Patrick McGrath VP Research, Innovation and Knowledge Translation

Clinical and organizational ethics

Ethics are part of everything we do in healthcare. Every decision taken by and every action of executives, physicians, employees, and volunteers has ethical implications. When a physician supports a patient, when a nurse does a procedure, when a volunteer helps supply information to a patient, they are guided by ethics. Most of the time our ethics decisions are automatic, supported by our personal values, our standard practices and policies, our professional ethical codes, and our organizational values.

But ethical challenges are part of healthcare. For example, on the policy level, is a policy accidentally discriminatory? On the clinical level, is a decision made by a proxy decision maker in the patient's best interests? Ethics NSHA is designed to help us at NSHA use national and international best practices to work through these tough decisions.

The model we use at NSHA has professional ethicists, administrators and frontline health care providers collaborating with patients and families to respond to ethical challenges as they arise. I cannot overemphasize the importance of a vibrant clinical and organizational ethics presence in the delivery of healthcare. It is important in our everyday activities and provides targeted support when ethical issues challenge us.

The importance of clinical and organizational ethics is reflected in the central place of ethics in Accreditation Canada's accreditation of healthcare facilities in Canada. When the accreditation team comes to NSHA they will be examining how our clinical and organizational ethics processes are working to help guide our clinical care. We will be ready.

Accountability for clinical and organizational ethics is through the NSHA Ethics Leads Group to the NSHA VP Research, Innovation, and Knowledge Transfer portfolio with final responsibility residing in the Board of Directors of NSHA.

Ethics are part of all we do at NSHA. It is in our family history, it is in our DNA as we translate our mission, vision, and values into practice to create a healthier Nova Scotia. We are grateful for those who take on the special responsibility of serving on the ethics committees and local ethics teams across Nova Scotia as well as to all those working within NSHA, who bring ethics to bear in everything that they do.