



6th International Conference on Clinical Ethics Consultation

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www.ethics2010.org



Abstract Submission Form – Workshops

Please contact John Tuohey at ethics@providence.org with any questions.

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Others? Please include Name, Title/Degree, Institution, and Country:

Proposed Workshop Title: Making Medical Decisions for the Forgotten Ones

Workshop abstract with three clearly state objectives (up to 250 words):

Four years ago, our hospital recognized that we were admitting an increasing number of incapacitated patients who lacked family or surrogates, and for whom major medical decisions had to be made in a relatively brief period of time. The ethics committee designed a protocol to address this problem, which was approved by the administration. Basically, a subgroup of the committee meets with the social worker (who has attempted to gather information about the patient) and with the treating physician (who reviews the patient's condition and treatment options). After deliberating what is in the patient's

best interest, this small group makes a recommendation to the physician. If all are not in agreement, there are provisions for further review by the full ethics committee and the chief medical officer.

We have now utilized this protocol with about 30 patients. Our experience in making decisions for patients who have no one to speak for them has been profound. These “patients without proxies” have included the homeless, treatment-resistant psychiatric patients, and isolated individuals who have outlived family and friends. Often the decisions involve end of life.

In this workshop we will briefly describe the protocol and the types of patients who have warranted our review. Several of the more challenging cases will be presented, along with questions that have arisen from the process. Is this method of decision-making preferred to judicial review or to the decision of the medical team alone? What is the optimal make-up of such a committee? Should the committee always meet the incapacitated patient, or does this border on voyeurism? How should the important decisions of this committee be monitored?

Are you planning to or will you be willing to submit a poster along with your workshop?

Yes No