

Bioethics Consultation Service



STAMFORD HOSPITAL

The Regional Center for Health

affiliate Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons
member NewYork-Presbyterian Healthcare System
A Planetree Hospital

Bioethics is the analysis of issues that arise in the healthcare setting. These are moral issues of health, life and death, related to patient care and treatment decision-making. The concerns of bioethics are the well-being and dignity of the patient, as well as matters of choice, rights and responsibilities of the patient, the family and caregiving team. Any matter relating to these issues is appropriate for a bioethics consultation.

What Is a Bioethics Consultation?

Modern healthcare presents issues that are often complex and troubling for patients, families and caregivers. This can result in uncertainty about the most appropriate course of action. Members of Stamford Hospital's Bioethics Consultation Service are available to meet with patients, families or designated representatives and caregiving staff to help clarify and resolve these ethical dilemmas.

The following are ethical principles employed to resolve difficulties:

- **Autonomy (Respecting the person):** Who should make healthcare decisions for patients who cannot decide for themselves or communicate their wishes?
- **Informed Consent (Provide sufficient information):** What should a patient do if he or she cannot understand what caregivers are saying about the need for certain tests or treatments?
- **Beneficence (Promoting benefit):** What should happen when there is strong disagreement or uncertainty among the patient, family and/or caregivers regarding what is the best option of care for the patient?
- **Non-Maleficence (Do no harm):** What should a patient do if caregivers' treatment recommendations conflict with the patient's ethical, cultural or religious beliefs or traditions?
- **Distributive Justice (Conserving resources):** When should life-prolonging treatments (such as feeding tubes or ventilators) be started, continued or stopped?
- **Confidentiality (Maintaining privacy):** What medical information can be appropriately shared or withheld from third parties?

How Can a Bioethics Consultation Be Requested?

Anyone involved in patient care—patient, family member or proxy agent, caregiver or staff member—with an ethical concern or problem can directly access the Bioethics Consultation Service. Bioethics consultations can be requested by contacting the Bioethics Consultation Service via email at ethicsconsult@stamhealth.org.

Requests for consultation will be answered within 24 hours. Depending on the nature of the ethical problem, the bioethics consultant(s) may convene a conference of the patient's caregiving team and selected members of the ethics committee.

What Does the Ethics Committee Do?

The Ethics committee at Stamford Hospital includes ethicists, physicians, nurses, social workers, patient representatives, clergy and risk managers. The committee is not a decision-making body, but rather a forum for study, review and advice. It meets on a regular and as-needed basis to:

- Explore different approaches to healthcare decision-making and provide recommendations for resolving ethical issues in patient care.
- Assist in consultations when requested by the Bioethics Consultation Service.
- Participate in developing and reviewing Stamford Hospital policy when matters of ethics are involved.
- Provide educational programs about ethical issues, both within Stamford Hospital and for the wider community.

Confidentiality: All deliberations of the Bioethics Consultation Service and the bioethics committee are confidential, and all information and records are protected. There is no charge for this service.



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As a Planetree hospital, we are committed to personalizing, humanizing and demystifying the healthcare experience for patients and their families. Our approach is holistic and encourages healing in all dimensions—mind, body and spirit.

Stamford Hospital

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