



SaskEthics

An Ethics Newsletter for Catholic Healthcare Organizations in Saskatchewan

Newsletter builds Catholic healthcare community

Dear *SaskEthics* Readers,



After over a year long absence, I am pleased to announce the return of the *SaskEthics* newsletter. I had the chance to touch base with several of our Catholic healthcare facilities this summer following my appointment as the new bioethicist for the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS), and I consistently heard that *SaskEthics* provides a valuable way to keep our provincial Catholic healthcare community connected. With this in mind, I hope to publish this newsletter bi-monthly to provide healthcare professionals a chance to reflect on the ethical issues they encounter in their care for patients, clients, residents and families.

As I connected with senior leadership, nursing managers, and front line healthcare professionals this summer, we had a chance to discuss the ethical challenges they face in their acute and long-term care facilities. I was surprised to learn that for many healthcare

professionals, it is the routine, day-to-day ethical decisions that often carry the greatest weight.

For example, imagine a continuing care assistant (CCA) who regularly helps a patient with his meals. The patient has had a swallowing assessment, and is at risk of choking; however, he insists that he wants to continue eating a regular diet. The CCA initially feels that it is her duty to help the patient eat, but after the patient endures a number of intense coughing fits, she begins to question her role in his care. She becomes increasingly anxious on shifts where she realizes she will have to help the patient with his meals.

If left unchecked, this routine ethical distress can create what it sometimes called “moral residue.” Moral residue can build up, making it harder and harder to face the situation that is causing moral distress. This can eventually contribute to burnout.

So what do we do about this? One good place to start would be to talk over the ethical problem as a team and see if there is another way to understand the situation. In the example above, this could potentially involve a discussion about the responsibilities of care team members and



St. Paul's Hospital



Catholic Health
Association of Saskatchewan

the patient's right to live at risk. If this does not ease the CCA's concerns, a possible solution might be to coordinate team members so a CCA who does not share the same concerns is caring for the patient during meal times.

Of course, another option might be to call in an ethicist to help the team find a way to resolve or manage the situation - and fortunately CHAS has just hired a brand new ethicist who is eager to help!

The day-to-day reality of working in a complex healthcare system can be challenging, but these challenges do not need to be met in isolation. Looking ahead to the coming year, I hope this newsletter

will encourage ethical reflection as well as help to create a sense of community in our Catholic healthcare facilities.

On another note, the long hiatus between issues of *SaskEthics* provides a good opportunity for a gentle rebranding of this newsletter. If you have any ideas for new features that you would like to see included in future issues, please do not hesitate to contact me at mary@chassk.ca

I look forward to working with all of you!

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2017 Convention – Time to Register

October 20 - 22, 2017
DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Regina



**MINISTERING
TO GOD'S BELOVED**
serving and learning
from those who are vulnerable

Joint Convention of the
CATHOLIC HEALTH
ASSOCIATION OF SASKATCHEWAN
and the
SASKATCHEWAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL
BOARDS ASSOCIATION

Early bird registration (before Sept 30th) is \$265,
following this is \$280.

Keynote Speakers and sessions:

Anne Butler, RN, MSN

Session #1: The Beauty of the Dancer: Embracing Our Own Vulnerability

Session #2: The Beauty of the Song: Embracing the Vulnerability of Others

Dr. Josephine Lombardi

Session #3: Becoming Experts in Humanity: Understanding the Factors that Influence Human Behaviour and Limit Authentic Freedom

Session #4: Mercy and Beyond: Understanding the Obstacles that Keep us from Being Merciful Witnesses

Plenary Presentations:

Health Focus with Dr. Hazel Markwell:

Autonomy & Choice: How Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia Changes Everything

Education Focus with Fr. Mark Miller: The Gospel

Mandate to **Love** those on the Margins:
Healthcare and Healing for Those Who Are Different

For more information please contact us at:

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