

Approved  
4/9/18  
Medical Ethics Committee

## Medical Ethics Committee Charter

**Purpose:** The committee's purpose is to promote the highest standards of care by developing and providing ethical guidelines at Erlanger Health System through consultation, policy formation and education. Committee members will be readily available to all patients, families and staff. The functions of the committee will be confined exclusively to medical ethics matters.

### **Description:**

The ethics committee will be a multidisciplinary committee dedicated to establishing and maintaining an ethical environment for the care of patients by providing a forum for consideration and discussion of the ethical aspects of medical practice and health care delivery.

Medical ethics is a system of moral principles that apply values and judgments to the practice of medicine. The core ethical principles supporting the therapeutic relationship with a patient are as follows:

1. **Respecting patient autonomy** – supporting and facilitating the capable patient's exercise of self-determination in health care decision making;
2. **Beneficence** – promoting the patient's best interest and protecting the patient from harm;
3. **Nonmaleficence** – avoiding actions likely to cause the patient harm; and
4. **Justice** – allocating fairly the benefits and burdens related to health care delivery.

Some examples of ethics issues include:

- Advance care planning
- Withholding / withdrawing treatments
- Informed consent
- Organ procurement
- End of life decision making
- Decisional capacity

### **Scope and Function:**

- Review policies that pertain to ethical issues in a timely manner and at least annually
- Develop guidelines for the management of common areas of ethical conflict
- Facilitate education about topical issues in clinical ethics
- Provide clinical ethical consultations when:
  - There is a perceived ethical problem in patient care, AND
  - Patient / surrogate and health care provider have been unable to establish an agreed upon resolution

*The Ethics Committee does not make decisions regarding patient care but makes recommendations based on ethical principles. Recommendations of the ethics committee should impose no obligation for acceptance on the part of the institution, medical staff, attending physician, patient/family, or other person.*

### Organization:

- Authority: The Ethics Committee is a standing committee of the MEC.
- Membership: Members will be approved by the MEC in accordance with current Rules and Regulations.
  - Minimally the committee will include 4 physicians, 2 nurses, 1 risk management / legal person, and 1 person experienced with palliative and/or hospice care.
  - With the intention of bringing together a multidisciplinary group, other members may include on an ad hoc basis a chaplain, diversity leadership representative, quality improvement representative, educator, an ethicist, or a community representative.
  - These members should be given a basic handbook for new members and should receive further education regarding principles and approaches to dealing with ethical conflicts.
  - The Chief of Staff will appoint a chairperson and Vice-Chairperson from the membership
  - The committee will provide medical ethics consultations as requested and record recommendations in the chart.
- Meeting and Reporting:
  - The committee will meet at least quarterly
  - The committee will report to the MEC semi-annually and include:
    - Brief summary of consultations done
    - Progress report on the review of policies and guidelines related to ethics
    - New policies or guidelines being developed that pertain either directly or indirectly to ethical issues
    - Plans and progress toward meeting educational objectives