



6th International Conference on Clinical Ethics Consultation

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Abstract Submission Form – Major Papers

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Proposed title of paper: The Clinical Ethics Consultation Project: A Pilot Program to Develop Quality in Clinical Ethics Consultation

Abstract with 3 clearly stated objectives in 250 words:

There is spirited debate in the field of clinical ethics consultation (CEC) about how clinical ethics consultants (CEC's) should be trained and how their work should be evaluated. This paper describes the Clinical Ethics Consultation Project (CECP), a one year pilot program developed to address these questions. The goals of the CECP were:

1. to develop an instrument to evaluate consultation notes.
2. to create a one year training program in CEC.
3. to begin to design a process to credential and privilege CEC's.

CECP used the clarity and completeness of the chart note as the basis for evaluating quality practice. CECP faculty developed an instrument, the "QI tool", to assess and score the essential elements of a quality ethics consultation that could be documented in a note. The project participants, 53 practicing CEC's from the New York metropolitan area, met monthly with CECP faculty to become familiar with the QI tool, use it on their own notes, and review the results with the group. Participants' notes were scored over the course of the project and showed statistically significant improvement in clarity and completeness. Participants were surveyed at the completion of the project and many described specific improvements in their consultation practices as a result of their participation in the CECP. Several also made major progress in developing credentialing and privileging mechanisms at their home institutions, including use of the QI tool for ongoing quality assessment. These findings provide encouraging evidence that peer review of consultation notes using a standardized instrument can lead to

improvements in consultation practice and documentation, and may be useful in establishing quality assurance processes for privileging established consultants..

What significant contribution to the field of clinical ethics consultation does this presentation make?
(250 words)

The CECP was initiated in response to the emerging picture of diversity in the quality and scope of clinical ethics consultation practice, and in recognition that CEC intrinsically occurs in difficult situations. Although the need to ensure high quality practice is clear, there are at present no universally accepted standards for consultation practice, no "accredited" programs to train consultants, no professional body overseeing credentialing, and no established method to track the quality of consultations. The CECP developed an instrument to evaluate CEC chart notes and used it as a basis for both training CEC's and evaluating their work (the QI tool). The assumption behind this strategy was that documentaion of the consult in a chart note is an essential element of a quality consultation. And, in fact, adherence to a high standard of written documentation could potentially have the added benefit of improving the actual consultation process. Although designed as a pilot the CECP makes an important contribution to the debate about training and standards. Its 53 participants, all practicing CEC's from varied backgrounds, represent a "living laboratory" whose work unambiguously benefited from the intervention. The results demonstrate that the QI tool has many potential uses: a component of a training program to teach the skill of documentation, a vehicle to foster peer evaluation of chart notes (and therefore discussion of the consults they represent), and the basis for institutional QI processes. The fact that several CECP participants began developing formal mechanisms to credential and privilege CEC's at their institutions after participation in the project is an additional significant outcome.

If you have or will publish on this topic, please cite reference:

Manuscript in preparation.

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

Yes No