

SARASOTA MEMORIAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM CORPORATE POLICY

TITLE: BIOETHICS COMMITTEE
AND CONSULTATION

POLICY #: 00.MD.00
EFFECTIVE DATE: 03/03/87
REVIEWED/REVISED DATE: 03/21/12
POLICY TYPE: Clinical Non-Clinical
PAGE: 1 of 5

Job Title of Responsible Owner: Chief of Medical Operations

PURPOSE: The Bioethics Committee exists to provide educational support and information on bioethical issues to the personnel of Sarasota Memorial Health Care System (SMHCS). This committee also serves in an advisory and consultative capacity to those making bioethical decisions (including, but not limited to, medical staff, SMHCS personnel, patients, and families).

POLICY STATEMENT: The SMHCS affirms the patient's right to make decisions regarding his/her health care. In the event that ethical dilemmas arise, the Bioethics Committee may serve patients, family, physicians, and SMHCS personnel in an advisory/consultative capacity. The recommendations resulting from a consult are not binding on the physician.

Authorization - This committee is an authorized standing administrative committee. Its operation and conduct will be consistent with all administrative policies and procedures.

EXCEPTIONS: None

DEFINITIONS:

1. Bioethics –That area of ethics that pertains to the consideration of spiritual, moral, and cultural insight in medical decision-making.
2. Committee - The committee consists of voluntary members of Sarasota Memorial Hospital personnel, medical staff, and community representatives approved by Sarasota Memorial Hospital Administration.
3. Consultation - A team of health care professionals and others authorized by the Bioethics Committee to analyze ethical and/or medical/legal issues arising in patient care.

PROCEDURE: Bioethics Committee

1. The Bioethics Committee will conduct regularly scheduled meetings, as established by the committee and special meetings as needed.
2. The meetings will be noted by means of minutes. All discussions of specific patient concerns will be for the purpose of education and learning and are considered confidential.
3. All members of the Bioethics Committee are required to sign a Sarasota Memorial Hospital Bioethics Committee Confidentiality Statement.
4. Use of the committee other than as an educational forum (e.g., in a consultative capacity) must be approved by the committee co-chairs and the Chief Executive Officer, Chief of Medical Operations, or designee.

Bioethics Consultations

1. A bioethics consult may be indicated (but is not limited to) when:
 - a. There is a disagreement between the physician and the patient and/or his/her legally authorized representative regarding care and treatment;
 - b. There are possible serious medical/legal consequences;
 - c. There are issues or unresolved conflicts regarding the withholding/withdrawing of life-prolonging procedures, treatments, or Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) orders.
2. A bioethics consult may be requested by a physician's order or by any health care provider, SMHCS employee, a patient's family, or a patient's significant other.
3. For inpatients at Sarasota Memorial Hospital, a Bioethics consult will be coordinated in a timely manner through the Integrated Case Management (ICM) clinical supervisor on call who can be reached through the hospital operator. The ICM clinical supervisor will assess the situation and if deemed appropriate will facilitate the consult, in collaboration with the co-chairs of the Bioethics Committee. The risk manager or his/her designee may be contacted to assist with the determination.

4. For subsidiaries other than Sarasota Memorial Hospital, the committee may be consulted as needed.

- RESPONSIBILITY:**
1. It is the responsibility of department directors and managers to see that personnel in patient care areas are aware of and adhere to this policy.
 2. It is the responsibility of the medical staff to be aware of and adhere to this policy.
 3. It is the responsibility of the committee co-chairs to oversee policy compliance.

REFERENCES: None

AUTHOR(S): Chairperson(s), Bioethics Committee

**REVIEWING
AUTHOR(S):** R. Stephen Taylor, M.D., chief of medical operations
L. Rae DaPrato, RN, MA, director, Risk Management
Colleen Ryan, manager, Integrated Case Management

ATTACHMENT(S): Attachment I - "Bioethics Committee Consultations"

****NOTE:** This policy is to be reviewed by the Chairperson(s) of the Bioethics Committee at each renewal cycle.

APPROVALS:

Bioethics Committee	Miriam Lacher, co-chairperson	1/5/12
Bioethics Committee	Bruce Berg, M.D., co-chairperson	1/5/12
Medical Executive Committee: (if clinical policy)		
Director's Signature:		
Vice President/Executive Director:	Fred Jung, executive director, Quality Improvement & ICM	1/11/12
Chief of Medical Operations (if clinical policy)	R. Stephen Taylor, M.D.	1/13/12
Chief Executive Officer:	Gwen MacKenzie	1/16/12

BIOETHICS COMMITTEE CONSULTATIONS

WHAT IS A BIOETHICS CONSULT?

A bioethics consult can serve a variety of functions, but it basically serves to assist Health Care providers in analyzing difficult ethical and/or medical/legal issues that arise in patient care. The Sarasota Memorial Health Care System Bioethics Consult Team consists of Health Care professionals, physicians, nurses, chaplains, social workers, the risk manager, and others who have experience in consulting on the ethical and medical/legal problems, which arise in patient care. **Note:** A bioethics committee consult is not binding on the physician, but it is documented in the patient medical record. It is advisory in nature, as is any other consultation.

WHO TO CALL TO REQUEST A CONSULT?

The on-call Integrated Case Management Clinical Supervisor at Sarasota Memorial Hospital who can be reached through the hospital operator.

WHO CAN REQUEST A CONSULT?

Patient, patient's families, physicians, nurses, social workers, respiratory therapists, or any member of the health care team.

WHEN TO CONSIDER SEEKING A BIOETHICS CONSULT:

1. A bioethics consult may be indicated when there is disagreement between the physician and the patient as to what is in the patient's best interest, as compared to what the patient would have wanted if he/she could make his/her wishes known. **Note:** The more serious the disagreement or the more serious the possible medical/legal consequences, the greater the indication for a consult.
2. A bioethics consult is often appropriate when there is no apparent conflict between the parties but there are significant ethical and/or medical/legal issues involved (e.g., withdrawing/withholding of life-prolonging procedures, treatments, Do-Not-Resuscitate (DNR) orders). In these cases, a bioethics consult may validate the decision and/or ensure that all the relevant issues and facts have been addressed.
3. Prior to a bioethics consult, the integrated case manager, with input as needed from Risk Management/Legal Affairs, can often help clarify who should be the primary decision-maker, who should be informed of the patient's condition, or who is the appropriate proxy. Because these situations often have legal ramifications, additional consultations may be required and are also available from the consult team.

WHAT RESULTS MAY BE EXPECTED FROM A BIOETHICS CONSULT?

1. Ethical issues are identified and recommendations can be made based on legal and ethical standards.
2. Educational needs are identified on a particular legal/ethical issue (e.g., advance directives, withholding/withdrawing of life-prolonging procedures, DNR policy). The consult team can assist with this educational process as needed.
3. Specific advice can be offered on the medical/legal or ethical ramifications of a particular treatment decision; the range of ethically and medically/legally acceptable alternatives; or the ethically optimal course of action.