



Ethics Accreditation in Health Care: Opportunity For Outreach

What is Accreditation

Accreditation is one of the most effective ways for health services organizations to regularly and consistently examine and improve the quality of their services.

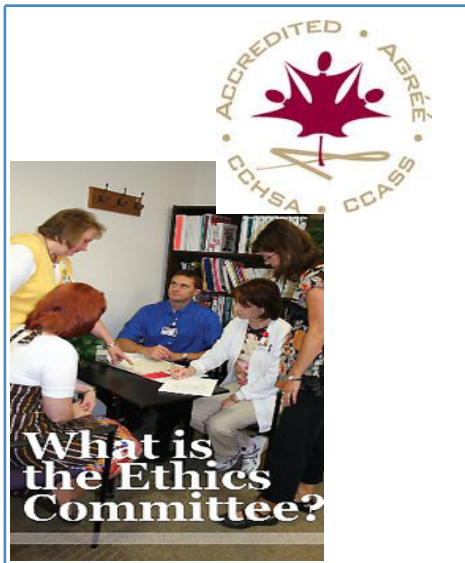
Health care organizations that participate in Accreditation Canada's accreditation programs are evaluating their performance against national standards of excellence. These standards examine all aspects of health care, from patient safety and ethics, to staff training and partnering with the community.

Health care staff devote time and resources to learn how to improve what they are doing so they can provide the best possible care and service.

What is CHES?

The Capital Health Ethics Support (CHES) Model is a nationally recognized, innovative and effective framework for providing comprehensive ethics support to a large, tertiary care health organization. CHES' primary goal is to build the ethics capacity of the Capital Health, Nova Scotia community.

It achieves this through delivery of four integrated, laterally-organized components: Ethics Education, Policy Development and Review, Clinical Ethics Consultation and Organizational Ethics.



The following two articles discuss the topic of accreditation in health care, specifically in the Capital District Health Authority.

Ethics Accreditation – Try Substituting Opportunity for Panic

I thought I'd share some thoughts with you about Capital Health's recent experience with accreditation. The Capital District Health Ethics Committee (CHES) coordinators had the usual gut reaction to initial communications about this – 'Oh no, not again!' We assumed that preparations would take a lot of time (that we didn't have) and, regardless of our efforts, it would ultimately go the way of most accreditations – we'd be 'red-flagged' once the surveyors visited a clinical unit or two and ascertained that frontline staff had little awareness of, or interest in, CHES' ethics activities.

After a constructive meeting with Capital Health's Effective Organization Group, we decided to approach the accreditation process in a new way, i.e., to view it as an opportunity to enhance the awareness of CHES within the Capital Health community. Working closely with one of the organization's communications consultants, Margaret Angus, we redeveloped CHES' website and established our first communications plan. We came up with a new tagline – working together to put values into practice – and designed a conceptual poster around this for presentation during an interactive forum with Capital Health's senior leaders. We created about thirty informational 'did you know?'- tidbits that were distributed prominently around Capital Health in the lead-up to accreditation. A brief e-communication highlighting the core functions of CHES was widely distributed. At the suggestion of the CEO and VP People, we prepared and submitted a proposal for CHES to be considered as a possible leading practice by Accreditation Canada.

During the on-site visit, the senior surveyor met with CHES' coordinators for about two hours. We had pre-selected two 'tracers' which took the form of our records documentation about an interesting clinical ethics consultation and a recent organizational ethics consultation. The surveyor selected the organizational ethics case and spent a half hour enthusiastically discussing it with us. She liked our communications plan, and I was later told that a few staff people knew about CHES when she visited a sample clinical unit. CHES ended up with no red flags (yes!) and a leading practice designation.

I recognize that this is a happy accreditation narrative about a relatively resource-rich health district. However, I think the key learning and insight here is to not panic about accreditation and instead, to creatively make the most of the opportunity that it presents.

Dr. Jeff Kirby
Associate Professor, Department of Bioethics, Dalhousie University
Ethics Consultant, NSHEN

Did you know?

The ethics committee is a group of people who serve as a resource for patients, health care providers and health care organizations when ethical decision making becomes a challenge

Did you know?

The committee offers case consultations which are conducted in a confidential setting and offer assistance and guidance to assist in sound ethical decision making

Communicating About Ethics Committees

Organizational leaders, health care providers, employees, learners and volunteers can only access ethics support if they are aware of the services offered and see the link between these services and their day-to-day work to care for Capital Health patients.

The role of communications is to build awareness (particularly among employees and health care providers) of the support offered by Capital Health Ethics Support (CHES) and to demonstrate the importance and relevance of these services to our daily work.

In preparation for Accreditation and to ensure employees and physicians have easy access to information about ethics support, an ad hoc CHES communications working group launched a new website highlighting CHES's four core components and other important information.

CHES has identified several vehicles for communicating important ethics information. Capital Health's weekly newsletter provides a venue for regular ethics "tips," along with contact information and a link to the CHES website. In addition, there are opportunities for face-to-face communication and education, such as grand rounds and ethics education sessions. CHES has developed a promotional postcard containing a summary of the four components of CHES and our contact information; these will be distributed at such face-to-face events.

This year, CHES launched a video for health professionals on the topic of informed choice. This video has been shown to health professionals in a number of venues, and has been posted to YouTube.

CHES continues to identify opportunities to raise awareness of ethics support and to help health professionals make the connection between ethics and everyday practice.

Margaret Angus
Director of Marketing and Communications
Capital District Health Authority

Ethics Q & A

Question: What is the ethics committee?

The ethics committee only makes recommendations – decisions are made by the individuals directly involved in an ethics issue

Question: When is someone allowed to make medical choices for themselves?

Whenever they can understand information relevant to the decision and can understand the consequences of their choice

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

Questions?
Comments? Want to join the mail list?

Contact NSHEN!

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NSHEN: Coming Events...

November 30, 2011	Telehealth Education Session Ethics and Social Media (Panel Discussion) 12pm-1pm Please check with your Telehealth Coordinator for the room location in your area
December, 2011	NSHEN Newsletter
January 25, 2012	Telehealth Education Session Topic to be announced, Halifax, NS.
February, 2012	NSHEN Newsletter
March 6 & 7, 2012	NSHEN 2012 Conference. Details available on our website (www.nshen.ca)
April 11, 2012	All Hazards Workshop. Details available on our website
April 25, 2012	Ethics Committee 101 Workshop. Details available on our website

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.