help the CCE to continue to develop a rigorous, world-class program that will attract and graduate exceptional Ethicists.

Canada’s first university-sanctioned Clinical Ethics Fellowship Program



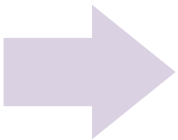
Dave Langlois, MA, PhD
Clinical Ethicist, Fellowship Director



Alexandra Campbell, JD, LLM, MHSc
Clinical Ethicist and Recent Fellow

Juhee Makkar, JD, MHSc
Clinical Ethicist and Recent Fellow

TOP Four Ethical Issues for 2021



Substitute Decision Making (SDM)



Discharge Planning



Concerns about the appropriateness of a patient’s treatment plan



Concerns about a patient or a Substitute Decision Maker’s capacity for decision making

Changing Perspectives on Seniors' Care

In Canada, almost one in five Canadians are now aged 65 or older, according to Statistics Canada. The pandemic impacted this population particularly hard, creating a sense of urgency around addressing long-established gaps impacting their care, housing, and mental health.

In November 2021, the Centre for Clinical Ethics (CCE) at Unity Health Toronto hosted a conference titled Ethical Issues in Caring for Older Adults. The conference included a speaker series with lectures and a panel discussion, which included the voices of clinicians, patients, and columnist André Picard of *The Globe and Mail*.

The goal of the virtual conference, the second of its kind for the CCE, was to raise awareness of the ethical challenges facing Canada's seniors. The speakers offered solutions on how to engage older adults

and caregivers in research about aging, information on models of senior-centred care delivered in other jurisdictions and learnings from the pandemic. The series grew from its first year, with over 400 people in virtual attendance from across the province in 2021.

Much of this advanced theory of seniors' medicine is already in practice at Unity Health's Providence Healthcare, a hospital with a long term care home with 288 beds. Melissa Morey-Hollis, Vice-President of Clinical Programs at Providence, and Dr. Ashley Verduyn, Chief and Director of Medical Affairs at Providence, offered insights on their work to improve eldercare.

"We want people to have a good quality of life whether they access care here or in their own homes. We offer both in-patient and at home solutions," said Dr. Verduyn.

She added that seniors prefer to age at home and continue to live their best lives with grace and dignity.

Morey-Hollis said that they believe in partnerships in care with patients, family members and others in the health system to better serve the needs of seniors. Both noted that they rely on their ethics partner, Dave Langlois, to help guide difficult conversations about respect for those aging. To them, ethics plays an important role in clearing the noise that can surround difficult decision-making at this time in people's lives.



Click on each link below to access a specific topic covered in the 2021 conference series.

- [Vulnerability in the senior population from medical, bioethics and legal perspectives](#)
- [Speakers from the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee discuss the role of the Guardianship Investigations Unit](#)
- [Co-creating research in older adults with patients and caregivers](#)
- [Seniors' Care](#)



We want people to have a good quality of life whether they access care here or in their own homes.

WHAT DOES A CLINICAL ETHICIST DO?

Clinical Consultation

Meets on the unit with the care team to work through a situation where a patient with a mental health diagnosis is refusing a potentially life-saving surgery.



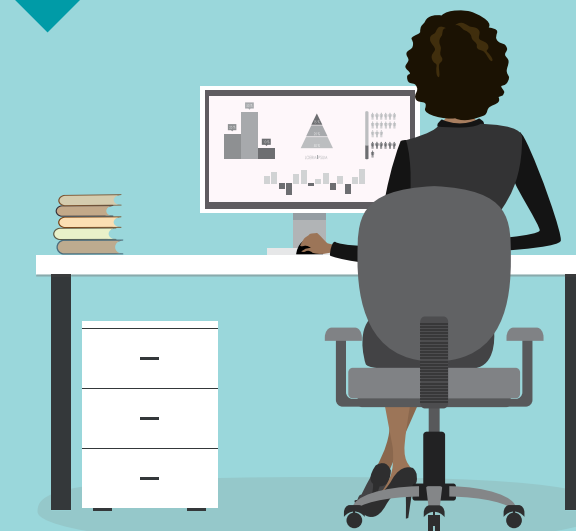
Education

Delivers hospital-wide Ethics Grand Rounds on a cutting edge area of research that has important ethics and practice implications for healthcare providers.



Research and Scholarship

Co-authors a journal article with clinicians about a recent ethically challenging clinical case at the hospital.



