

Donors make a difference at PMHV



As the Program in Medicine and Human Values approaches its 20th year, I am pleased to report that our greatest challenge is our own success. Dr. Al Jonsen and I started this program with the goal of applying his method of moral analysis to ethical dilemmas occurring in CPMC's medical wards. Combining the arts of medicine and philosophy has succeeded, as evidenced by the dramatically increasing demand from the medical staff and other providers for ethics consultations.

Beginning in 2003 with one hospital and about 20 annual consults, we've expanded to seven hospitals and seven clinical ethicists on track to provide more than 700 clinical consultations this year. Additional Sutter hospitals across Northern California now recognize our value and request our service. Our challenge is to address that need.

We need more clinical ethicists. Several of our current ethicists trained in the PMHV fellowship program. Only a handful of other training programs offer candidates that meet our needs. While recruiting additional clinical ethicists, we are finding other ways to increase our presence.

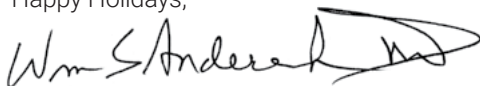
Several years ago, a donor told me that she wanted to make a gift to PMHV that promoted new types of virtual communication in our clinical work. I was skeptical. I have based my medical and ethical career on a personal connection with the patient. I have insisted that all our ethics consultations include an in-person evaluation of the patient. But I did not want to look a gift horse in the mouth, so I thanked her and started thinking about how to honor her request.

It turns out my skepticism was unfounded, and she was prescient. COVID-19 happened and turned the delivery of medical care upside down. The pandemic forced us into a virtual world. Fortunately, PMHV was prepared. We had been thinking about how we could incorporate virtual communication, and we were ready to go when the opportunity arose. We were one of Sutter's first departments to launch virtual learning programs with our webinar series, focused on practical approaches to ethical problems faced by front-line providers. We have continued to conduct annual workshops for hospital ethics committees, as well as our international conferences, online. The results have both pleased and surprised me as I struggle to adapt.

Now we are moving from online education to virtual clinical care. Providers at Sutter already offer telehealth intensive care and psychiatry services to many outlying hospitals. Adding virtual communication tools to our ethics consultation service will allow us to eliminate barriers of distance, date, and time from our work with patients, families, and healthcare workers. Distant family members will now have a chance to better understand their loved one's condition and participate in healthcare decisions. And we will be able to connect with physicians in the rural areas of Northern California and the Central Valley.

This is just one example of how you, the donor, can make a difference. We use your contributions to support, develop, and test new ideas and projects. When a program proves valuable, the organization funds it, enabling us to apply your donations toward new advances. Keep it up.

Happy Holidays,



William S. Andereck, M.D., FACP



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Welcome and Introduction: Sarah W. Sawicki

Ms. Sawicki comes to Sutter Health from the University of Alabama Birmingham Hospital where she worked as a clinical ethics consultant. She's currently pursuing a Ph.D. in healthcare ethics with a concentration in clinical ethics at Saint Louis University. She has a master's degree in bioethics from Trinity International University. She has also taught undergraduate courses at Saint Louis University. Sarah will provide clinical ethics consultations at CPMC and Mills Peninsula Medical Center.



VIRTUAL BIOETHICS WORKSHOP | 2022

Beyond the Basics: Problem-Solving Unique Cases

PMHV hosted its third annual Virtual Bioethics Workshop during successive two-hour sessions on September 9 and 16. Participants represented 38 institutions from California to Maryland, and several health systems, such as Sutter Health, Dignity Health, and Kaiser Permanente. Workshop attendees included ethics committee members and other healthcare professionals, such as bioethicists, physicians, nurses, risk managers, chaplains, social workers, administrators, and patient advocates.

The interactive virtual workshop focused on helping participants refine their analytical skills to resolve complex patient situations. PMHV senior clinical ethicist Shilpa Shashidhara, Ph.D., served as program chair.

PMHV program director Ruchika Mishra, Ph.D., opened Day One with a discussion on equitable treatment, specifically focusing on disabled patients in the

hospital. Next, clinical ethicist Kelsey Gipe, Ph.D., discussed strategies to respond to patients' challenging behaviors toward providers. Clinical ethicist John Frye, Ph.D., shared tips on how to determine who best represents a patient when identifying a surrogate decision maker. Dr. Shashidhara concluded Day One by analyzing a pediatric care situation involving artificial nutrition and parental autonomy.

Senior clinical ethicist Robert Fulbright J.D., began Day Two by discussing how to navigate uncommon requests from patients and families. Dr. Mishra and clinical ethics fellow Alex Duvoisin, J.D., examined the scenario of an undischargable patient and reviewed providers' obligations. PMHV medical director William Andereck, M.D., ended the session by focusing on the importance of communication in challenging situations, reiterating that "words matter."



7 HOSPITALS



7 CLINICAL ETHICISTS



700
CLINICAL
CONSULTATIONS

Bioethics: A Resource for All

RUCHIKA MISHRA, PH.D.

The Program in Medicine and Human Values is a resource for one and all. Our team of clinical ethicists performed 704 ethics consultations in 2021.

As the pandemic changed everyone's lives, a broad range of ethical issues continued to surface. With patients delaying medical attention and experiencing social isolation and increased mental health issues, hospital providers were often confronted by acutely ill patients with complex psychosocial needs.

We received ethics consultation requests from a diverse group of providers. Although anyone encountering an ethical dilemma, uncertainty, or conflict can request assistance, our professional ethicists' process is inclusive regardless of who requests the consult.

As we advise providers about their ethical obligations and help implement appropriate policies in challenging situations, our ethicists:

- Visit and consult with the patient.
- Speak with patient representatives (relatives, friends, or court appointed conservators).
- Liaise with community stakeholders involved in the patient's care.
- Work with frontline clinicians and staff to develop an appropriate care plan for the patient.

