UMHS Ethics Committee Handbook

I. Introduction

What is this? This short booklet sets forth basic information about how ethical issues are managed at UMHS.

At UMHS, the Center for Bioethics and Social Sciences in Medicine has a Clinical Ethics program, which provides the administrative home of the adult and pediatric ethics committees. We also have a stem cell research committee (http://www.stemcellresearch.umich.edu/research).

You can find the committee chairs, membership, bylaws, and other information at the committee websites.

Websites for the Clinical Ethics Program:
Adult: http://www.med.umich.edu/adultethics/


Center for Bioethics & Social Sciences in Medicine:
http://cbssm.med.umich.edu/

The Committees exist to provide consults on ethical issues, help develop policy and provide education. The stem cell committee exists to ensure stem cell research is in compliance with federal law.

Ethics is a way of thinking about disputes and conflict resolution. It can include issues like rationing (access to care), ethics at the edges of life (beginning and end of life issues), inappropriate treatment, how to determine death, organ transplantation, research using human subjects, what rights do/should patients have, physician refusal of care (conscience clause issues), abortion, etc.

UMHS has a legal office which can be consulted for any legal issues such as validity of an advance directive, relevant state or federal laws, assisted suicide laws, guardianship rules, who can make decisions for an incompetent patient, etc. For details see VI below.

Law and ethics are not the same, so in some cases the ethics committee must carefully set forth ethical positions.
II. Policies

Can be found at: http://www.med.umich.edu/i/policies/umh/toc.html

Some important policies are:

Advance Directives- 03-07-010
http://www.med.umich.edu/i/policies/umh/03-07-010.html

End of Life/Futility Issues- 62-10-005
http://www.med.umich.edu/i/policies/umh/62-10-005.html

Brain Death- 03-01-020
http://www.med.umich.edu/i/policies/umh/03-01-020.html

Charity Care- 01-03-003
http://www.med.umich.edu/i/policies/umh/01-03-003.html

DNAR-03-01-025
http://www.med.umich.edu/i/policies/umh/03-01-025.html

Conflict of Interest-01-04-003
http://www.med.umich.edu/i/policies/umh/01-04-003.html

Pacemaker De-activation (in-process. link to Google doc)
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1exde9wUcrjBg3DMOceMOHUrABPEgYdL4OvUTSGKTSpw/edit?usp=sharing

Privacy-01-04-320
http://www.med.umich.edu/i/policies/umh/01-04-320.html

Flu shots- 04-06-030
http://www.med.umich.edu/i/policies/umh/04-06-030.html

Patient Rights- 06-01-001
http://www.med.umich.edu/i/policies/umh/06-01-001.html
III. Process

Monthly committee meetings: the committees meet monthly to discuss cases, draft policies, plan educational sessions and discuss ethical concerns at the patient and institutional levels.

Process of a consult is:

1. There are eight faculty ethicists that rotate on call, Elias Baumgarten, Ed Goldman, Susan Goold, Naomi Laventhal, Adam Marks, Andy Shuman Lauren Smith, and Christian Vercler.
2. Janice Firn is the clinical ethicist and coordinates call and consults during normal working hours.
3. Interested committee members and students can ask to be included on call, if interested let Janice Firn know and she can get you signed up.
4. When called the consult member on call reviews the medical record, talks to relevant folks and writes a proposed recommendation which is posted on Box for the whole committee to review and comment on before it is finalized and placed in the patients’ medical record as a consult. The folder is located on M+box in the UMHS Ethics Committee folder- Adult Ethics Consults. Peds consults can be found in the Pediatric Ethics Committee folder- Ethics Consults.
5. Typically the consult member follows the case to see if any further assistance is required.
6. Cases are discussed at monthly committee meetings.
   • Pediatric ethics meets on the first Tuesday of the month from noon to 1:30 in dining rooms C-D.
   • Adult ethics meets on third Tuesday of the month from noon to 1:30 in dining room D.

IV. Ethics Grand Rounds

Grand Rounds are generally held monthly in Ford Auditorium on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 12-1pm.

All meetings and educational sessions are open.

V. Readings

There is significant ethics literature but to get started you can consider:

Belmont Report: (sets forth the basic rules of ethics especially for research) http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/

Troug, et. al., The Ethics of Everyday Clinical Practice, Hastings Center Report, Jan/Feb 2015, 11-20.
VI. Ethics and the Law

UMHS has a legal office available for consultations on the legal aspects of ethical issues. In some cases there are specific laws like Michigan’s ban on assisted suicide. In other cases the law and ethics may clash in areas like abortion which is legal but felt to be unethical by some. This can lead to discussions about patient choices versus physician refusal to provide certain types of care under conscience arguments. In other cases the law and ethics are in sync, like the rules for informed choice.

To learn more about Michigan law you can review the legal FAQ page at: https://www.med.umich.edu/u/medlaw/index.htm and talk to the health lawyers found at: http://ogc.umich.edu/practice-areas/health

VII. Where to learn More?

Ethics committee meetings are open and members of the Ethics Committees are happy to meet and talk about our work. CBSSM has extensive resources and hosts events and talks frequently. Contact info for the Clinical Ethics Program team is below.

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