



# ETHICS IN ACTION

## Accreditation Canada conference: “Ethics in Health Care—Not a Matter of Choice”

Accreditation Canada hosted a two-day conference on “Ethics in Health Care: Not a Matter of Choice” on October 1 and 2, 2009 at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel. The goal of the conference, attended by individuals working in the health care sector from across Canada, was to facilitate dialogue among health care workers and help them learn ways of meeting Accreditation Standards related to clinical and organizational ethics.

The theme for the first day was “A Framework for Supporting Ethical Practice” and morning sessions began with an introductory address from Dr. Robert Butcher, who also served as the conference moderator. The three plenary sessions that followed were presented by Dr. Timothy

Christie, Dr. Andrea Frolic, and Dr. Lisa Schwartz. These sessions described how organizations can ‘live’ the values they espouse, offered ideas for fostering and supporting ethical decision making in organizations, and provided tips on facilitating effective ethics case reviews.

The afternoon featured a round-robin poster session where attendees rotated through four different stations. Kim Ibarra and Frank Wagner of the Toronto Central CCAC developed a poster presentation titled “The Community Ethics Network: Building an Integrated, Accountable and Sustainable Network”. The presentation detailed the CEN’s goals and objectives, activities, and results to date. It outlined the CEN’s modified Hub and Spoke structure, described the development of the Community Ethics Toolkit, and discussed challenges that the CEN has faced during its growth. The presentation concluded with tips to help others build sustainable ethics networks.

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For an update on CEN activities visit our website: <http://www.jointcentreforbioethics.ca/index.shtml>

Ann Heesters (Director of Ethics, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute) and Michael Campbell (Ethics Fellow, University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics) presented a poster titled “Variations on a Theme: Development of Regional Ethics Networks and Services” on behalf of Hannah Kaufman (Ethicist, South-East LHIN Ethics Initiative) and Frank Wagner. This poster compared the activities of the CEN, the Champlain LHIN Ethics Centre, and the South-East LHIN Ethics Initiative to demonstrate how ethics networks and regional ethics services can enhance infrastructure. It detailed ways of building staff and organizational ethics capacity, sharing policies and educational resources, providing case consultation, and providing preparedness training in targeted areas such as accreditation and pandemic flu planning.

The second day’s theme was “Ethical Decision Making”. The morning opened with a plenary session by Dr. Jonathan Breslin that offered key reasons why health care leaders should make ethics a priority in their organizations. It was followed by a panel presentation featuring four ethicists. Dr. Rick Singleton discussed an ethics position paper developed at Eastern Health on “Facilitating Client Care in the Most Appropriate Available Setting”. He demonstrated how this paper provides an approach to handling admissions, transfers, and discharges in the local health region. Dr. Timothy Christie focused his talk on resource allocation and priority setting, asking whether it is ever ethically justifiable to deny patients beneficial services because of their cost. Dr. Andrea Frolic described Hamilton Health Sciences’ ethics initiative for end of life care, comprised of documentation strategies, stakeholder engagement, policies and procedures, education and practical integration, and quality improvement. Last, Dr. Marie-Ève Bouthillier discussed strategies for overcoming conflict in inter-professional care.

The afternoon featured four simultaneous break-out sessions. At each session, participants were divided into small groups where they analyzed a clinical or organizational case using an ethical framework. Each group was assigned one of four frameworks, including the CEN’s Community Ethics Toolkit. At the conclusion of the exercise, each group selected a spokesperson to summarize the analysis and describe possible courses of action. The exercise provided an excellent opportunity for participants to enhance their ethical deliberation skills.

Dr. Robert Butcher concluded the conference by encouraging participants to embrace values-based leadership. He stated this will be accomplished through self-reflection, open discussion, and accountable decision making.

