


**Ethics and Resource Allocation:  
How to Respect Human Dignity in the Making of Tough Choices**

Hospice & Palliative Care Manitoba  
19th Annual Provincial Conference



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Who should get admission to inpatient hospice/palliative care beds?

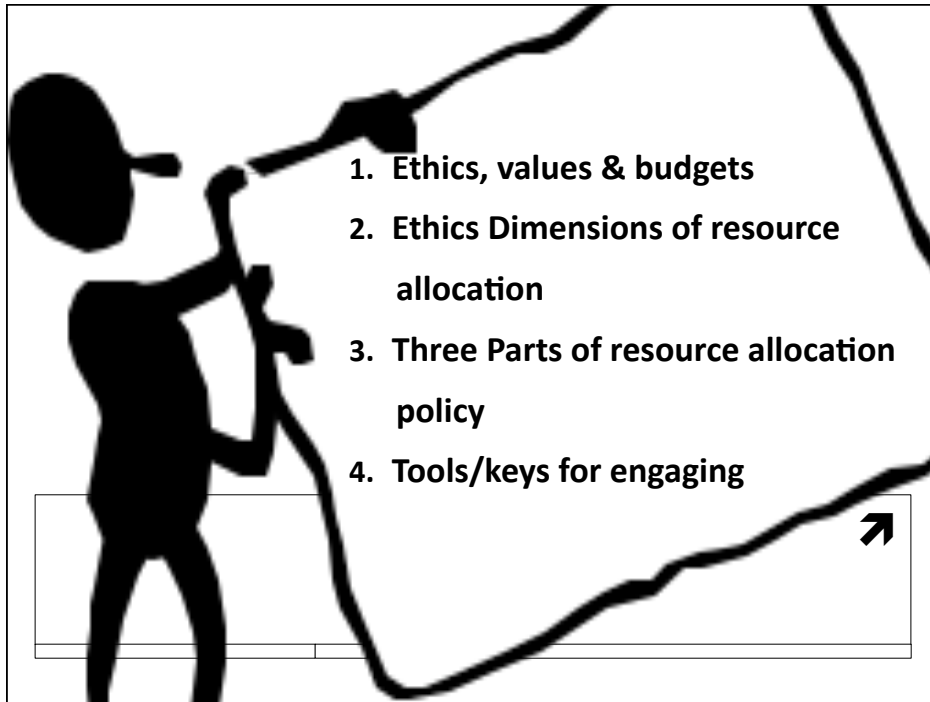
patient	age	Length of time waiting	Anticipated length of stay	Acuity of physical pain	Acuity of psychosocial distress	Family coping well	Current place	Nursing care needs
James	50	Two weeks	Active deterioration	high	medium	no	Acute care	high
Tina	75	3 months	Longer term stay	medium	high	No family	Assisted living	medium
Akbar	80	1 month	Has approached active deterioration, then improved so hard to say	medium	low	Stretch ed, but not in crisis	home	high

## How do you respond – to the system?


- You are a leader.
- A home care nurse calls you.
- She is going to visit a patient today, whose family is doing the best they can to support their father who is dying.
- She knows that he and they want to stay at home, but may have questions or need support.
- How do they access support after the business day is over?
- You see this as a broader issue. You are very sensitive to the complexities of healthcare decision-making and the challenges facing leaders and practitioners at all levels, but feel the need to advocate for better care for this population.
- How do you engage the system about it?

## Who should get your time?

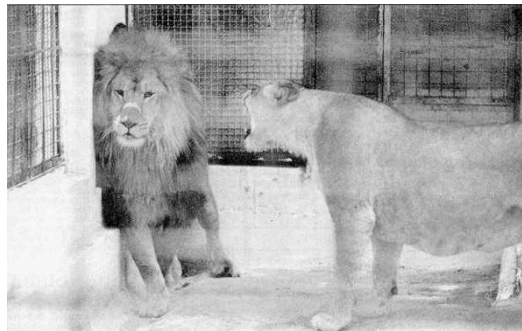
- You are a home care nurse.
- You arrive at work on Monday morning and see the roster of patients awaiting your support.
- There are 20 patients and families on the list.
- If you were to give everyone the time they needed, it would take 80 hours.
- You have only 30 hours to allocate.
- Who should get your time?



