

A Method for Ethical Deliberation: R.I.C.E.

Reflect:

1. Identify your biases and intuitions.

- What are your gut feelings about the case?
- What are the sources of your intuitions (i.e. your moral training, professional norms, personal history, social position, religious beliefs, relationships with the people involved, etc.)?
- What are the story lines playing in your head? (i.e. doctor not listening to nurse, noncompliant patient, doctor unable to let go of patient).
- What is your role or position in this case?

2. Identify the needs and concerns of the client/caller.

- Why did the client call you?
- How do they understand this situation as an ethical dilemma?
- What does the client want from you (a safe place to vent, moral support, brainstorming options, risk management, mediation, advocacy, conflict resolution, etc., etc.)?
- Is this the right channel to address the issue? Is this case appropriated to the needs/roles of ethics consultation?
- What can you offer to this situation? How can you support the moral decision-makers?

Investigate: Probe the Facts as Presented.

- Are there contextual, organizational or interpersonal issues complicating the case?
- Who is the ethical decision-maker? What are their needs and concerns?
- Who are the other stakeholders in the case? What are their values and interests?
- Has any perspective been neglected (i.e. nursing, family, resident)?
- Are there crucial unanswered questions or ambiguities?
- What resources could be mobilized to ease the situation?
- Who needs support and how could they best be supported?

Contemplate & Communicate: Prioritize Information, Identify Ethical Dimensions.

- What facts are particularly crucial?
- What ethical principles are in tension?
- What values are in conflict? Whose values are they?
- How are the patient's interests best served? Are there competing interests?
- What organizational or social structures have contributed to this dilemma?
- What are the benefits and burdens of the available options? How are these benefits and burdens distributed?
- How does this case compare to others you have experienced or heard of?
- How does the literature enhance your understanding of the case?
- Is there a middle way (i.e. can a third option be identified, such as a trial of treatment)?
- When does a decision have to be made?
- How do ethical theories, as well as moral inclinations, inform your analysis?
- What is the good act, and what makes it so?

Evaluate:

1. Attend to Organizational Dimensions.

- Does this case point to an institutional problem?
- Does it reveal an ambiguity or inconsistency in institutional policy?

2. Lessons Learned (peer evaluation and follow-up).

- How did participants experience the consultation process?
- Did participants find it helpful? How?
- Did this consult fulfill the goals and vision of ethics consultation?
- How could the process be improved?