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## Flexing Your Core: the Palliative Workout ECHO

### *Domain 7: Professional & Ethical Practice*

### Nov 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024

AGENDA ITEM	NOTES
<b>Introductions, Objectives</b>	<p>Session Facilitator: Leanne Drumheller, MSW</p> <p><b>Learning objectives:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify common ethical issues in palliative care.</li> <li>2. Indicate the first step to take in addressing any ethical issue.</li> </ol>
<b>Session Key Points and discussion</b>	<p><b><u>Common Ethical issues in Palliative Care:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Decision-making capacity:</b> assessing whether patients can make informed choices regarding their care.</li> <li>• <b>Withholding/withdrawing life-sustaining treatments:</b> navigating patient or family decisions to stop or avoid treatments like ventilation or resuscitation.</li> <li>• <b>Principle of double effect:</b> managing treatments that relieve symptoms but may hasten death (e.g. high-dose pain medication).</li> <li>• <b>Advance directives:</b> respecting documented patient wishes for future care.</li> <li>• <b>Artificial nutrition and hydration:</b> deciding on feeding tubes or hydration when patients cannot eat or drink.</li> <li>• <b>Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD):</b> handling cases where patients request assistance in dying within legal and ethical frameworks.</li> </ul> <p>Some of the participants' experiences with ethical issues in practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Someone experiencing dementia.</li> <li>• When the person is not able to make decision and family is in conflict with their decisions.</li> <li>• When families want choices that the health care feel are futile.</li> <li>• When a person wants to go to hospice that doesn't allow Maid.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Navigating Ethical Issues</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>First step:</b> consult with the healthcare team for guidance and resources.</li> <li>• <b>Key workplace considerations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What processes are in place for navigating ethical concerns with patients?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



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- Who is involved in resolving ethical issues (e.g. risk management, ethics boards)?
- How are disagreements among team members resolved?

Some steps taken by participants to address ethical issues in their practice:

- Availability of a bio-ethics team to consult 24/7.
- Explaining to clients; delving into goals and wishes for the individual and clarifying the issue.
- Talking about it in weekly rounds with the management team and community involved.
- The use of an Ethical grid with the facts laid out.

### **Ethical Pillars in Palliative Care:**

- **Autonomy:**
  - Honoring patient's rights to make decisions about their care.
  - Providing education and resources to support informed choices.
- **Person-Centered Care:**
  - Respecting individual wishes, beliefs and values.
  - Addressing medical, emotional social and spiritual needs holistically.
- **Family Support:**
  - Involving close family or chosen support networks in care plans.
  - Acknowledging their roles in decision-making and caregiving.
- **Justice:**
  - Promoting equitable access to palliative care resources for all patients.

Discussion from participants:

- Access within a community is not always equal. Judgements are made about what constitutes a more deserving/appropriate/urgent situation.
- having the same criteria for hospice admission across.
- Funding for hospice is not equal to hospital so can only build hospices in "rich" areas.
- How to make access for the unhoused?
- gaining the trust of the indigenous communities is key in getting resources into their communities.

### **Case Study discussion**

You are caring for Alex, an 80-year-old client with end stage heart disease that regularly receives home care. He has recently begun experiencing increasing fatigue, shortness of breath and chest pain. Alex's daughter asks you if you think he is nearing the end of his life. You tell her time may be short and you feel this is likely the strongest he will feel. His daughter then tells you that she sees no



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point in informing Alex about his situation, as it will only distress him further and make him give up. You and the healthcare team feel uncomfortable with this request.

**What are some ways you might address this dilemma?**

- Ask her what she is concerned about with this discussion.
- Ask Alex where he feels he is at with his disease and what he wants to know.
- Ask daughter how she would change her treatment or care if he was on limited time? Agree to treatment around symptoms.
- Ask Alex what he would like to do if his time was limited.
- Ask the daughter why she feels it would distress him? Is there a history of him getting distressed with unfavourable information or situations

**Ethical Tensions:**

- Balancing transparency with the patient’s right to know versus potential emotional harm
- Conflict between respecting the family’s wishes and prioritizing patient autonomy.

**Possible Actions:**

- Facilitate a conversation between the healthcare team and Alex’s daughter
- Assess Alex’s capacity to receive and process information
- Explore ways to communicate sensitively about this condition.

**Resources:**

- Journey home- [https://youtu.be/DxaGQZ9SKZ0?si=Ex-H7HAnLLDd\\_6Ke](https://youtu.be/DxaGQZ9SKZ0?si=Ex-H7HAnLLDd_6Ke)

**Next session  
info**

Next Flexing Your Core ECHO Session:

**Domain 2: Cultural Safety & Humility** Nov 26<sup>th</sup> 9am-10am PDT. Register [here!](#)

Other upcoming ECHO sessions listed [here](#)