



## Conscientious Objection

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The following discussion questions are provided as an additional educational tool to accompany this fireside chat video. Please feel free to select the questions that are most relevant to your committee or group, revise and adapt them as needed etc. As always, we welcome feedback on this or any other NSHEN resource.

1. Discuss Dylana's understanding of the term "conscientious objection", the values it reflects and the criticisms for allowing conscientious objection. Does your understanding align with hers?
2. Health care providers are often faced with conflicts between their personal values and their professional duty to provide care. In these situations, it is usually expected that professional obligations will be prioritized over personal values. What is different about a situation in which a health care provider may choose to conscientiously object to providing care?
3. Do you agree with Dylana's assertion that only individuals - not organizations - can conscientiously object to a health procedure?
4. Discuss the compromise that health care providers are permitted to refuse care as long as another health care provider is available to provide the service without creating undue burden on the patient. How might this present extra challenges in rural settings where access to health care providers is more limited? How should rural providers respond to this challenge? Is it ethical that the type of setting in which providers practice may influence their ability to conscientiously object to providing care?
5. How do ethical issues of paternalism, respect for patient autonomy, moral distress and resource allocation relate to this discussion?
6. What preventative measures could organizations and health care providers enact to try to avoid difficult conscientious objection situations?
7. Do you agree with Dylana that conversations with patients about conscientious objection should take place early in the patient/provider relationship? Why or why not?
8. How do you think the issue of conscientious objection will develop with regards to the new assisted death legislation in Canada?

## Resources

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Aidan Hayes. (2015). *The Shortcomings of Conscientious Objection*

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The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. (2015). *Professional Obligations and Human Rights*.

<http://www.cpso.on.ca/policies-publications/policy/professional-obligations-and-human-rights>

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<http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/margaret-somerville-a-modest-proposal-for-respecting-physicians-freedom-of-conscience>

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Shaw, J. & Downie, J. (2014) *Welcome to the Wild, Wild North: Conscientious Objection Policies Governing Canada's Medical, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Dental Professions*. In Bioethics, 28(1), 33-46.

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