

The Third Annual Catholic Healthcare Innovation in Ethics Forum

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The third annual Catholic Healthcare Innovation in Ethics Forum (CHIEF) was hosted by Ascension and CommonSpirit Health in September 2021. Rather than a hybrid of in-person and virtual due to the COVID-10 pandemic, CHIEF was again held completely virtual. The planning committee, made up of ethicists from Ascension, CommonSpirit Health, Providence Health & Services, OSF HealthCare, Mercy Health System, and SSM Health, affirmed the goals of CHIEF: to provide a venue for ethicists working in Catholic health care to present innovative ideas or projects, receive critical feedback, and contribute to evolving the way Catholic health care thinks about and implements ethics.¹

As in years past, we solicited talks on specific focal areas. This year the planning committee selected:

- Ethics Outside the Hospital
- Ethics and Data Science
- High Reliability in Clinical Ethics

The majority of the conference time over the two days remained as lightning talks. Each presenter was limited to seven minutes and three slides (plus a title slide). Presenters were

grouped by subject area, and each group was followed by a 45-minute panel discussion and Q&A with the presenters from that session. Over the two days, there were 24 presentations from 20 ethicists on topics ranging from “Recalibrating Clinical Ethics Toward Justice” to “Benchmarking and Variance Analysis in Clinical Ethics Consultation.”

In addition, the conference planning committee decided to create two breakout sessions that intentionally would not follow the lightning talk format. For each session, we invited subject matter experts for a 15-20 minute presentation followed by engaged dialogue on a tangible work product. This format allowed us to do a “deeper dive” on two areas. The first was “Ethics and Data Science: The Experience at the VA” offered by Dr. Ken Berkowitz, Acting Special Advisor, National Center for Ethics in Health Care, US Department of Veteran Affairs and the second was “Striving for Excellence in Ethics 3.0” offered by Dr. Nate Hibner, Director, Ethics, The Catholic Health Association.

As with the CHIEF 2020, the planning committee approached the virtual format with the desire to optimize the virtual format rather than simply look at it as a substitute to an in-person gathering. To that end, this year’s conference utilized a Virtual Conference Platform. The Virtual Conference Platform

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allowed for participants to network during conference “brain breaks” or request to meet with other participants in a variety of virtual meeting rooms to discuss session content further.

We were once again blessed this year with a keynote presentation from a leader in the field, Carol Taylor, PhD, MSN, RN. Dr. Taylor preserved the tradition of CHIEF keynote presentations offering more of a retreat-like engagement, hers being “Reflection on a Lifetime of Grace: Emerging Challenges.” Throughout the keynote, Dr. Taylor allowed for moments of reflection on the themes of Vulnerability, Empathy and Health Equity, as well as contribution from conference participants which she then seamlessly wove into her talk with reflective responses.

Evaluation data indicate that CHIEF 2021 was again a success. With 79 participants, CHIEF continues to increase attendance each year. Over 93% of participants thought the event had a “high” or “higher quality” when compared to other professional events attended. Nearly 77% of survey respondents indicated that they would “likely” or “very likely” make changes to the ethics services at their respective organizations as a result of attending CHIEF. Such changes include but are not limited to implementing training in bioethics for clinical staff, designing indicators and measurement tools that allow for improvement in the clinical environment, and striving for a better incorporation of charity — being an instrument of grace during challenging and complex interdisciplinary ethics conversations. The CHIEF Planning Committee is still working to find the right balance and use of the “brain break” sessions as indicated by survey

data on suggestions for improvement. Finally, it appears from these data that regardless of whether we proceed in-person or virtual, CHIEF will continue to be well received as over 50% of survey respondents said “CHIEF was great no matter the format.”

We remain grateful to The Catholic Health Association for their offer to publish summaries of presentations in *Health Care Ethics USA* for presenters who wished to submit. We look forward to CHIEF 2022 again this fall, preserving its well-received format. 

ENDNOTE

1. You can find more information about CHIEF and the agenda here: www.missiononline.net/chief-2021-09151621/#