

Canberra Hospital and Health Services Clinical Ethics Committee

Ethical issues form a large component of the clinical care delivered to patients on a daily basis. Health care professionals, patients and their carers may have differing values and if unresolved, may impact upon clinical decisions made in the health care setting. Clinical ethics is an important part of effective clinical governance.

The role of the Clinical Ethics Committee is to support health care professionals in the consideration of ethical issues and assist with the decision making process related to their clinical practice. The Clinical Ethics Committee may also assist patients, relatives and advocates in resolving concerns about ethical aspects of clinical practice. The committee does not discuss concerns around the competence of clinical staff or resource allocation.

Membership of the Clinical Ethics Committee is comprised of medical practitioners, nursing staff, a lawyer, a bioethicist, representatives from social work, pastoral care and consumer representatives. This diverse group provides many viewpoints and will assist the clinician or family member to make better informed and considered decisions.

Examples of clinical situations where ethical issues arise include:

- Informed consent and competence
- Organ and tissue donation
- Termination of pregnancy
- Care of vulnerable consumers, such as the mentally ill
- Prioritising allocation and use of therapeutic products of limited availability
- Withdrawal or cessation of treatment

The Clinical Ethics Committee provides advice to clinicians who are still responsible for making clinical decisions for their patients. The Clinical Ethics Committee is an advisory committee and clinicians are not obliged to follow the advice or recommendations suggested by the committee.

If you have a matter that you feel should be considered by the Clinical Ethics Committee, contact the Secretariat on 6205 4977 or via email ACTHealthQSUExecutiveDirector@act.gov.au

