



Perth and
Smiths Falls
District Hospital



Patients and Families
THE Heart of Care

A Guide for PSFDH Staff, Physicians, Volunteers and Medical Students/Learners



Ethics Framework 2022

Introduction

Building a Culture of Ethics

Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital (PSFDH) takes its commitment to promoting an ethical culture seriously. Building the organization's ethics capacity, providing support to those making decisions and facing challenging ethics issues and, most importantly, ensuring the delivery of health care and services with the highest ethics standards, is essential.

A variety of resources are available to patients and families as well as PSFDH staff, physicians, volunteers and medical students/learners, to assist in addressing ethics questions. The ultimate goal is to embed ethics reflection and action into all aspects of health care and other services across the organization.

The PSFDH Ethics Committee is a multi-disciplinary team that represents the many different perspectives that are required to view ethical situations.

Patient and Family Advisory Council members are appointed "Advisors" that assist in identifying current and future opportunities to improve the care experience for patients, family and caregivers. They ensure the perspective of patients, family members or their caregivers is always considered and incorporated in organizational activities and listen and learn from patients and family members. Patient and family advisors are also part of the Ethics Committee.

The PSFDH has an Ethicist partnership with Queens University. The partnership supports the Ethics team when required to discuss complex ethical issues.

Clinical and Non-Clinical Ethics

Ethics has broad application to values, hospital policies and practices, decision-making, complying with legislation, stewardship, financial matters, honesty, integrity in reporting to funders and the public, and resource allocation. Ethical issues involving clinical crisis management may include, but are not limited to, patient's prior capable wishes or advance directives, matters dealing with the delivery or withholding of life-sustaining treatments, consent, organ transplantation, nutrition, pain management, ethnic and/or religious preferences and beliefs.

Ethical issues involving non-clinical case management may include but are not limited to: decision-making, conflict of interest, stewardship and financial matters.

Resources

The PSFDH Ethics Framework provides a summary of the resources designed to support ethical values, behaviour and decision-making that will build upon our Ethical Foundation. The Framework was two sections:

Section 1: Clinical - Ethics Resources describes the **PSFDH Values** and **Ethics Support** in the areas of:

- Clinical Ethics
- Compliance
- Research
- Quality Improvement
- Evaluation Processes.

Section 2: Non-Clinical - Ethics Decision-Making Process outlines a step-by-step decision-making process that can be used to help identify and address ethics issues as they arise.

Feedback

The Ethics Framework is a living document that will be enhanced and refined over time. We appreciate feedback and suggestions, which can be sent to the Ethics Committee through a direct e-mail to the department Manager or the Privacy Officer at privacyofficer@psfdh.on.ca.



Section I
PSFDH Values

PSFDH Values

Our Values

Our values define what we believe in and what we stand for as an organization. They provide us with a common understanding of our priorities and serve as a framework for our actions.

Six Ways

Our values describe "Six ways" we can personally demonstrate our commitment to patient care in our daily interactions with patients, their families and our colleagues. The PSFDH staff, physicians, volunteers and medical students/learners are expected to use these values to lead our work, our actions and decisions. Doing so consistently enables us to build a stronger ethical climate.

Values in Action

Our values include the following:

1. An environment where everyone is treated with dignity, respect and compassion.
2. Promotion of positive working environments and relationships.
3. Commitment to excellence in the provision of safe, high quality, patient-focussed care.
4. Collaboration to facilitate access in collaboration with our health care partners to appropriate care in response to patient need.
5. Accountability to our stakeholders to ensure responsible stewardship of our resources.
6. Commitment to the recruitment and retention of staff who are dedicated to the organization's Mission, Vision and Values.

Clinical Ethics

Facing Difficult Choices

Health care is complex and sometimes requires us to make difficult decisions where there are no clear answers. Patients and families faced with difficult choices in the course of treatment or healthcare professionals challenged with situations that cause moral distress or uncertainty in the course of patient care can turn to the PSFDH Clinical Ethics Committee for support to work through questions such as:

1. “What is the right thing to do?”
2. “How should this decision be made?”
3. “Is this a reasonable compromise?”

A Supportive Hand

The Clinical Ethics Service exists to assist **patients, staff, families, clinicians, administrators and policy-makers** in identifying, examining and resolving a wide range of ethical challenges that arise in health care.

Consultations can be simple conversations, guided discussions with teams, assistance with decision-making, or shared analysis of complex situations and ethical issues.

The Clinical Ethics Committee **does not make decisions** or replace the appropriate decision-makers. Upon request, it may make recommendations or facilitate the balanced, objective discussion of ethical issues with those involved.

