Professionalizing Ethics Consultation: Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?

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The Case for Increasing Professionalization

1. Improve quality of ethics consultants or improve confidence in quality of consultants
2. Improve professional standing of those doing consultation
3. Stewarding of legacy of *Core Competencies & Education Guide* documents; Prevent pre-emption by substandard certification processes
Ways of Professionalizing

1. Credentialing – hospital does this

2. Certification – independent agency
   a. medical model – school, residency, & board examination
ASBH-Reviewed Credentials: “Quality Attestation”

Question
How can a hospital know that a particular consultant is appropriate for credentialing to do ethics consultation?

Potential Answers
• Certification
• Verification that the consultant meets a standard of ASBH-recommended credentials is another answer
ASBH Clinical Ethics Consultation Affairs

• Evidence of having performed a minimum number of consultations as “lead consultant”
• Graduate degree in applicant’s field
• Evidence of CEC education and training (e.g., CEC content in a degree program, certification program, or continuing education)
• Letter of recommendation from supervisor or colleague who has provided CEC and observed applicant providing CEC
• Written case study analysis and example of medical record documentation
• Oral interview
Attesting to Quality


1. Portfolio of Qualifications relating to Knowledge, Interpersonal and Process Skills

   • 2. Examination – Originally conceived as Oral, Case-Based
Attesting to Quality - Portfolio

Goals of Portfolio

a. Demonstrate expert competence w/range of issues

b. Document ability to function independently

c. Evidence of “entrustability” via quality measure or collegial reference
Attesting to Quality - Portfolio

Contents of Portfolio

• Diplomas and certificates of training programs
• Summary of one’s consultation experience
• One’s philosophy of ethics consultation incl. accomplishments
• A representative sample of consultation write ups - 6
• External evaluations/letters from those who have worked with consultant on consults
Attesting to Quality
– Proposed Oral Examination

Goals

• Observe performance:
  
  Interpersonal skills - Poise under stress
  (interview situation)

  Ethical Assessment & analysis skills

  Process skills – e.g., establishing expectations, procedure

(See ASBH Core Competencies for Healthcare Ethics Consultation, 2nd ed.)
Attesting to Quality – Oral Examination

a. Discuss cases, e.g. one from applicant’s portfolio; two surprises

b. Determination of “good enough” v. remediation process

Wouldn’t a better way of assessing interpersonal skills be preferable? Simulations!
Ethics Consultation Simulation

- Comprised of online course activity and on campus workshop
- Students participate in ethics consultation simulations at Loyola’s state of the art clinical skills center
- Receive in-person and video feedback
Key Phrases in a competent Ethics Consultation

• Introductions (“Hello, I am . . . and you are. . .”; I am here as a member of the ethics consultation service.)

• Purpose of consult (“In an ethics consultation, we try to. . .”)

• Supportive statements (“This must be really difficult for you.”)

• Elicit medical facts (“Doctor, can you tell us what Mrs. Czarnewicz medical situation is?” “Are you saying that she might get better?” “What might be the best we can hope for?” or “Is she actively dying?”)

• Elicit patient/surrogate values “Did she ever talk about what she might want in a situation like this?” “If she could hear what we’re saying and she could sit up and talk, what might she say to us?”

• Identify ethical issues – “What are the burdens of continued treatment?” “What are the benefits?” “Our job is to try to come up with a plan that is what the patient might want or that is in the best interest of the patient.”

• Seek common areas of agreement, outline options/alternatives – “It sounds like we all agree that . . .”

• Summarize/Next steps – “If I can summarize what I think we’ve said. . .”