



# SaskEthics

*An Ethics Newsletter for Catholic Healthcare Organizations in Saskatchewan*

## The collateral damage of autonomy

Dear *SaskEthics* Readers,



Every fall, I am delighted by a smattering of requests for education sessions from a wide variety of teams who are trying to get

energized for the year ahead. This fall, I started to notice a pattern as almost every team who reached out asked me to address some variation of this question: “How do we continue to care for someone who is making choices we don’t agree with?”

Luckily for me, during my first year as an ethicist I designed a talk to address precisely this issue. However, as I began making my rounds to different care teams, I quickly realized that the issues raised by this question have intensified during the pandemic. Rather than asking, “how can we care for this one person,” the question has become, “how can we keep doing this day after day when people are coming into our hospital unvaccinated,” or, “when my colleagues show no appreciation for why I do not want to be vaccinated?”

The reason that is sometimes given for respecting other people’s choices is that

the individual is the only one affected by his decisions. But this answer misses the mark. When a patient makes a choice, he may be the person most impacted, but that choice starts a ripple effect and it is most often our frontline staff who are caught up in that wave. This can happen whether they are asked to support an unsafe move back home, assist a patient who has refused a feeding tube, or care for someone who refused to wear a motorcycle helmet.

Our reason for respecting these choices runs deep enough that facing the challenges usually feels worthwhile. The *Catholic Health Ethics Guide* roots autonomy in our respect for persons and their free will, and I hope most of us would say that healthcare has improved since we shifted from paternalism to autonomy as a grounding principle.

Yet, we still must acknowledge that respecting the choices of others is not always easy, especially when it has an impact on the care we provide. What does your team do to help each other weather the collateral damage of autonomy? Are some situations harder to face than others? What makes them hard? What helps you



St. Paul's Hospital



Catholic Health  
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to let go of frustration when you know you need to continue to provide care?

As a resource for your team, I hope you will consider attending the W.F. Mitchell Bioethics Presentation. This year Erin Beckwell of Seen + Heard Consulting will be leading a session titled, “Beyond Burnt Out: Coping with Trauma, Grief, and Loss as Healthcare Workers in a Global Pandemic” as well as a session aimed

specifically at leaders titled, “Beyond Burnt Out: A Session for Leaders on Supporting Healthcare Workers and Teams.” Please see the attached posters for more details on how to join.

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## ETHICS EXCHANGE

*Monthly Discussions of complex issues for  
SHA staff and clinicians*

### September 22, 2021

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

SPEAKER	TOPIC	LEARNING OBJECTIVES
<b>Gary Goldsand</b> Ethicist, Regina and Integrated Rural Health Saskatchewan Health Authority	<b>A Reasonable Middle Path?</b> <b>The Ethics of Harm Reduction in Clinical Encounters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In this session we examine the pros and cons of harm reduction - the idea that we offer interventions that help protect patients from serious harm, while accepting behaviors likely contributing to current lesser harms.</li><li>• How reasonable is such an approach, all things considered?</li></ul>

**WebEx Presentation:**  
[CLICK HERE TO JOIN](#)  
Meeting number (access code): 1328 86 1794  
Meeting password: mTuiShNJ268

If you have any questions regarding this Ethics Presentation,  
please contact [ethics@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:ethics@saskhealthauthority.ca)

**Saskatchewan  
Health Authority**

[saskhealthauthority.ca](http://saskhealthauthority.ca)

# Beyond Burnt Out:

## Coping with Trauma, Grief, and Loss as Healthcare Workers in a Global Pandemic

**Trying to figure out how to keep going when there's nothing left 'in the tank'?**  
**Struggling to find time and energy to care for yourself when your job is caring for others?**  
**Feeling like your passion for working in healthcare is disappearing?**

**Working in healthcare during the pandemic has exposed us to a never-ending stream of grief, loss, and trauma and has pushed many of us to drain our reserves of energy, compassion, and coping. This session will explore how this environment can impact us, and provide space to reflect on and process complex emotions.**

Presenter: Erin Beckwell, MSW RSW (SK)

Two opportunities to join via WebEx:

**October 28**  
**12-1pm**

[Click to join meeting](#)

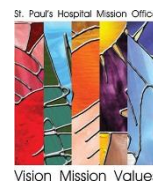
**November 3**  
**2-3pm**

[Click to join meeting](#)

For more information contact Mary Heilman  
[mary.heilman@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:mary.heilman@saskhealthauthority.ca)



*Annual conference funding supported by  
William F. Mitchell Endowment Fund*



# Beyond Burnt Out:

## A Session for Leaders on Supporting Healthcare Workers and Teams

Working in healthcare during the pandemic has exposed us to a seemingly never-ending stream of grief, loss, and trauma. It's also pushed many healthcare workers and leaders to draw upon - and ultimately deplete - our reserves of energy, compassion, and coping strategies.

This session will explore how ongoing exposure to compassion fatigue, trauma, grief and loss can impact us and the people we support, identify strategies for promoting wellbeing and resilience among healthcare workers and teams, and provide space to reflect on and process complex emotions.

Presenter: Erin Beckwell, MSW RSW (SK)

Join via WebEx:

**October 26**  
**2-3pm**

**Join meeting**

For more information contact Mary Heilman  
[mary.heilman@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:mary.heilman@saskhealthauthority.ca)



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