A widening variety of hospital and community stakeholders benefit from our team's expertise. Here are a few of their stories.



Kelsey Gipe, Ph.D.



John Frye, Ph.D., M.A.



Shilpa Shashidhara,
Ph.D.



Robert Fulbright,
J.D., M.A.



Thomasine Kushner,
Ph.D.



Ruchika Mishra, Ph.D.



Daniel Zimmerman, R.N., BSN

*Wound Ostomy Team
California Pacific Medical Center*

When divergent opinions develop among patients, their families, and hospital staff while navigating what might be best for our wound care patients, the bioethics service is an invaluable resource. They provide great insight, guidance, and advocacy for everyone involved with these difficult cases. They allow us to align care goals under such circumstances and make treatment decisions that are ethical, compassionate, and sustainable.



Nicole Lapointe, LCSW

*Deputy Conservator
Office of Public Guardian, Contra Costa County*

I worked alongside the clinical bioethicist at Sutter Delta over the course of several months in a case regarding a conserved client’s end-of-life treatment and quality-of-life considerations. I’m a conservator for Contra Costa County and this was my first time dealing with such a difficult case. I was able to see firsthand how compassionate and dedicated the bioethicist was. She was there the entire time for consultations, meetings with medical providers, court proceedings, and difficult conversations with the patient and her family. The bioethicist’s in-depth knowledge of patient-centered medical care and respect for autonomy goes above and beyond usual expectations. She is kind, calm, and practices with perfect balance. I am extremely grateful to be working alongside hospital staff that practices with such integrity and respect for the work that they do.



Cherie Green, M.D.

*Director, Inpatient Adult
Medicine Service
Family Medicine Residency
Program, Sutter Santa Rosa
Regional Hospital*

The family medicine residency service at SSRRH cares for our community’s most vulnerable patients, who often face complex medical problems while unhoused, mentally ill and/or suffering from substance use disorders. The bioethics team has been incredibly valuable in helping us navigate the complex social, medical, and ethical dilemmas. It can be confusing and difficult to make sure we’re doing the right thing for our patients, who may not have capacity nor any person in their lives who can help. The bioethics team has helped shepherd our physician learners so that they can master these crucial skills during their training and carry the ethical tools and principles with them throughout their careers. Thank you for the many years of support and service!



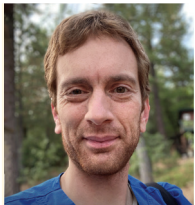
Denise Navellier, R.N.

*Chief Nursing Executive
Alta Bates Summit Medical Center*

The bioethics service is a must-have in any organization. The team engages in many types of cases and supports the families and care teams in discussions when tough decisions need to be made. I’ve personally been involved in a number of challenging cases with the team. The group’s process and support has allowed resolution of cases in the best manner possible. The collaboration with the healthcare team and chaplaincy is amazing. I’m so grateful for the bioethics team and their engagement with our hospital teams.

I'm thankful the bioethics service helped obtain my contact information and reached out to me so I could visit my sister at the hospital before she passed. I appreciate that I had the opportunity to speak with my sister and was able to assist the medical team respect her end-of-life wishes. The support I received from the medical team, especially the nurses at her bedside, ensured that my sister's passing was as comfortable as possible.

— **A patient's sister**
Novato Community Hospital



Adam Long, R.N.

*Nurse, Medical-Surgical Unit
Sutter Lakeside Hospital*

The bioethics team is a valuable resource for difficult situations, including one that happened

earlier this year. Two sides of a large family strongly disagreed about a patient's plan of care. The bioethicist made the long drive to our remote hospital and helped to assess the situation. By building trust and rapport with the family, the bioethicist, along with nursing staff, care coordination personnel, and physicians, created a plan that improved safety for both the patient and the healthcare team. Thanks to the support from bioethics, the care team was able to maintain a positive relationship with the family. Without the help and guidance of bioethics, a greater amount of hospital resources would have been expended unnecessarily on the situation. Having the consistently high-quality bioethics consult service available benefits the entire team when dealing with the most complex situations.



Alyssa Kasten, LCSW

*Palliative Care and Support
Services*

Palo Alto Medical Foundation

The bioethics service is an invaluable resource and asset

to Sutter network hospitals, medical professionals, patients, and families. During my time as a social worker at Mills-Peninsula Medical Center, I consulted with our incredible bioethicists to assist with complex situations, including helping to identify surrogate decision makers for unrepresented patients, exploring and guiding ethically appropriate medical treatment, and navigating conflict surrounding treatment and care. I greatly appreciate the bioethics service's approach to consultations as they consider the medical, psychosocial, spiritual, ethical, and legal aspects of care. The bioethicists respect and maintain dignity for all those involved; elicit and ensure everyone's voice and perspective is heard; facilitate meetings with the healthcare team, patients, and families; and offer recommendations that reflect and support value-based, goal-concordant, and ethically appropriate care. I hope this service continues to expand to other Sutter network hospitals and outpatient settings.

“The bioethicist's in-depth knowledge of patient-centered care and respect for autonomy goes above and beyond expectations.”

**PROGRAM IN MEDICINE
& HUMAN VALUES**

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Senior Clinical Ethicist



Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for 2023!

Our expanding team at the Program in Medicine and Human Values wishes you a joy-filled holiday season and good health into the new year. We appreciated the return to normalcy this year as we continued in-hospital clinical ethics work with colleagues and began to use tele-ethics. The year 2023 promises more opportunities, which we hope includes interactions with you.

If you'd like to learn about opportunities to invest in our current initiatives, please contact **Vanessa Tan** at **415-600-4400** or vanessa.tan@sutterhealth.org.

