

The Sixth Annual Catholic Health Care Innovation in Ethics Forum

The Sixth Annual Catholic Health Care Innovation in Ethics Forum (CHIEF) was hosted virtually in October by the Hospital Sisters Health System (HSHS). 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 health care. The conference was coordinated by the CHIEF planning committee that consisted of membership representing Catholic health care. Members were ethicists from CHRISTUS Health, CommonSpirit Health, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, Mercy Health, OSF Health care, Providence Health, SSM Health, and Trinity 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
- Ethics & Data Science
- 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

M. Cathleen Kaveny, PhD, JD, MPhil, MA, delivered the CHIEF 2024 Keynote Address titled, 'Prophet, Priest, or Royal Ruler: The Identity Crisis for Catholic Ethicists Today.' Dr. Kaveny's thought-provoking and insightful talk had three parts. First, she explored the evolution of Catholic ethics in the second half of the 20th century. She described the shift that occurred from a time when moral theologians addressed issues in medicine to the present time of "Christian ethicists of the Catholic persuasion." Second, she articulated two problems leading to a crisis in Christian and Catholic ethics. The first problem is the division within the field, specifically that methods, foci, and presuppositions are deeply fragmented. The second problem she identified is the halted state of Catholic moral theology. Due to these two problems, Dr. Kaveny argued that Catholic health care ethicists face challenges in grounding current thinking and in finding a voice that carries authority. In the third part, Dr. Kaveny drew on the *Munus Triplex* as a source for constructive reflection for the role of an ethicist.

During her talk, Dr. Kaveny offered remarks on the current role of the ethicist in Catholic health care. She concluded that four common roles are dispenser of judgment, risk manager, negotiator, and translator. After sharing her

thoughts, she challenged attendees to consider what additional roles they feel they assume in their work as an ethicist. The post-conference survey asked attendees to answer Dr. Kaveny's question. Since CHIEF is about sharing ideas and prompting dialogue, we want to publish the responses that were submitted by CHIEF attendees: counselor, translator, protector, witness bearer, ERD police, jack of all trades, co-carrier of burdensome decisions, alleviator of moral distress, trusted thought partner, knowledge sharer, guide, co-deliberator, navigator, convener, inspirer of moral discourse, colleague, mission leader, enforcer of Catholic identity, prompt of a third way, creative problem solver, faithful partner, interpreter, advocate, advisor, educator, teacher, learner, collaborator, preserver of Catholic moral teaching and tradition, leader, supporter, clinician supporter, one who accompanies people through difficult situations, moderator, listener, facilitator, and architect of safe spaces.

LIGHTNING TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

Lightning talks are 7-minute presentations that are limited to 3 slides of content. In total, there were 18 lightning talks that included time for Q&A with the presenters. Of the many fascinating topics, 5 talks focused on normothermic regional perfusion (NRP) and donation after circulatory death (DCD). To compliment the lightning talks, Anji Wall, MD, PhD, FACS, a transplant surgeon at Baylor Scott & White Transplant Services and a doctorally-trained bioethicist, joined CHIEF for the final session to provide background on the clinical care involved in NRP. Dr. Wall's presentation and the round of lightning talks led to a Q&A session with a dynamic

discussion about the ethical complexities of NRP.

CHIEF 2024 also offered a choice between two concurrent workshop sessions. Laura B. Webster, DBE, RN, HEC-C, led 'Assessing Ethicists: A Competency-Based, Milestone Approach.' This workshop examined current approaches of evaluating the attributes and characteristics of an ethicist. Dr. Webster then articulately presented a new approach for assessing an ethicist through their competencies and significant milestones.

Jennifer M. Dunatov, DHCE, MA, facilitated 'Obstetric Violence? How Ethicists Can Mitigate Harm in Birthing Spaces.' This workshop presented the prevalence and harmful impact of obstetric violence on mothers. Dr. Dunatov identified various factors that contribute to the violence and shared ideas to promote safety, trust, and accountability in birthing spaces.

CELEBRATING OUR FIELD

New to CHIEF this year was the exciting addition of the 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 health care. 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 health care organization and the broader field. The inaugural winner of the Emerging Ethics Leader Award was Amy Warner, DO, MA. Dr. Warner serves as the Director of Ethics at Mercy Health. She was nominated by Jenny Heyl, PhD, HEC-C, who has been at Mercy

Health for 23 years and currently serves as Executive Director of Ethics.

In addition to the new award, CHIEF recognized attendees' publications from the prior year (September 2023 through September 2024). This collection of writings identified the exciting contributions of many ethicists. CHIEF attendees published 21 articles in 14 peer-reviewed journals during the prior year. Additionally, 8 articles appeared in trade and popular magazines, and attendees contributed to 5 book chapters. These publications highlight the significant contributions ethicists in Catholic health care are making to the field of bioethics.

FEEDBACK ON THE CONFERENCE

Following the conclusion of CHIEF 2024, post-conference survey results showed a 4.9 (out of 5) overall rating – a tremendous success! Of the 32 respondents, 87% of the attendees indicated they were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to implement changes to their ethics services from content learned at the conference. Regarding the new aspects of this year's conference, 100% of the respondents want to continue the Emerging Ethics Leader Award.

For the first time, CHIEF provided 7.25 hours of Continuing Medical Education (CME) for attending the conference. The post-conference survey sought feedback on the value of offering CME. Half of the 32 respondents indicated that they are not pursuing HEC-C and therefore do not need CME, while 14 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 3 partial-day schedule of CHIEF was also strongly affirmed in the post-conference survey.

SAVE THE DATE!

For those who missed the 3-day CHIEF conference, recordings of day 1 and day 3 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 Seventh Annual Catholic Health Care Innovation in Ethics Forum, hosted by SSM Health, from September 9-11, 2025! Please contact Michael.Miller@ssmhealth.com for any questions or comments on the 2025 conference.

Thank you to the following CHIEF Planning Committee Members for collaborating and providing input on this conference summary: Mary Homan & Theresa McCruden. ✚

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