Questions

Some clinical ethics issues include:

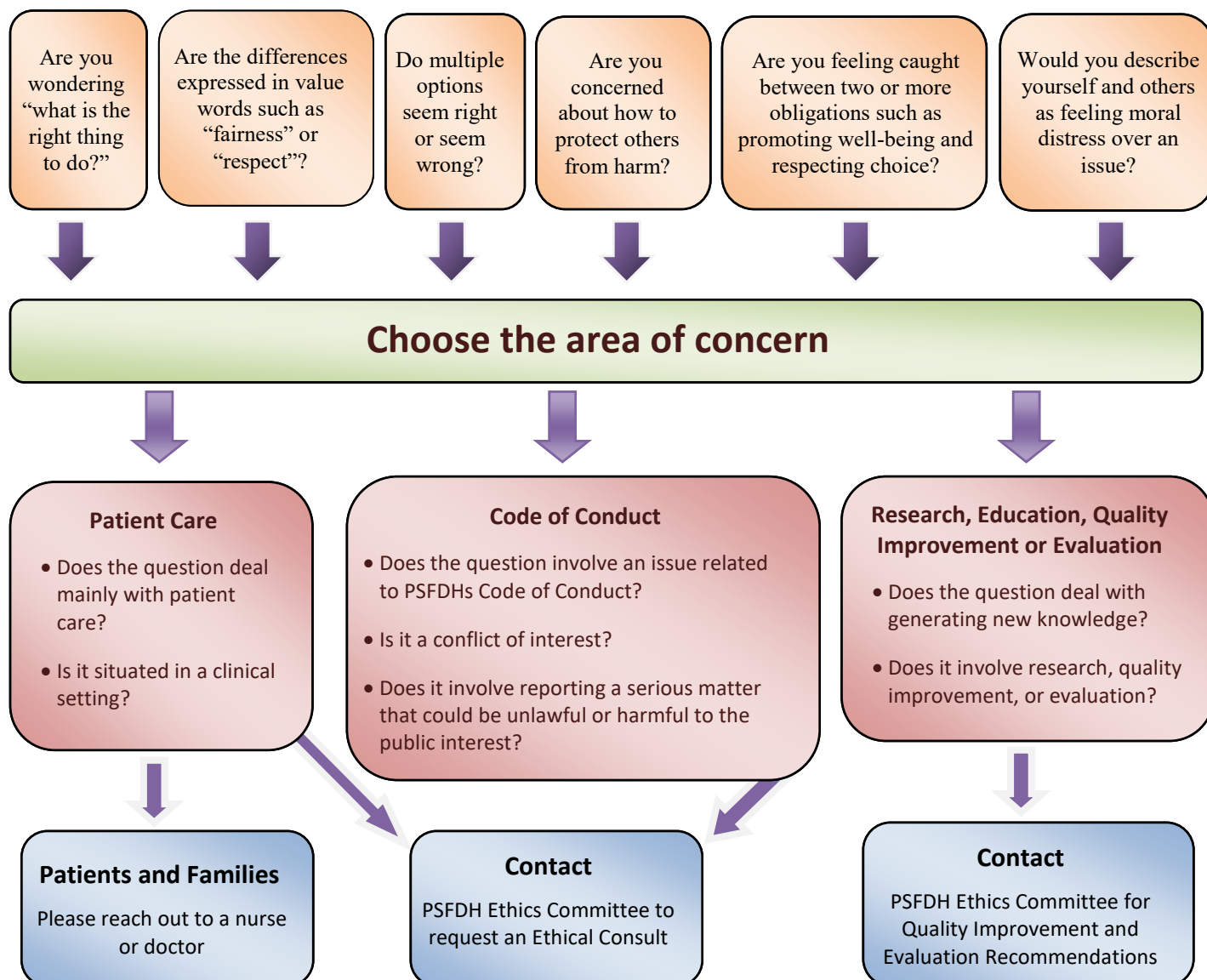
- Can a patient and family demand continued medical care differed from healthcare team recommendations physician’s recommendations?
- What if substitute decision-makers make decisions that are not based on the patient’s wishes?
- Should physicians share information about the reproductive choices of an adolescent with parents?
- When should we follow the prior wishes of patients with mental illness and/or suicidal ideation?
- Do my personal beliefs and values conflict with Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)?

Ethics Support

The Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital supports you in making good ethical decisions. Follow the decision tree below to determine the service that most closely suits your needs.

Do you have an ethics question or dilemma?

If you answer yes to any of the following, then it's likely that you do.