Clinical Consultation

Conducts short phone consultations with a Medical Resident to help them “check their math” in the process of identifying a substitute decision-maker for an incapable patient with a large family.



Organization Consultation

Provides an ethics analysis as a member of a working group responsible for setting the hospital’s approach to supporting people who use illegal drugs while in hospital.



Research Ethics

Reviews a research protocol to ensure compliance with Federal guidelines and makes recommendations to improve the informed consent process.

“My interactions with the members of the Centre for Clinical Ethics have been so grounding for me as a clinician. Sometimes in our clinical work, we bump up against hard questions; questions that need a well-rounded timely approach, informed by all perspectives to assist patients, families and clinicians to arrive at the best solutions given difficult circumstances. I am always amazed by the professionalism, commitment to patient advocacy and clarity of thinking offered by our Clinical Ethics Team.”

Najma Ahmed MD, PhD, FRCSC, FACS
Surgeon-in-Chief, St. Michael’s Hospital

Education

Delivers unit-based rounds in the Intensive Care Unit to share learnings from a recent difficult case involving a family not accepting a diagnosis of brain death.



Research and Scholarship

Authors a paper about the ethical challenges of accepting ethics consultation requests from patients’ family members, an underdeveloped part of clinical ethics practice.



A Patient Partner’s Perspective on Ethical Care

Unity Health’s Centre for Clinical Ethics (CCE) provides high quality, thoughtful and effective clinical ethical services to a variety of healthcare organizations across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, including the Scarborough Health Network (SHN). Clinical ethicists help clinicians, administrators, families and patients navigate challenging decision-making at the bedside and in the boardroom.

Rochelle Maurice, a Clinical Ethicist with the CCE, leads the ethics program at SHN and she co-chairs their Ethics Advisory Council (EAC). The EAC provides guidance on ethical issues raised through consults, discusses trends in ethics, and supports education on ethics. The EAC includes patient and family advisors, spiritual and religious care leaders, social workers, medical administrators, a physician leader, and patient relations staff amongst others.

Rochelle provides clinical ethics consultations to staff, physicians,

patients and family members in the hospital and brings lessons learned to the EAC. She highly values the voice of patient and family advisors at the EAC because “they balance the conversation about care very well.”

One such voice is that of Diane Akai, a caregiver and EAC member who is passionate about mental health and eldercare as they have both affected her family. “Being on the EAC has been a very, very good experience for me. I get to hear firsthand about the clinical and ethical issues the staff are facing. Then I get the opportunity to express my perspectives, needs and concerns as a family member,” says Diane.

Diane notes that her voice is valued in influencing policy, day-to-day operations and staff education. “Education is a big part of the role of the EAC, for both the community and staff.” The EAC supports public and staff education on topics ranging from housing to the intersection of healthcare with equity and anti-racism work. Diane also added that education in

areas such as Advanced Care Planning can help to mitigate future ethical issues.

Since Diane joined the EAC in 2019, she and Rochelle have collaborated and have a shared respect. “Rochelle is very supportive and a good communicator. She respects what I have to say and values my input,” says Diane. And Rochelle adds, “Diane’s thoughts and comments are highly valued.”

While clinical ethics can be opaque to many, Rochelle notes the CCE’s approach is, “to integrate ethics into a collaborative and natural workflow and understand how clinical ethics decisions affect staff, patients and families.”

Rochelle’s work with the Scarborough Health Network’s EAC aligns with this direction and allows her to collaborate with passionate family advisors like Diane to strengthen patient care more broadly.

Our approach is to integrate ethics into a collaborative and natural workflow.

