

## **Functions and Outcomes of a Clinical Medical Ethics**

### *Abstract*

Established in 1997, Summa Health System's Medical Ethics Committee (EC) serves as an educational, supportive, and consultative resource to patients/families and providers, and serves to analyze, clarify, and ameliorate dilemmas in clinical care. In 2009 the EC conducted its 100th consult. In 2002 a Palliative Care Consult Service (PCCS) was established to provide supportive services for patients/families facing advanced illness; making during crisis; and improve pain/symptom management. How these services affect one another has thus far been unclear.

### *Objectives:*

This study describes EC consults: types, reasons, recommendations and utilization, and investigates the impact the PCCS may have on EC consult requests or recommendations.

### *Methods:*

Retrospective reviews of 100 EC records explored trends and changes in types of consults, reasons for consults, and EC recommendations and utilization.

### *Results:*

There were 50 EC consults each in the 6 years pre- and post-PCCS. Differences found include: (1) a decrease in number of reasons for consult requests (133–62); (2) changes in top two reasons for EC consult requests from 'Family opposed to withdrawing life-sustaining treatment (LST)' and 'Patient capacity in question' to 'Futility' and 'Physician opposed to providing LST'; (3) changes in top two recommendations given by the EC from 'Emotional Support for Patient/Family' and 'Initiate DNR Order' to 'Comfort Care' and 'Withdraw Treatment.' Overall, 88% of recommendations were followed. Conclusion: PCCS availability and growth throughout the hospital may have influenced EC consult requests. EC consults regarding family opposition to withdrawing LST and EC recommendations for patient/family support declined.

*Keywords:* Ethics -Hospital ethics committee -End-of-life decision making- Palliative care -Consult service