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Background

In 2020, the ACGME released a framework of competency-based milestones for assessment of resident performance. We identified a **lack of formal curriculum and assessment in our internal medicine (IM) residency program addressing ethics**, a sub-category of the ACGME professionalism milestone, and interpersonal communication skills. This project aims to implement a **novel, monthly ethics morning report case conference** in a large, academic IM residency program.

Methods

- A **monthly ethics case conference** was presented by residents in July 2022 – June 2023. Each presenter was guided in preparing presentations and teaching points.
- The case conference and discussion were facilitated by a clinical ethics-trained faculty member using the 4-box method (see right).
- After each case conference, attendees completed a brief survey

Results

Completed **24 total ethics morning reports**, with 75 resident survey responses (68% PGY-1, 13% PGY-2, 19% PGY-3/4)

Resident comfort levels with clinical ethics scenarios

Ethics scenario	PGY-1 mean (SD, 95% CI)	PGY-2/3/4 mean (SD, 95% CI)	p-value
Assessing a patient's medical decision-making capacity	3.51 (0.75, 3.30-3.71)	4.25 (0.66, 3.97-4.53)	<0.05
Determining who should act as a surrogate decision-maker for a patient without capacity	3.73 (0.87, 3.53-3.93)	4.29 (0.54, 4.06-4.52)	<0.05
Leading a discussion with a patient and/or family about withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment	3.35 (0.99, 3.07-3.63)	4.21 (0.64, 4.00-4.42)	<0.05
Leading a discussion with a patient and/or family about changes in code status	3.54 (0.83, 3.30-3.78)	4.33 (0.69, 4.12-4.54)	<0.05

*Items scored on a Likert scale from 1 (very uncomfortable) to 5 (very comfortable)

Most respondents felt that the sessions “quite” or “extremely” improved their ability to achieve the objectives:



Frequency of topics selected for cases by resident presenters

Topic	Frequency (N, percentage of total cases)
Goals of care at the end of life	10 (42%)
Futility	10 (42%)
Assessment of decision-making capacity	8 (33%)
Identification of surrogate decision maker	8 (33%)
Informed refusal	6 (25%)
Discharges	5 (21%)
Treatment over objection	2 (8%)
Advance directive interpretation	2 (8%)
Other (transplant ethics, carceral ethics, miracle language, human trafficking)	4 (16%)

*Note that 22 out of 24 cases addressed >1 ethical issue

A novel case-based ethics morning report for teaching medical ethics to residents



Take-home points

- 1 Almost half of surveyed residents felt discomfort with ethics-related tasks and decisions that may arise daily in the practice of internal medicine
- 2 A monthly ethics morning report case conference is perceived by most residents to help them recognize and think about ethical issues and articulate ethical reasoning
- 3 Cases selected by residents frequently involved multiple ethical issues and most often addressed goals of care at the end of life and futility

Future directions

Integrate our project into the Internal Medicine residency program's assessment of ACGME competency-based milestones in ethics and professionalism

Approach to Ethical Dilemmas The 4-Box Method

Medical Indications	Patient Preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clinical condition: acute vs chronic, emergent vs non-emergent, curable vs incurable Treatment goals: curative vs supportive, burdensome vs non-burdensome, probability of success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision-making capacity: communicate choice, understand information, appreciate consequences, reason between treatment options Informed consent: risks/benefits, understanding Surrogate decision-making: substituted judgment, best interest standard
Quality of Life	Contextual Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prognosticate: best case, worst case, most likely Assess patient's values, biases, prior experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence of professional, family, religious, financial, legal, and institutional factors Assess your own response/moral distress

Adapted from Jonsen AR, Siegler M, & Winslade WJ (2022). *Clinical Ethics: A Practical Approach to Ethical Decisions in Clinical Medicine*, 9e. McGraw Hill.



Take a **picture** to view the “Ethics Fast Facts” sheet distributed after each ethics morning report