

Team's Perspective of the Problem

What difficulty is being faced?
What is the 'red flag' that drew the team's attention to this problem?
What ethical concerns have been raised by team members?
Is there team consensus on options and goals for care?

Patient Preferences

Who has talked to the patient? When?
What are the patient's care preferences or goals for care?
Is the patient's decision voluntary and informed?
Who are the important people in the patient's life?
Who is the SDM if the patient is incapable?

Respecting Diversity

What values and beliefs are important to the patient?
Are there religious and/or cultural factors the patient wishes to honour or perform?
How does the patient perceive the cause, nature of the illness and the meaning of death, health and well-being?
What supports or resources are needed by the patient / family? (e.g. translator, chaplain etc.)

Communicating Effectively

What is appropriate and sensitive language for this family?
Is information being communicated in a manner that everyone can understand?
How timely is communication?
Are patient / family given time to comment and ask questions?
Are patient / family concerns clearly understood?
Is there any sign of conflict? What are your resources to resolve conflict?

Moral Community

What professional ideals or obligations need to be upheld?
What organizational values are relevant to the situation?
What organizational policies, protocols or barriers are influencing ethical decision-making in this situation?

Reflecting

What ethical principles are relevant to this case? (autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice)
Which ethical principles are unclear, compromised or in conflict?
Have team members explored feelings, cultural biases and values that may influence decision-making or behaviour?
What other resources or consultation would be helpful in addressing this situation?
What has been learned and what proactive measures could be used in the future?

When you should call for an Ethics Consult:

- ✂ Consensus cannot be reached within the interdisciplinary team or between the treatment team and the family / patient on goals for care.
- ✂ Team is facing a true ethical dilemma:
 - care options pose an equal level of benefit and harm to patient / family making decision-making difficult or
 - team knows the most ethical course of action but this option cannot be pursued due to barriers either within the institution or due to special circumstances of the patient and / or family.
- ✂ Patient / family has challenging expectations about care or posing challenging behaviours.
- ✂ Pervasive feeling that something is wrong but ethical dimensions are unclear.
- ✂ Not sure that particular benefits of a course of treatment or level of care justifies the burden this will place on the patient / family.
- ✂ Concerns that values of organization or individual are not consistent with optimal patient care.
- ✂ Conflict or confusion about the appropriate role of substitute decision-maker.

Ethics Centre

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