

**SECTION HAQ – QUALITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

**HAQ0400**

**ETHICAL DECISION MAKING**

**POLICY**

All staff members will follow the established framework and process in addressing ethical dilemmas.

**PURPOSE**

To ensure a consistent approach in addressing ethical dilemmas.

**ETHICAL DECISION MAKING WILL BE GUIDED BY:**

**1. Ethical Principles**

**Autonomy:** Self-determination. Respect people's preference

**Non Maleficence:** Do no harm

**Beneficence:** Do well. Prevent, avoid or remove harm.

Also includes concept of proportionality- Balance harms and benefits.  
Maximize good and minimize harm.

**Justice:** Treat like cases alike. Be fair

**Veracity:** Tell the truth. Don't withhold information. Informed consent

**2. Organizational Mission and Values**

**3. Cultural beliefs and Values**

**PROCESSES** (Please refer to the Ethics Guideline in Appendix A)

**Identification of ethical problem**

Ethical issues or dilemmas occur when questions or concerns arise about how to proceed in the most morally appropriate way in a given situation, or when the choice is between what is the most right or least wrong, how a situation is being managed.

Informal discussion with colleagues is usually initiated by the person who feels uncomfortable, uncertain or concerned about a situation to identify the nature of the conflict and the decision(s) that need to be made.

**Fact finding**

Assembling the relevant facts using the established framework provides an analysis of the dilemma: what we know, what we need to know =, and who should be involved in further fact finding and decision making. Sources of information may include the literature, members of the Interdisciplinary Team, resident/client, or family.

**Who should be involved with decision making?**

A meeting of the identified participants should be held to present the dilemma and the facts fathered to date. The resident/client/family may or may not be involved tin the initial meeting depending on the level of fact finding required. One or more meeting may be required to gather the relevant facts; the resources needed, and determine a course of action(s).

**How should the decision be made?**

Identify all possible courses of action, the possible consequences of action and the moral argument both for and against each action.

Through discussions of the four topics and the predominant ethical principles, a single course of action may be evident and the situation resolved.

Often, the principles conflict and may point equally to different courses of action. Direction may be guided by reviewing other clinical situations for similarities and differences or additional resources people (e.g. member of the ethics Committee) may be asked to attend a meeting.

Select the best alternative. Document the decision and rational in the Health Record and communicate this to all concerned.

Review the situation regularly to evaluate the outcome and modify the plan or strategy as required. A time-limited trial of therapy may be appropriate.

**When making decisions regarding life sustaining treatment, the following points should be considered:**

- ✧ If the resident/client's preferences are not known, the decision to withhold or withdraw a specific treatment should depend solely on whether it is beneficial to the resident/client (e.g. ordinary vs extraordinary treatment; food and fluids vs medical treatment.)
- ✧ Treatment is not beneficial to the resident/client if:
  1. Treatment will be ineffective or harmful
  2. resident/client's life will be severely shortened regardless of treatment, and non treatment will allow a greater degree of caring and comfort than treatment
  3. resident/client is bound to have a life of intolerable and intractable pain and suffering
  4. resident./client is in a persistent vegetative state

**DOCUMENTATION**

Refer to Policy HAR6450 – Documentation of Special Conference.

**Reference**

**Guide for Ethical Decision Making in Clinical Practice—Peace Arch Hospital Ethics Committee**

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

