

Ethics Consultation Quality Assessment Tool: A Novel Method for Assessing the Quality of Ethics Case Consultations Based on Written Records

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Although ethics consultation is offered as a clinical service in most hospitals in the United States, few valid and practical tools are available to evaluate, ensure, and improve ethics consultation quality. The quality of ethics consultation is important because poor quality ethics consultation can result in ethically inappropriate outcomes for patients, other stakeholders, or the health care system. To promote accountability for the quality of ethics consultation, we developed the Ethics Consultation Quality Assessment Tool (ECQAT). ECQAT enables raters to assess the quality of ethics consultations based on the written record. Through rigorous development and preliminary testing, we identified key elements of a quality ethics consultation (ethics question, consultation-specific information, ethical analysis, and conclusions and/or recommendations), established scoring criteria, developed training guidelines, and designed a holistic assessment process. This article describes the development of the ECQAT, the resulting product, and recommended future testing and potential uses for the tool.