1. Ethics, values & budgets
2. Ethics Dimensions of resource allocation
3. Three Parts of resource allocation policy
4. Tools/keys for engaging



Unhelpful understandings



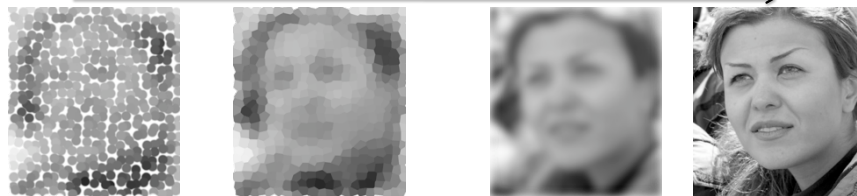
## ETHICS AS JUDGMENT

- ◆ God-Squad
- ◆ Ethics Police

Unhelpful  
understandings



**ETHICS AS  
COMPLIANCE**



Ethics as living  
with integrity

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## Budgets communicate values

- Your decisions, actions and attitudes are all based on your values and beliefs
- Your budget is a summary of what is important to you and how you will get there
- Values concern
  - the actual decision you make (content)
  - How you make the decision (process)

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## Respect

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Unconditional positive regard</li><li>➤ Empathetic understanding</li><li>➤ Meaningful engagement of ideas</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ In a <u>fiduciary relationship</u>:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ guiding decisions based on <u>trustee's</u> values and beliefs</li></ul></li><li>➤ In a <u>relationship of intimate partners</u>:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Collaboration</li></ul></li><li>➤ In a <u>relationship of (what should be) public equals</u>:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Transparent decisions based on informed, inclusive, recursive, reflexive deliberation</li></ul></li></ul>
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## Substantive Values: Models of Distributive Justice

- What is our understanding of justice?
  - Treating everyone equally?
  - Treating everyone equitably?
  - Maximizing overall happiness?
  - Building community solidarity?
  - Respecting individual liberty?

## Differences in health

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Justified (though unequal)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Overall health between young and old</li><li>➤ Prostate cancer rates between men and women</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Unjustified (unequal and inequitable)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Nutritional status between girls and boys</li><li>➤ Immunization status between girls and boys</li><li>➤ Access to care based on race</li></ul></li></ul> |
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## Inequity in Health

- Inequalities in health that are unjust/unfair
- Unjust/unfair if systematically put groups of people already socially disadvantaged at further disadvantage
- Systematic inequality in health between more and less advantaged groups in society

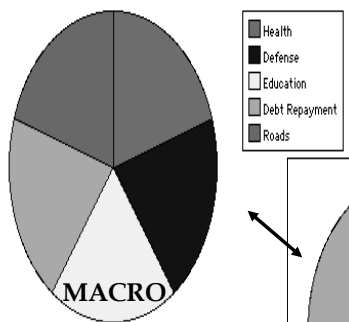
## Groups at risk in Canada

- Poor
- Homeless
- Aboriginal communities
- Immigrant & refugee population
- People with physical and mental disabilities

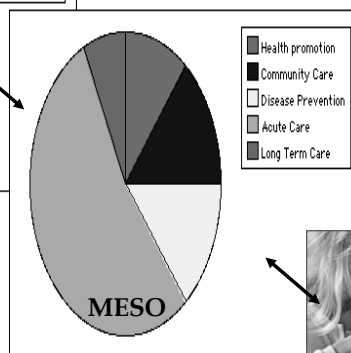
## Meritocracy and vulnerable populations

- People with dementia... “have no knowledge left to convey to their children, they no longer are intertwined with the community but rather have lost the memory of relationships; and they are therefore easily transgressed and abandoned.” (Post, 1995)

### MEGA ALLOCATION



### Allocation levels: forward and back





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## Is equity a Canadian value?

- If so, this has implications
  - Within individual care programs
  - Within the health system
  - Within macro governmental policy
  - For our outlook on foreign affairs

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## 2. Salient ethics dimensions of decisions...

