

The Seventh Annual Catholic Healthcare Innovation in Ethics Forum

The Seventh Annual Catholic Healthcare Innovation in Ethics Forum (CHIEF) was hosted virtually in September 2025 by SSM Health. This year's conference successfully accomplished CHIEF's mission: to provide a dynamic forum for ethicists to exchange innovative ideas and promote effective integration of ethics in Catholic healthcare. The conference was coordinated by the CHIEF planning committee that consisted of membership representing Catholic healthcare. Members were ethicists from SSM Health, Hospital Sisters Health System, CommonSpirit Health, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, Mercy, OSF Healthcare, Ascension, and Intermountain Health.

Similar to prior years, CHIEF welcomed presentations on a variety of topic areas such as:

- Community and Belonging
- High Reliability in Clinical Ethics
- Beyond the Common Consult
- Professionalism and the Ethicist

This year's conference took place over the course of three days and included three types of learning sessions: a keynote address, lightning talks, and workshops.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Peter J. Cataldo, PhD delivered the CHIEF 2025 Keynote Address titled, "The Via Media and the Profession of Catholic Healthcare Ethics." Dr. Cataldo offered some reflections on his career in Catholic healthcare ethics, inviting participants to consider connections to their own context and the profession in general. The central theme for his keynote was identifying the via media in Catholic healthcare ethics as a way to avoid extremes, and he provided several examples from his own career as well as prominent examples in Catholic healthcare ethics today. Dr. Cataldo has graciously provided a written summary of his keynote address in this special issue on CHIEF 2025.

LIGHTNING TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

Lightning talks are 7-minute presentations that are limited to three slides of content. In total, there were 23 lightning talks that included time for Q&A with the presenters. Of the many fascinating topics, we had several talks in the "Beyond the Common Consult" category that focused on caring for particularly vulnerable patients.

CHIEF 2025 also offered a total of three workshop sessions. In one workshop, Rafael

Flores and Tim Cotita led a discussion on “Ethics as a formative process.” In another workshop, Alexandria Lescher shared about “Magnetic: a new approach to marketing ethics services.” The final workshop was a featured workshop led by Becket Gremmels, Mary Homan, and Mark Repenshek on “A standard process for assessing the ROI of clinical ethics consultation.” This final workshop provided opportunities for CHIEF attendees to share in small groups about work we are all engaged in to learn from one another.

CELEBRATING OUR FIELD

Last year, the CHIEF Planning Committee added a new Emerging Ethics Leader Award. The award was established to recognize an ethicist who has been working full time for two to seven years in Catholic healthcare. The intent of the award is to recognize an ethicist who has moved beyond the start of their career and is emerging as an established, consistent contributor within a Catholic healthcare organization and the broader field. The winner of the Emerging Ethics Leader Award in 2025 was Laura Webster, DBE, RN, HEC-C. Laura serves as vice president of the Northwest Region of CommonSpirit Health. She was nominated by her colleagues at CommonSpirit Health. Congratulations, Laura!

As we have done in previous years, CHIEF recognized attendees' publications from the prior year (September 2024 through September 2025). This collection of writings identified the exciting contributions of many ethicists. CHIEF attendees published 11 articles in seven peer-reviewed journals during the prior year. Additionally, six articles

appeared in trade and popular magazines, and attendees contributed to one book chapter, with several more forthcoming in 2026. These publications highlight the significant contributions ethicists in Catholic healthcare are making to the field of bioethics.

FEEDBACK ON THE CONFERENCE

Following the conclusion of CHIEF 2025, post-conference survey results showed a 4.8 (out of 5) overall rating – a tremendous success! Of the 19 respondents, 84% of the attendees indicated they were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to implement changes to their ethics services from content learned at the conference.

In 2025, CHIEF provided 8.25 hours of Continuing Medical Education (CME) for attending the conference. The post-conference survey sought feedback on the value of offering CME. Of the 19 respondents, 11 indicated that they are not pursuing HEC-C and therefore do not need CME, while 6 respondents stated they would report the CME hours to meet their HEC-C requirements.

Feedback also showed that the virtual forum of CHIEF is highly valued. The virtual setting balances out other in-person opportunities and provides an accessible opportunity for people to attend, even amongst their busy schedules. The three partial-day schedule of CHIEF was also strongly affirmed in the post-conference survey.

CHIEF 2026

For those who missed the 3-day CHIEF conference, recordings are available at [this link](#).

Thank you to all the attendees who participated in this year's conference. We are excited to return for the Eighth Annual Catholic Healthcare Innovation in Ethics Forum, hosted by Intermountain Health. Please contact Christopher.Ostertag@imail.org for any questions about CHIEF 2026 and you can expect a save-the-date in early spring.

Thank you to the CHIEF Planning Committee Members for collaborating and providing input on this conference summary!



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