*Michael Campbell, Academic Fellow  
University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics*

# Congratulations to...

# ETHICS IN ACTION

**Kimberley Ibarra** and **Steering Committee Co-Chair Caroline Hunter** who will be presenting a poster on the CEN called “Building a Sustainable Network of Community Partners” at the Canadian Home Care Association’s 2009 Home Care Summit from October 28th to October 30th in Banff, Alberta.

**Kimberley Ibarra** and the **Steering Committee Co-Chair Frank Wagner** who presented a poster on “The Community Ethics Network: Building an Integrated, Accountable and Sustainable Network” at the 2009 Accreditation Canada Conference on Ethics in Health Care, on October 1 in Toronto, Ontario.

**Michael Campbell, Frank Wagner, Ann M Heesters and Hannah Kaufman** who presented a poster titled “Variations on a Theme: Development of Regional Ethics Networks and Services” at the 2009 Accreditation Canada Conference on Ethics in Health Care, on October 1 in Toronto.



## The Community Ethics Network: Building an Integrated, Accountable and Sustainable Network



### Introduction

Health care organizations have increasingly been investing resources in ethics programs, recognizing ethics as a key component of quality care. However many healthcare organizations lack the resources necessary to develop their own ethics programs (Ansayi KW and Wagner F, 2008). Yet, there is an overwhelming need for ethics capacity in healthcare as the number and acuity of healthcare cases continues to increase and the ethical dilemmas faced by healthcare workers become even more complex.

### The Community Ethics Network

To meet the need for healthcare ethics capacity, the Community Ethics Network (CEN) was founded by 12 home care and support services organizations in the Greater Toronto Area. The CEN is a partnership of community health care and support services organizations committed to:

- Building ethics capacity in the homecare sector
- Making ethical decisions within and across member organizations
- Developing best practices in homecare ethics

### Results

*“We joined the Network because we felt that ethical issues come up all the time and other people might have better answers than we do.”*

Homecare and community support workers frequently encounter ethical issues. 96.2% of Outreach Project participants reported encountering an ethical issue at work at least monthly.

### Ethics Capacity

The most frequently cited mechanism for addressing ethical issues at CEN member organizations were consulting with colleagues, approaching a manager or supervisor and using the Community Ethics Toolkit. Respondents also reported using the CEN ethics tools to deal with ethical issues at work.

### Strengths of the CEN’s Ethics Tools

According to respondents, the CEN’s Ethics Tools are simple and easy to use. They provide cross-sector engagement and a consistent approach to dealing with ethical issues.

*“The tools give everyone the same framework to use, make the approach consistent and facilitate learning from each other.”*

*“The framework gives decisions a good basis. You know you’re doing the right thing.”*

### Lessons Learned

#### Lessons Learned to Date

1. Vocabulary, methodology, and strategies must be inclusive and representative of all stakeholders.
2. It is as important to engage front-line staff as it is to engage senior leadership.
3. Strategic planning models and priority setting exercises can be adapted to fit a network of community health care organizations.
4. “If you build it, they will come” – plan for growth and expansion early on.
5. Integration, sustainability and accountability are principles of success (Kilham J, 2009).
6. Being able to identify an ethical dilemma is key to building ethics capacity. “If staff don’t know they’re in an ethical dilemma, they won’t be able to work with you dealing with it.”
7. The CEN is not a panacea – continue to plan, set priorities, train, develop, and re-evaluate.

#### Building your own ‘Ethics Network’

- Identify the needs of your community
- Determine available resources
- Find partners committed to a common goal
- Develop goals and objectives
- Secure organizational buy-in
- Plan for growth – define scope and member responsibilities
- Hire multidisciplinary, inter-professional, and cross-sectoral
- Choose an education model to develop ethics expertise
- Determine membership expectations
- Leverage academic affiliations, if possible
- Start with what you have and work from there
- Evaluate and re-evaluate

#### Conclusion

There is still much work to be done. Homecare workers frequently encounter ethical issues. There continues to be a lack of ethics capacity in homecare. Moreover, there continues to be a lack of resources and expertise to build ethics capacity in homecare. The CEN demonstrates that collaboration across a sector can help advance the practice of ethical decision-making. However, simply creating an ethics network is not enough. Building capacity in ethics in homecare, and more broadly, in healthcare, is an ongoing and dynamic process.

