

Striving for Excellence in Ethics

Improving the quality of ethics services in our health care organizations has been a recurring theme in these pages. This issue of *Health Care Ethics USA* carries two additional contributions—“Building a Lasting and Effective Health Care Ethics Program: Insights from the Field,” by David Belde and “Inside Out: The Value of a New Perspective When Evaluating and Assessing Ethics Programs” by Steven Squires. Each article has different concerns and takes a different approach, but their goal is the same—promoting excellence in ethics services.

We have previously noted here the work that is going on in secular health care ethics. The latest development is the initiation of a pilot certification process for clinical ethics consultants to be conducted by the Board of Directors of the American Society of Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH) during the current 2010-2011 academic year. The pilot “will be used to refine the portfolio requirements and the examination process.” The intent is to open the certification process to all applicants within one year of the pilot program. The implications of such a certification process for clinical ethics consultants in Catholic health care are unclear at the moment, but are intriguing to say the least!

While not going down the road of certification (at least not currently), Catholic health care is undertaking a project—“Striving for Excellence in

Ethics”—that will hopefully contribute to increased excellence in ethics services and programs across the ministry. The project aims at identifying and describing components of a “robust ethics program,” along with recommendations for achieving excellence with regard to each, and competencies, standards, evaluation mechanisms, and tools where applicable. CHA has pulled together a small work group of ethicists to draft the resource and is working in collaboration with Ascension Health ethicists. Ideally, there will be a draft available for review at the March 2011 Theology and Ethics Colloquium and a final product available at the June 2011 Catholic Health Assembly. In addition to supporting ethics quality initiatives across the ministry, this resource will also serve as a foundation for other CHA-ministry endeavors around excellence in ethics programs and services.

In the meantime, we invite those of you who are engaged in projects related to ethics quality to share in these pages with the rest of the ministry what it is you are doing.

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