

## Ethics at the Bedside: Real-Time Engagement of Clinical Nurses



Session # C919  
October 9, 2015 9:30-10:30 AM  
2015 ANCC National Magnet Conference

Linda Henderson, BSN, RN, CCRN  
Stacy Wenner, MSN, RN, NEA-BC  
Milwaukee, WI



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## About Children's Hospital of Wisconsin

- Magnet® designated since 2004
- 306-bed free-standing pediatric hospital
- outpatient surgery center
  - located in Milwaukee, WI
- NICU, pediatric & ambulatory clinics
  - located in northeastern WI
- Destination programs:
  - neonatal/fetal care
  - cardiac
  - neuroscience
  - hematology/oncology/bone marrow transplant

- 2014 statistics (MKE + FV):
  - 25,207 inpatient admissions
  - 282,804 ambulatory visits



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Objective

Given daily challenges faced  
by the evolving role of the nurse ...



- ✓ Share innovative strategies to engage clinical nurses in everyday dialogue about ethical situations that arise at the bedside.

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Foundational Work

- Annual Pediatric Nursing Conference  
– pre-conference workshop
- PICU RNs identify need for continued learning/dialogue
- Pediatric Ethics Education Program designed
- Informal interest group continues  
– Journal Club → literature search →  
unit based ethics conversations



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## From idea ....

The problem:

- clinical nurses experience ethical questions on daily basis
- formal processes, such as ethics consult, overwhelming
- concern that build-up over time → moral distress



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Moral Distress

The painful psychological disequilibrium that results from recognizing ethically appropriate action, yet not taking it, because of such obstacles as lack of time, supervisory reluctance, an inhibiting medical structure, institution problems, or legal considerations



(Jameton, 1984)

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Unit Based Ethics Conversations (UBECs)

### Purpose

"Provide a forum for meaningful conversation among staff nurses about ethical issues they face in routine clinical practice and which are felt to contribute to moral distress"

### Goals

- Increase participants abilities and confidence in dealing with ethically challenging situations
- Provide an environment free of judgment for disclosure and frank discussion of morally troubling situations



(Wocial, 2009)

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Access to external consultants

- Collaboration between clinical nurse & nurse ethicist
- Medical College of WI – Center for Biohumanities sponsors Ethics Grand Rounds featuring

Lucia Wocial, PhD, RN

- Facilitated UBEC as part of discussion
- 15 Children's participants, clinical RNs (PICU) + nursing leadership

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## To planning ...

- UBECs/theory of overall impact
  - Over time, an improved ethical climate will be experienced on the critical care units where UBECs are offered. The improvement will be demonstrated in the aggregate. Not everyone will have to participate in a UBEC to see a collective difference in the way in which ethical situations or conflicts are managed on participating units.
- Partnership with nursing leadership
  - Magnet/special projects manager
  - executive director, pt care
  - chief nursing officer
- Access to external expert to serve as facilitator



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Proposal

- 12 month pilot
- UBECs held monthly on West 4 Pediatric Intensive Care Unit
- Facilitator funding secured
- Evaluation:
  - Pre, 6 months, after each UBEC



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.



## Pre-UBEC Needs Assessment- All PICU staff

- ❖ I participate in discussions related to the ethics of a patient care situation with my interdisciplinary colleagues.  
72% - sometimes/rarely/never
- ❖ Adequate resources are available to me if I have a question or concern related to the ethics of a patient care situation.  
45% - Agree/Strongly Agree
- ❖ I feel comfortable requesting an ethics consult.  
68% - Neutral / Disagree/Strongly Disagree
- ❖ I feel it is important to have an opportunity to freely discuss ethical issues encountered in my work.  
96% - Agree/Strongly Agree

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.



## To implementation ....

Clinical Nurse takes the lead

Logistics

- Coordination with unit leadership
- Advertising / promotion
- Central location on unit
- Development of evaluation form



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.



