



## Health Ethics in the Digital Age

### NSHEN March 2012 Conference Proceedings

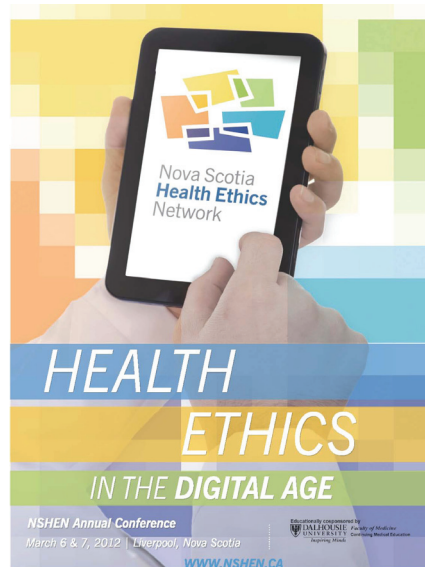
#### Comments from participants of the 2012 NSHEN Pre-Conference

...Very interesting and relevant topics  
...Interesting and relevant to my work  
...Very enjoyable  
...Excellent session, well worth it  
...Excellent opportunity, glad to have attended  
...Facilitator was great

#### Comments from participants of the 2012 NSHEN Main Conference

...Excellent array of sessions, great keynote  
...Interesting and excellent content, well presented, good venue  
...Conf was very informative and gave insight as to more of the questions I should be asking when dealing with ethical issues  
...Very engaging, informative thoughtful retreat  
...Well done  
...Excellent, thank you. Location food excellent  
...Excellent foundation for me being new to health ethics  
...Extremely informative, makes one realize that you must look at the great big picture  
...Thanks to all those who worked so hard to make it happen

The fifth annual NSHEN conference was held March 6th and 7th, 2012 in Liverpool and by all accounts it was a success. Feedback was positive overall and participants indicated that the conference could have been even longer, which is a first! We were glad to see familiar faces but were also very pleased to meet many first-time attendees as well. We started with a preconference focused on ethics in public health, examining various frameworks developed to address the unique ethical issues that arise in that context. This follows up on some of the feedback that we received after H1N1 through the ethical lessons learned process regarding the need for learning and tools around public health ethics.



A panel of public health professionals helped to facilitate discussion which was stimulated by cases addressing influenza vaccination, childhood obesity, and breastfeeding. Participants were very engaged and the discussion was both thoughtful and thought-provoking. It was a very full afternoon, and the feedback generated will help guide further work at NSHEN on the topic of public health ethics.

The theme for the main conference was “Health Ethics in the Digital Age”, and breakout sessions focused on exploring this theme in the context of patient communication, patient autonomy, patient safety, and the new Nova Scotia Personal Health Information Act. A final breakout session provided a forum for the sharing of best practices around ethics in Nova Scotia.

Some of the guiding questions for the conference were:

- Is high-tech care necessarily good care?
- Is confidentiality a bonus or a burden to health care?
- Are these new questions or old questions in new clothing?
- Just how helpful is Dr Google?
- Is technology a solution to shortage of health care providers in rural & remote areas?

Other issues that emerged in the discussion include the changing nature of professional boundaries, shifting expectations of patients and families, and the management of risks associated with new technologies in health care.

This year’s keynote speaker, Robert Sibbald of the London Health Sciences Centre, was particularly well-received. He related his experiences as the ethicist involved with the “Baby Joseph” case and highlighted the varied ways in which new technology can give rise to and exacerbate ethics issues.

### Some resources:

Using social media: practical and ethical guidance for doctors and medical students  
[http://www.bma.org.uk/images/socialmediaguidance\\_tcm41-206859.pdf](http://www.bma.org.uk/images/socialmediaguidance_tcm41-206859.pdf)

Take Two Aspirin And Tweet Me In The Morning: How Twitter, Facebook, And Other Social Media Are Reshaping Health Care. [Health Aff March/April 2009 vol. 28 no. 2 361-368]

Participants indicated that they went away with plenty of food for thought. Discussion was lively and excellent questions were raised. Feedback demonstrated that there is interest in further exploration of some of the questions raised at the conference, so NSHEN will remain engaged with questions that arise around how to integrate new technologies into health care practice so as to capitalize on their ability to help us provide the best possible care while avoiding potential pitfalls.

Participants also reported that the conference was well-organized, which is a credit to NSHEN's Administrator, Krista Mleczko-Skerry, as well as the conference organizing committee. We thank Angela Arra-Robar, Jeff Kirby, Fergall Magee, and Nancy Williamson for their time and effort and we thank our presenters for their contribution to the conference's success.

We're already starting to think about the conference for 2013, and if you have any thoughts regarding themes, breakout topics, presenters, or location please contact Krista at [krista.mleczkoskerry@iwk.nshealth.ca](mailto:krista.mleczkoskerry@iwk.nshealth.ca).

We'll also be exploring the ways in which we can capitalize on technology to make the conference more widely accessible while continuing to provide the opportunity for people to interact face-to-face.

## Social Media



## Did you know?

### A VERY BRIEF HISTORY OF ETHICS COMMITTEES

Ethics committees first started appearing in North America in the 1970s and proliferated during the 1980s. Several factors contributed to their emergence, including the establishment of institutional review boards (IRBs) or research ethics boards (REBs), therapeutic abortion committees (TACs) and abortion selection committees, dialysis selection committees, prognosis committees, and medical-moral committees in some Catholic hospitals.

The purpose of ethics committees, however, differed from some of their predecessors in that they were usually not given the task of making a decision but instead of providing a recommendation that could be taken into account in the decision-making process. Ethics committees also provide support for teams in identifying and addressing ethics issues.

Ethics committees traditionally focus their activities in one or more of the following three areas: ethics education, policy review or recommendations, and ethics consultation. They are generally multidisciplinary and often involve members of the community or public as well.

NSHEN currently has a library of books that may be of interest to you. Please contact the Administrator for the title listing or to arrange a book loan.

Questions?  
Comments? Want to join the mail list?

### Contact NSHEN!

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## Ethics in the News From the Hastings Center

"M," Polly, and the Right to Die  
Health Care  
Celia Kitinger and Jenny Kitinger, 10/12/2011

Read more: [http://www.thehastingscenter.org/Bioethicsforum/Post.aspx?id=5557&blogid=140&terms=social+media+and+%23filename+\\*.html#ixzz1tXyLJHfZ](http://www.thehastingscenter.org/Bioethicsforum/Post.aspx?id=5557&blogid=140&terms=social+media+and+%23filename+*.html#ixzz1tXyLJHfZ)

## NSHEN: Coming Events...

**April 25, 2012**

**Ethics Committee 101 Workshop. Holiday Inn, Truro.**  
Registration closes April 11, 2012. Details available on our website

**May 30, 2012**

**NSHEN Education Telehealth. Identifying the Ethics Issues.**  
12pm-1pm. Contact your local telehealth provider for location information in your area.

**June 13, 2012**

**Advanced Consultation Workshop. Pictou County Lodge, Pictou, NS.** Please contact NSHEN for registration information or visit our website [www.nshen.ca](http://www.nshen.ca)

*If there are any topics you would like to see discussed in our Newsletter or Telehealth Education sessions, please let us know!*

## What Makes NSHEN Unique?

While there are other ethics networks and centres across the country, there are a few features that make NSHEN unique within Canada.

- \* Our collaborative structure facilitates dialogue between partners
- \* Our strategic goals are collectively established by the collaborating partners
- \* NSHEN involves academia, government, and health care organizations in a single network

This results in a network that is innovative, efficient, and responsive to ethics needs in Nova Scotia.