### Actions

*Homecare ethics promote the homecare sector’s philosophy of supporting clients’ independence and ongoing integration in their community.* Enacting one of a recognition of the distinctive features of homecare, it is sensitive to how a client’s self-determination may be affected by the setting of care and types of supports received (Ansayi KW and Wagner F, 2008).

### Goals and Objectives

The Community Ethics Network’s goals and objectives are to:

1. Test a cross sectoral common approach to ethical decision making
2. Increase staff awareness and understanding of homecare ethics
3. Enable staff to identify and address an ethical dilemma they are experiencing
4. Provide a process for additional support

### Challenges

The CEN was a modified “Hub and Spokes Strategy” (MacLure et al., 2005). It has academic involvement with the University of Toronto and George Brown. Other notable activities include:

- Development of the Community Ethics Toolkit, including the Community Code of Ethics and Ethical Decision-Making Workbook
- Webpage and Quarterly Newsletter
- Education sessions for management and front-line
- Case study collection
- Ethics capacity building survey
- Annual conference
- Chapter in *The Cambridge Textbook of Bioethics* (2008)

Recipient of the CMACC-AC 2007 Award for Excellence

Survey Respondents’ Top 5 Most Pressing Ethical Issues in the Community*	
Autonomy, consent and capacity	55.6%
Moral distress and workload	51.9%
Client advocacy issues	40.7%
Human resources issues	33.3%
Access to care	29.6%

### Success when all homecare staff...

- ✓ Recognize an ethical issue when they face it
- ✓ Are equipped with tools, resources and education to work through ethical dilemmas
- ✓ Know where to get help

### Contact Information

**Kimberley Ibarra**  
Program Evaluation Specialist, Toronto Central CCAC  
416-217-3820 ext. 2630  
[kim.ibarra@toronto.ccaac-ccc.net](mailto:kim.ibarra@toronto.ccaac-ccc.net)

**Frank Wagner**  
Bioethicist, University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics  
Toronto Central CCAC  
416-217-3820 ext. 2466  
[frank.wagner@utoronto.ccaac-ccc.net](mailto:frank.wagner@utoronto.ccaac-ccc.net)

**For more information on the Community Ethics Network, please visit our webpage at:**  
<http://www.jointcentreforbioethics.ca/partners/cen.shtml>

### Challenges

Currently the CEN has 37 local and national member organizations. The Network’s rapid expansion, both numerically and regionally, has raised a number of challenges: sustainability, communication, member engagement, collaboration, and accountability of member organizations.

### The Outreach Project

To address these challenges, the CEN turned to its membership. In 2008, it embarked on an outreach project to engage its members in reviewing the mission, vision, goals and objectives, evaluating and enhancing the Network’s activities and initiatives, and defining future directions and setting priorities.

The Outreach Project used an online survey and semi-structured interviews. This was collected on members’ perspectives of ethical issues, current ethics capacity, and future directions. We performed descriptive and thematic analysis and results were validated using a member check. Limitations were the low response rate and low representation of front-line staff.



## Variations on a Theme: Development of Regional Ethics Networks and Services

### Introduction

Health care institutions such as community hospitals, long-term care facilities and community health care organizations are increasingly concerned about staff moral distress and lack of ethics capacity for their staff and organizations. Meeting Accreditation Canada’s standards for growing communities of ethics practice remains a major challenge, especially for small facilities that cannot hire dedicated ethics.

Ethics networks, along with regional ethics services and programs can build ethics infrastructure effectively. These collectives can foster ethics program development, staff and organizational ethics capacity building, policy and educational resource sharing, responsiveness training in complex areas (e.g. accreditation, pandemic flu planning, case consultation, and other supports). Several models have been implemented and others are under development in Ontario and other provinces.