Ethics & Compliance

Living our Values

The Ethics Committee promotes and maintains a values and ethics-based culture consistent with the following PSFDH governance documents:

Clinical Consultation – An ethics consultation may be requested by a patient, staff, physician, volunteers, patient’s next of kin, any family member or the Board of Directors. Procedures can be requested for both urgent and non-urgent consultations.

Code of Conduct & Whistleblower Policy – A standard of conduct committed to promoting, preserving and enhancing public confidence in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of PSFDH's clinical and business activities. These activities include compassionate care, trustworthiness and fairness, integrity, respect and dignity, collaboration, cooperation and teamwork, transparency and accountability and quality improvement.

Research, Education and Quality Improvements or Evaluation - Research activities at the hospital will conform to the PSFDH's Mission, Vision and Values statements, as well as its policies and procedures. All research related activity involving patients, caregivers or staff at PSFDH must be reviewed by the Ethics Committee and the Medical Advisory Committee (MQA) if appropriate and approved by the Senior Leadership Team and the Medical Advisory Committee.

Guidance

Anyone can contact the Ethics Committee with questions and concerns or to ask for assistance; including patients and families, PSFDH employees, physicians, volunteers and medical students/learners.

PSFDH staff with an ethics concern or inquiry are encouraged to first speak to their manager or others such as:

- Resource team leader
- Human resources contact
- Union representative
- Professional regulatory body

If the matter is still not clear or if staff believe there may have been a breach of the policies/standards and it would be inappropriate to go to a manager first, the individual or their manager may contact the Ethics Committee consider by completing an Ethics Committee Consultation Request form.

Further Information

Details regarding the Ethics Committee, the policy/standards, documents and educational resources, are available in the Policy and Document Management System (PDMS).

Research Ethics

Research

Research is used to develop or contribute knowledge, evidence or information that can be used widely.

Maintaining the Highest Ethical Standards

With the current emphasis on evidence-based practices in health care, various initiatives to generate knowledge are not only encouraged but also necessary to provide quality care for patients.

Regardless of the nature of the knowledge-generating project, it is important practice to review such initiatives to ensure that the well-being of participants or patients is protected and that the highest ethical standards are maintained.

Research Ethics Review

PSFDH is committed to excellence in the provision of high quality patient-focused care. Through the hospital's extensive programs and services, we continue to expand upon the health care services provided. As such, a formalized corporate policy with regard to research, as it applies to the patients and health care team members of the PSFDH, is a necessity.

For more information about research ethics please visit:

- [The Ethics page located on the PSFDH website](#)
- [Ontario – Health Information Act](#)



Quality Improvement & Evaluation Ethics

Quality Improvement and Evaluation

Quality improvement initiatives are ongoing processes designed to improve performance within a particular institution and setting.

Evaluations are initiatives that aim to measure the success of a program or practice to inform decisions, identify improvements or promote accountability.


Promoting Safety and Preventing Harm

Risk and harm are not exclusive to research. There may be some elements of risk embedded within quality improvement and evaluation strategies. While the potential to cause harm may be unintentional, risk can occur in poor design and planning, violation of confidentiality, lack of informed consent and lack of consideration for the burden generated by this work.


All managers, physicians and staff who undertake quality improvement or evaluation projects should consider the ethical implications of their projects.

To help mitigate risk, PSFDH staff and physicians can review the following documents:

- [Organizational Ethics Decision-Making Process](#)
- [PSFDH Ethics Brochure](#)



Section II
Ethical Decision-Making



Non-Clinical Organizational Ethical Decision-Making Process

While making ethical decisions can be a complex process not easily defined by an algorithm, identifying steps to take when faced with such an issue can help. Below is a decision-making process that can assist in ensuring that appropriate questions are being asked, and steps taken, to address an ethics issue.

<p>1. Clarify the key question</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify the central issue needing to be addressed
<p>2. Identify facts & stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Collect relevant facts and identify what you need but don't have ➤ If it is a clinical issue, collect information about the medical diagnosis or prognosis, quality of life described in patient's terms, patient's preferences and contextual features ➤ Are there any organizational policies or guidelines addressing the question? ➤ What guidance do relevant laws give? ➤ Which individuals are relevant to this issue and who should be part of the discussion and decision?
<p>3. Identify values and prioritize</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are the key values? ➤ What is the central conflict in values? ➤ How do you prioritize these values against each other? ➤ What do you think is most important and why?
<p>4. Identify options</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify all potential courses of action, even ones that don't immediately appear suitable
<p>5. Make a decision & evaluate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assess each option against the values that you determined to be of priority in the step above ➤ Make a decision consistent with identified key values ➤ Once the decision is made, follow up and evaluate so you can learn from this for next time