- Mandate of and relationships between decision-makers
- Consultation of others
  - Experts
  - Those impacted
- Decision itself
- Decision follow-up

## How a decision is made

- Who speaks?
- How is difference dealt with?
- How are decisions made?
- What standards will be used to decide what counts as evidence?

## The process of decision-making

### Implicit rationing

- Discretion of professionals
- Subjective
- Sensitive to patient needs?
- Focus on the quality of the story
- More sensitive to culture of facility than individual patient needs?

### Explicit rationing

- Use of formal criteria
- Transparent
- Accountable
- Fair?

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## Decision-making in a democracy

- The role and authority of...
  - Elites
    - those in positions of power
    - But in a democracy
  - Experts
    - Clinical experts
    - Experts about their own lives
  - Publics
    - The communities that the decisions are meant to serve

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## Respectful system-level decision-making

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Unconditional positive regard</li><li>➤ Empathetic understanding</li><li>➤ Meaningful engagement of ideas</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ In a <u>relationship of (what should be) public equals</u>:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Transparent decisions</li><li>➤ based on deliberation that is<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ informed,</li><li>➤ inclusive,</li><li>➤ recursive,</li><li>➤ reflexive</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
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# What decision is made

Criteria for admission


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- Age
- Deservingness
- Seniority – how long waiting
- Acuity of pain, symptom severity, need for symptom control
- Psychosocial care/crisis
- Risk to physical safety
- Political significance
- Patient best interests
- Probable longer term stay
- Terminal care – active deterioration
- Respite care - Risk to family stress
- Continuing care
- Rehab
- Clinician's personal knowledge of patient
- Dependency level
- Nursing care needs

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# How are people supported?



### 3. 3 parts of a resource allocation policy

- The criteria used
- Who uses the criteria
- The process by which the criteria are used

### Geoff, Tony, and Betty Ann agree to go on a holiday

- ✱ Geoff: family castle in Italy
- ✱ Tony: Montana
- ✱ Betty Ann: Hawaii

## How about these criteria?

- ✱ Definite option
- ✱ Maybe
- ✱ Not an option
  
- ✱ Where does this take us?

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## Ok, how about this criterion...

- ✱ Have a good time...

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## OK, it's important that...

- \* Access to fine wine
- \* Email access
- \* Access to family
- \* Within budget
- \* Good business facilities
- \* Access to mountain biking
- \* Exposure to new culture

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## Prioritized, it's important that...

- \* Most important
    - \* Access to fine wine
    - \* Access to mountain biking
    - \* Access to family
    - \* Within budget
  - \* Important
    - \* Email access
    - \* Good business facilities
    - \* Exposure to new culture
- \* **ITALY, it is!**

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But wait...

- ✱ Geoff always gets his way!
- ✱ NOT Italy!

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## 4. Steps forward

### The skills of ethics

- Understanding our own values and beliefs
- Listening to others to understand the perspectives they are coming from
- Engaging in deliberation respectfully
- Articulating the rationale behind decisions
- Acting on decisions, even when difficult



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## For leaders

- Make decisions transparent
- Use systematic processes
- Create a culture of appropriate consultation & engagement
- Support those impacted

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## Steps ahead – for all of us

- Use systematic processes for analyzing issues
- Use available ethics resources
- Push authority where appropriate
- Look after yourselves

Making ethics real at the system level

**Good Decisions**

A map to the best decision, all things considered

Fraser Health Ethics Services

**The Steps Involved**

1. Establishing The Terms
2. Getting The Question Straight
3. Looking At The Evidence
4. Identifying And Prioritizing What's Important
5. Brainstorming Options
6. Evaluating Possible Options
7. Making a Preliminary Decision
8. Engagement
9. Making a Decision
10. Education
11. Communication
12. Downstream Support
13. Implementation
14. Evaluation and Sustainability
15. Responding To The Decision

**Integrity**

If integrity is about walking our talk, and if we're not clear on what our talk is, then how can we walk it?

Ethics as Freedom

We are guided by values, whether we recognize it or not

To think about and act on the values we have reason to cherish, as opposed to values that have been subtly inculcated in us is to take control of our lives - to be free