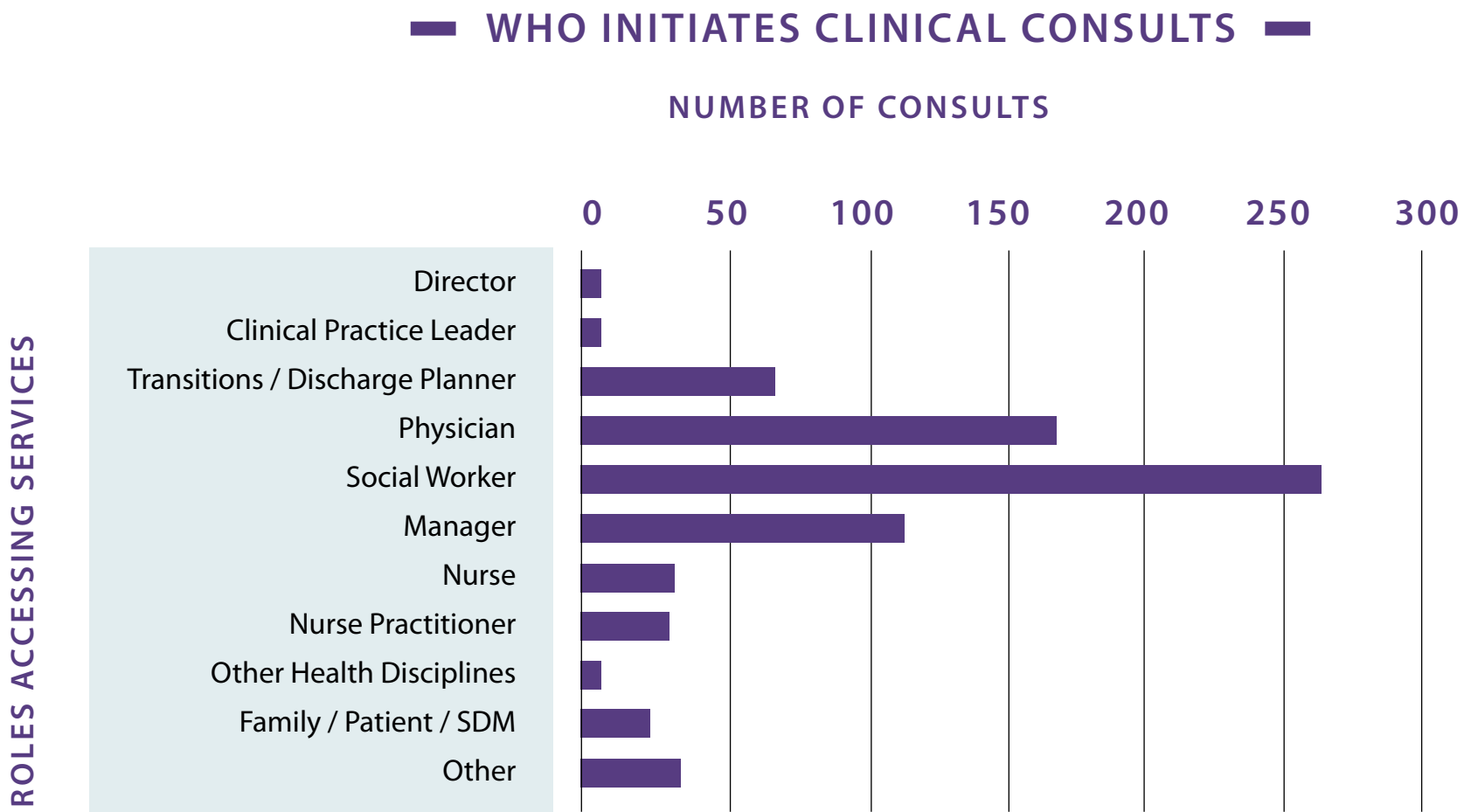
Rochelle Maurice, MSW, RSW, MHSc
Clinical Ethicist



Clinical ethicists help clinicians, administrators, families and patients navigate challenging decision-making at the bedside and in the boardroom.

Measuring Impact

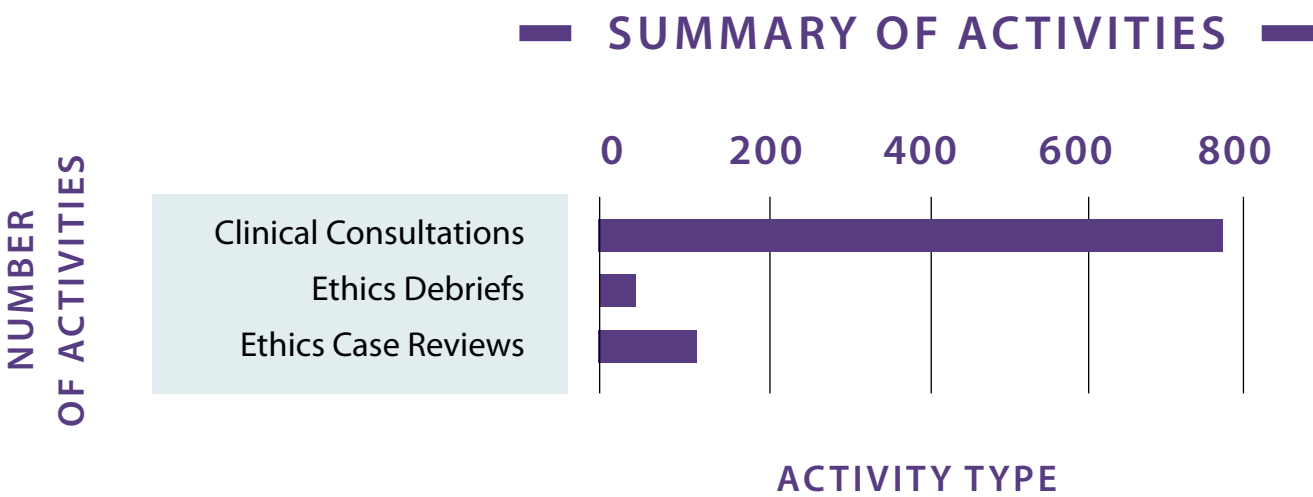
We work with a variety of clinical and administrative leaders to provide ethical services to patients, families and staff. Social Workers, Physicians, Unit Managers and Discharge Planners initiate the most ethics consults across all our partner sites.