This poster describes three models: the **Community Ethics Network in the Greater Toronto Area**, the **Champlain LHIN Ethics Centre in Ottawa**, and the **South East LHIN Ethics Initiative in Kingston**. This poster is intended to enhance global capacities and efficiencies by identifying lessons learned and sharing them by resource materials for ethics program development and support.

### Champlain LHIN Ethics Centre

This initiative began with a survey of health care providers in the Champlain LHIN to determine their health care ethics needs. These providers included community hospitals, a Community Care Access Centre and a number of long-term care providers. Two Directors of Ethics from university-affiliated hospitals and a university Director of Research Ethics formed a partnership to assess interest in establishing a regional ethics service. An ethics course was proposed as a way to meet local needs and demonstrate commitment.

- Funding was secured through an inter-professional practice grant to develop a course based on the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities’ Learning Guide.
- Assistance obtained through the BSHU Library to support lectures in remote sites. Materials for the course were gathered and a course pack was provided to participants.
- One-ethicist classes in 10 week evening courses delivered through Telehealth to learners throughout the LHIN. By the end of the program’s 2nd year, 10 sites were enrolled (with a total of 81 participants and a wait list of 16).
- A website was developed to allow participants to form an ongoing community of practice. They were able to share resources, exchange emails and one year past presentations associated with the formal class meetings.
- Meetings were held with CENs throughout the region to share successes and seek support for a regional ethics centre.

### Community Ethics Network

The Community Ethics Network (CEN) was formed as a collaborative initiative among several Community Care Access Centres in and around Toronto, local community health care organizations, and the University of Toronto Centre for Bioethics. The Network was formed to address moral distress experienced by front-line health care workers. It serves as a forum for discussing systemic ethical issues. Representatives from each organization meet regularly to share cases and strategies about resolving difficult problems.

Features of the CEN:

- Utilizes a modified Hub & Spoke model
- Each designated organization member representative or community ally is responsible for bringing ethical issues forward to the CEN Steering Committee, on a hub, and for communicating back to their own organization strategies and best for dealing with those issues as articulated by the CEN.
- CEN provides resources, consultation, and support to both clinical and organizational ethics as a multi-regional level.

### South East LHIN Ethics Initiative

The LHIN is seeking input on the ethical regarding the establishment of an Integrated Patient/Client Issues Office. This project is part of the LHIN’s goal of enhancing a culture of patient care. If it presents an opportunity to provide a unique regional ethics service.

Outreach activities:

- Regional service sessions for health care nurses in various departments of Brockville General Hospital.
- In-person meetings with the Ethics Values Audit Committee on ethics of pain management at Hotel Dieu Hospital, Kingston.

Ethics capacity building initiatives:

- Ongoing grand rounds on ethics capacity building presented to health care trainees at Kingston General Hospital.
- There are plans to provide a series of in-service sessions to palliative care nurses in the community and in nursing homes.

### Lessons Learned

- Do your homework: Meet with potential partnering organizations to discuss their ethics needs. Identify gaps in each organization’s ethics infrastructure and develop strategies to fill them.
- Critical ethics consultation
- Research ethics education and reviews
- Critical ethics education

• A course was launched based on the learning guide of the American Society of Bioethics and Humanities. Interest was so high that enrollment had to be capped.

• Participants learned about fundamental issues in health care ethics and were very present with resources to assist in their decision making and a framework to resolve ethical problems.

• A website was launched so that learners could develop a network where they could discuss emerging ethical issues. The objective was to provide a venue for discussion between participants which could continue after completion of the course.

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### Actions

#### Champlain LHIN Ethics Centre

- CEN Terms of Reference
- Community Ethics Case Consultation
- Ethics Consultation Database
- Community Code of Ethics
- Community Ethics Toolkit, including an ethical Decision-making Workbook
- Quarterly Community Ethics Newsletter
- Community Ethics Learning Review
- Case Review Collection
- Specialized educational sessions for members
- A series of workshops to enhance ethics knowledge and skill

The CEN continues to participate and present at conferences, meeting local, provincial, and national recognition. Notably, the Community Ethics Network was the proud recipient of an Ontario-Association of Community Care Access Centres’ Award for Excellence, Systems-Partnering Category in 2007.