## 6 Month UBEC Evaluation 12 Respondents

- Should UBECs be continued on West 4?
  - Yes: 92% (11/12)
  - No: 1 person; did not attend a UBEC
  - Reasons given:
    - Safe place to bring up issues
    - Staff needs support
    - Only chance for staff to have an open forum for sensitive topics
    - Great way to explore things that have happened
    - Having a facilitator that can probe and knows the right questions to continue thoughtful process
    - Great to have other disciplines there

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## UBEC Challenges

- Expectations
  - Open forum
  - Confidentiality
  - Specific vs general discussion
- Maintain constructive processing
  - Interpersonal dynamics
- Participation
  - Staffing
  - Access for all shifts to attend
  - Interprofessional



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



- Format changed to topic-based, identified by staff
  - Recent case study
  - Donation after Cardiac Death
  - Professional boundaries
- Rotate among 3 pediatric intensive care units

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Practical Challenges: real-life on the unit

- Acuity
- Staffing
- Morale
- Leadership changes
- Departure of clinical RN champion
- Measuring outcomes
  - Objective vs subjective



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Key Learnings

- Need for nimbleness
- Help staff navigate resources
- Evolving role of external consultant
  - weekly trauma rounds



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Expansion to Acute Care



Recognition that acute  
care units have different  
challenges than critical  
care units

End-of-life vs ...

- Management of behavioral patients
- Discharge family w/ hx of non-adherence
- Teenagers & suicide
- Access to interpreter resources
- Childhood obesity

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## To planning ...

- Nurse ethicist becomes internal expert
  - affiliated agreement
- Partnership with nursing leadership
  - Magnet/special projects manager
  - executive director, pt care
  - chief nursing officer
- Development of pilot proposal
- MD buy-in

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Engaging Clinical Nurses



- Road-show
  - unit partnership councils
- Survey acute care nurses by unit

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



- I would be interested in learning more about the following (check all that apply):
  - Basic overview of pediatric ethics
  - What do we mean by "best interests" of the child?
  - When can/should children start having input on their medical care?
  - Conflicts related to life-sustaining medical treatment
  - Managing "difficult" families
  - Influence of religion/culture/socioeconomics on health care decision-making
  - Personal and professional values assessment
  - Moral distress (and moral courage)
  - Recognizing potential for health care provider bias
  - Professional boundaries in Facebook age
  - Institutional resources to help resolve ethical issues
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



- The best way(s) for me to learn are through (check all that apply):
  - Small group discussion
  - Role play
  - Reading articles (self-study)
  - Lecture & discussion
  - Large group presentations
  - Small groups
  - Having someone available for questions during rounding or as needed
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



- I think my unit would benefit by learning in this type of environment:
  - Rounding- clinical ethics rounds or ethics part of kardex rounds
  - Unit based ethics conversations
  - Class
  - Journal club
  - Hospital wide orientation
  - Annual ethics workshop
  - Nursing grand rounds
  - Case-study review
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



### Survey says ...

- Nurse ethicist participation in interprofessional patient rounds
- Clinical nurses as ethics liaison
- Priority topics of interest:
  - Managing "difficult" families
  - Pediatric ethics overview
  - Assent



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





## Nurse ethicist presence during rounds

- Deeper understanding of day-to-day challenges
- Familiarity – RN, case workers, social workers
- Immediate access
- Appreciation for complexity
- Identification of / follow-up on organizational ethics issues



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Nurse Ethicist Reflections

Incorporate  
Code of Ethics



It takes  
the Nurses to  
lead the way!

Power of nursing  
Affirmation  
Validation



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Next Steps

- Ongoing collaboration based on identified needs
- Accessibility of nurse ethicist
- Infusing the voice of ethics within organizational structures and processes

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Bedside ethics @ your hospital

- Understand current state
- Identify clinical nurse champions
- Leverage shared governance councils to determine priorities
- Environmental scan of available resources
- Plan – Do – Study – Act
- Nimbleness within the complexity of health care environment



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



What questions do you have?



© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## References

- Jameton, A. (1984). *Nursing practice: The ethical issues*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Wocial, L et al. *Facilitated Ethics Conversations: A novel program for managing moral distress in bedside nursing staff*. JONA's Healthcare Law, Ethics, Regulation. Volume 11, Number 1 (January – March 2009).

© Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---