“There are times when despite their expertise, compassion, and thoughtfulness our teams find themselves at a crossroad in caring for our most complex patients. These have especially been the times that we engage our Bioethicists. The perspective, skill, and attention to process that the Bioethicist brings to the discussion has been invaluable to patient care. Our experience has consistently been that their comments and advice come from a fair, just and learned perspective that has a perfect mix of ethics, legislation, practice and past experiences.”

Mary Puntillo, Director, Schizophrenia and Community Integration Service, St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton-West 5th Campus

In 2021 we provided 751 Clinical Consultations and reviewed 90 Ethics Cases. We conducted 24 Ethics Debriefs.



PUBLICATIONS

Campbell, Alexandra. “Advance care planning? Your future self might not thank you.”
Healthy Debate. Nov. 17, 2021. [Click here to read publication.](#)

Pradan, L & Abdool, S. (2021). End-of-life care and the ethical dimensions of caring for patients with chronic lung disease. In L. Pradan, F. Mihaltan, V. Bansal (Eds). Practical Guide for Pulmonary Rehabilitation: The Essential Source for Pulmonary Rehabilitation Programs (Ch 13). Hauppauge, New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

“As a social worker in a large and busy Critical Care Unit, I am tasked with supporting families through the most difficult days of their lives. This often involves making very burdensome decisions on behalf of their loved one. Consequently, I have the opportunity to work closely with our colleagues in the Ethics Service. Sometimes I just want to run a case by Ethics to get confirmation of more simple details; but, more often, we are working collaboratively to help a family and a medical team through the various stages of complex decision-making. Our Ethicists reassure our teams and help focus us back on the facts of the situation. They offer us opportunities to debrief individually or in groups about our particularly difficult situations, whether they be a tragic acute circumstance or the moral distress of prolonged patient illness. Our Ethicists also work directly with families to help them through the challenging process of making life and death decisions. Critical Care teams are fortunate to work closely with skilled and compassionate Ethicists as we deliver the best care to patients and their families.”

Aline Demerjian, MSW, RSW
Social Worker, Critical Care Unit, Lakeridge Health

Perspectives From Our Partners

We are very appreciative of the relationships we share with so many hard working and dedicated healthcare professionals. Some have provided their perspectives on the value our team brings to their work and their organization.

We thank them for their kind words of support and encouragement.



Helpful and Practical

“Michael Szego and the Ethics team provide invaluable support to the MSICU staff and physicians through monthly ‘Ethics Debrief’ sessions, which are open forums for staff to discuss ethical issues related to patient care and which help to address staff moral distress. Michael and his team also provide very helpful consultations for ethically challenging cases, including joining us in meetings with patients and families. The team seeks out the ethics team since they know they will receive input that is helpful and practical.”

Jan Friedrich, MD, PhD, MSc, FRCPC
Medical Director, Medical Surgical ICU,
St. Michael’s Hospital



Invaluable Guidance

“At St. Mary’s General Hospital our patients, care partners, and staff benefit greatly from our partnership with our Ethicists and the Centre for Clinical Ethics. Their guidance and care before and during the pandemic are invaluable. It is also important to note the expertise our Ethicists share with us is knowledge we gain and use moving forward during these very difficult times. We are so thankful for their knowledge and support.”