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### Challenges

• Establishing partnerships: Be clear about your expectations. You can’t tell the program to perform a way if you are unsure about what you can offer or what their needs may be.

• Geographic challenges: It can be difficult to schedule meetings and coordinate work with widespread and/or remote workers. Overcoming this challenge requires persistence and creativity.

• Attitudes: Ethicsics working without formal affiliation to a health care organization can find it difficult to establish partnerships. It is important to seek allies with strong institutional connections.

• Maintaining good governance: Networks require approval from the Board of Directors, need a well-functioning steering committee, and effective working committees.

• Sustainability: As networks age, it becomes difficult to ensure sufficient resources are in place to support partnering organizations. A business case may need to be made – the importance of ethics work is not self-evident – especially in times when funding is scarce.

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### Contact Information

**Ann Heesters**  
Director of Ethics and Spiritual Care  
Toronto Central Community Care Access Centre  
(416) 931-3022 ext. 3000  
[heesters.ann@toronto.ccaac-ccc.net](mailto:heesters.ann@toronto.ccaac-ccc.net)

**Hannah Kaufman**  
Bioethicist  
South East LHIN Ethics Initiative  
(613) 374-2709  
[hkaufman.hannah@gmail.com](mailto:hkaufman.hannah@gmail.com)

**Frank Wagner**  
Bioethicist  
Toronto Central Community Care Access Centre  
(416) 217-3820 ext. 2466  
[frank.wagner@toronto.ccaac-ccc.net](mailto:frank.wagner@toronto.ccaac-ccc.net)

**Michael Campbell**  
Academic Fellow  
University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics  
(416) 978-2709  
[michaelcampbell@utoronto.ca](mailto:michaelcampbell@utoronto.ca)

## Community Health Nurses National Conference

The Community Ethics Network was the focus of a presentation given by Caroline Hunter and Kay McGarvey, on the topic “A New Community of Practice: A Network of Ethics Support To Community Health Nurses” at the Community Health Nurses National Conference held in Calgary, Alberta in June, 2009. The conference was sold out with a long waiting list. Representatives were present from each province and territory, and represented both Public Health and Home Health providers, Educators, Researchers, Professional Licensing Bodies and Provincial Governments. More than 70 people attended the presentation, and the CEN toolkits distributed were well received.

## Personal Support Network Conference

At the upcoming Personal Support Network of Ontario (PSNO) Conference Caroline Hunter and Frank Wagner, Co-chairs of the Community Ethics Network, will facilitate the opening plenary workshop “Ethical Decision-Making in the Personal Support Sector” to support PSWs and their Supervisors in making sound ethical decisions in the workplace. Using a combination of lecture, case scenarios and small group work, the workshop will address ethical dilemmas encountered by PSWs in health care service delivery and offer tools including an ethical-decision making toolkit to assist them and their agencies, as well as long-term care homes in addressing these difficult issues.

For schedule details of the October 19 event, visit:  
[http://www.psno.ca/conference\\_2009/docs/PSNO\\_2009ConfSchedule.pdf](http://www.psno.ca/conference_2009/docs/PSNO_2009ConfSchedule.pdf)

## CEN 2009 Fall Event set for November 17

“Defining and Enhancing Ethical Standards in Community Practice is the theme for the CEN 2009 Fall Event to be held November 17 the Sunnybrook Vaughan Estate, Courtyard Ballroom.

The morning program will feature a discussion on “Organizational Ethics and Pandemic Planning”. Leaders in community practice concerning organizational ethics and pandemic planning are encouraged to attend.

The afternoon session will be a practical workshop for all front-line service providers and their direct supervisors.

Mark your calendar now for November 17. This is an event you don't want to miss!