Leslie Waitson
Extern Coordinator,
St. Mary’s General Hospital



Great Listening

“Having the support of Dave and the Ethics Department available to the Houses team ensures we continue to support our residents as individuals. Dave has a great way of listening to all the parties and appreciating how each person feels (family, resident, staff, etc.) while keeping in mind the boundaries of the law and regulations. His approach, communication style, professionalism and overall personality is truly and sincerely a pleasure to work with. The expertise and experience Dave brings to the Houses team is invaluable.”

Pat Colucci,
Administrator,
Houses of Providence



Preserve Patient Dignity

“As a health care professional and consumer, I can appreciate that we, as staff, may be interacting with our patients and families at their most vulnerable moments. Having the support and perspective of the ethicist to ground our interactions ensures that we are actively living the Missions and Values of Unity Health Toronto. Engaging in discussions about next steps in a timely yet sensitive, informed manner is an art form and requires collaboration, teamwork, and trust while keeping the wishes and the dignity of the patient at the centre of any interaction or intervention. My heartfelt gratitude to Dave Langlois for helping the team to explore the complexities of capacity and decision making and his invaluable contributions to navigating challenging, difficult conversations with patients, families, and team members.”

Susie Seung-Hee Choi,
OT Reg. (Ont.)
Psychogeriatric Resource
Consultant, St. Michael’s Hospital
Formerly a Transition Planner,
St. Joseph’s Health Centre



A Balanced Approach

“At Lakeridge Health, having an ethics service from the Centre for Clinical Ethics gives frontline workers in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) the support and strength needed to do our jobs without compromising ethical standards. An indispensable resource, it allows team members to know they have a group of experts in place that can be called upon when patients, families, and the medical team themselves are facing ethical challenges in decision-making. This has been especially important during the pandemic when families were frequently asked to make end-of-life decisions from afar due to visitor restrictions. As an Intensivist, the ability to discuss a case with an Ethicist, and subsequently develop a balanced approach to a difficult situation, is invaluable. In addition to providing such timely clinical consultations that impact the day-to-day care in the ICU, the ethics program has also helped to improve ethics education and policy development within the organization itself, in part through leading such work with the Ethics Committee. Those of us in the ICU continue to look forward to many more years of collaboration and interactions with our Ethics team as well as the Centre for Clinical Ethics.”

S. Kavita Sridhar MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Intensivist and Education Lead
Department of Critical Care, Lakeridge Health
Assistant Professor, Dept.
of Medicine, Queen’s University
Lecturer, Dept. of Medicine,
University of Toronto



Accessible Source

“The clinical Ethicists are an accessible source of support from which our team routinely requests their unique perspective from their wealth of knowledge. They assist in discussing choices and options with patients and families around complex discharge planning concerns, Substitute Decision-Making and end of life care. Having access to a clinical ethicist during my time working as a Speech-Language Pathologist at SHN has been an invaluable addition to our interdisciplinary team.”

Asha Shelton, M.H.Sc. S-LP,
Reg. CASLPO
Speech-Language Pathologist
Scarborough Health Network





Ethicists jump
for joy after
seeing each
other in person
for the first time
in 2 years!

Who We Are



Michael Szego, PhD, MHSc
Senior Director,
Centre for Clinical Ethics
Ethicist,
St. Michael's Hospital



Steve Abdool, RN, MA, PhD(c)
Ethicist,
St. Joseph's Health System



Alexandra Campbell, JD, LLM, MHSc
Ethicist,
St. Michael's Hospital and
Scarborough Health Network



Sean Hillman, PhD
Ethicist,
Lakeridge Health



Dave Langlois, PhD
Manager, Fellowship and
Trainee Education,
Centre for Clinical Ethics
Ethicist,
St. Joseph's Health Centre
and Providence Healthcare



Juhee Makkar, JD, MHSc
Ethicist,
St. Joseph's Health Centre



Rochelle Maurice, MSW, RSW, MHSc
Ethicist,
Scarborough Health Network



Mark Miller, PhD
Ethicist,
Centre for Clinical Ethics



Jamie Robinson, PhD
Ethicist,
St. Joseph's Health System



Lynda Sullivan,
Admin Assistant,
Centre for Clinical Ethics



cce Centre for Clinical Ethics

Centre for Clinical Ethics
Unity Health Toronto, St. Joseph's Health Centre
30 The Queensway
Toronto, ON
M6R 1B5

Phone: 416-530-6750
After-Hours/Urgent Pager: 416-864-5070, Pager ID: 4211

For more information or to contact us please either [email us](#) or visit our [website](#).

