



ETHICS IN ACTION

Workshop Theme: Using the Community Ethics Toolkit to Meet Accreditation Standards

A workshop organized by CEN was held May 29th at VHA Homecare. The theme was: “Using the Community Ethics Network Toolkit Towards Meeting the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation Standards”. More than 40 representatives of a spectrum of community-based organizations turned out to hear the presentations and participate in the discussion groups. The workshop featured two speakers: Susan Burns, Manager of Quality and Risk, COTA Health; and David Gibson, Director of Human Resources and Organizational Development, Bellwoods Centres for Community Living.

Susan Burns’ presentation “Using Accreditation to Demonstrate Your Ethics Program” outlined the approach she developed and implemented at COTA in preparation for upcoming accreditation. The process involved: defining

quality dimensions; determining team structure; implementing a six-step self assessment process; reviewing the evidence and indicator information; and looking at the actual site survey.

The six steps in the self assessment process are:

1. Convene existing teams to work on the accreditation process.
2. Assess against the standards content.
3. Reflect on results in portal.
4. Determine action plans.
5. Provide evidence of actions taken.
6. Update the self assessment and indicator/survey data.

David Gibson’s presentation theme was “Implementing the Ethical Standards/Decision-Making Framework into Your Organization”. He focused on five key areas:

1. Setting the Standard: using the Toolkit, particularly the Code of Ethics, as a guideline to help develop policy.
2. Communication: rolling out the standard to all internal and external stakeholders.

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David Gibson and Susan Burns respond to questions following their presentations.

3. Education/Training: for those administering the policy and using the related process tools and for all others participating in the process.
4. Evaluation: assessing policy awareness and understanding how it's applied and assessing process understanding and use.
5. Acknowledgement/Outcomes: determine the appropriate measurement tools and define the assessment and action plans.

Workshop participants had lots of questions for each of the presenters and the enthusiastic break-out group discussions proved the workshop a great success.

Community Health Nurses Conference

The second annual Community Health Nurses conference was held at the Prince Hotel, Toronto, May 29th and 30th. The Conference theme was "Shaping the Future – Practice, Power and Politics". Michael Decter, the opening keynote speaker, addressed the delegates on "Navigating Canada's Health Care System – Growing Challenges and Opportunities for Community Health Nursing".

Community Health Nursing is a specialty area that includes both public health and home health. It is recognized by the Canadian Nurses Association, which provides certification in this area.

The conference was jointly hosted by the Community Health Nurses Association of Canada (CHNAC) and the Community Health Nurses' Initiatives Group (CHNIG), whose mission is to act as the voice of community health nurses in Ontario, influencing the health care system and health and social policy in areas that affect the work of community health nurses and the public they serve.

The goal of the conference was to bring together nurses representing various locales and practice domains to stimulate thought and discussion towards shaping the future of community health nursing. Approximately 450 Community Nurses from across Canada attended, representing multiple

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areas of practice including public health, home health, and First Nation communities, as well as Faculties of Colleges and Universities.

CEN was a popular exhibitor at the Conference and those manning the booth were kept busy answering questions and distributing materials. Thanks to David Gibson, Caroline Hunter, Victoria Seavilleklein and Frank Wagner for volunteering at the CEN booth over the two days.

Ethics on OACCAC Conference Program

The 2008 OACCAC Conference was held June 22nd to 24th at the Westin Harbour Castle Hotel. Key topics featured on the program lineup included “Research Ethics in the Community” and “Integrating Ethics into the Culture of Organizations”. Both sessions were conducted jointly by Trish Barbato of COTA Health and Frank Wagner of Toronto Central CCAC, assisted by Hannah Kaufman, Ethics Fellow, Joint Centre for Bioethics, University of Toronto and Tim Pauley, Research Manager, Toronto Central CCAC and West Park Healthcare Centre.

Case Study: Elder Abuse Creates an Ethical Dilemma

Elder abuse is often encountered by staff in the community. The following case was presented at the Saint Elizabeth Health Care Multidisciplinary Ethics Committee by a staff member who works in the Metro Crisis Program.

A 74-year-old Turkish woman was referred by a mental health case manager due to concerns about her safety in her present living situation. The client’s two adult sons, addicted to crack cocaine, live with her in her one-bedroom apartment and one of the son’s girl friend uses the home to “turn tricks”. The client is being evicted from her apartment by Toronto Community Housing since her sons are illegal occupants of the rental unit and their disruptive behaviour affected other tenants. She was told of the complaints six months earlier and warned that her sons’ continued presence would result in her eviction at the end of the month.

Client feels her sons are “good boys” and she cannot kick them out as they cannot live alone. She said that, although they might raise their voices, they never hit her. She also said the various people coming in and out of her home don’t bother her as she stays in her bedroom most of the time. She noted she had a joint bank account so her son could pay the bills, but he hasn’t been consistent and they have some outstanding bills.

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Client had no plans in case of eviction; she has no one to stay with and no money for a hotel. When long-term care was discussed, she was not willing to consider it. Arrangements were made for her to meet with community legal services who agreed to take her case and try to intervene with Toronto Housing to stop the eviction.

The client, with assistance from her case worker Collette, discussed the matter with her sons explaining that to keep her housing they had to leave by tomorrow and never return—even for a visit. The brothers blamed each other for their mother's problems and, since they refused to leave, Toronto Housing again started the eviction process. Collette was informed by the youngest son that his brother had spent all their mother's money to pay back his dealer and buy more crack.

The next day, Collette was to meet the client to take her for an ultra sound and then to meet with her lawyer. During the visit the client started coughing heavily and stated she had not eaten for 48 hours and had no food in the house. She agreed to see her doctor for assessment. Shortly after, the case manager called to say the youngest son had reported they had been doing crack all night. The client expressed concern for her sons and the need for them to stay together as a family.

On the way to the doctor's office, the client fell into a deep sleep and became cold and clammy. The doctor, concerned that she might have pneumonia and congestive heart failure, called 911. At the hospital, staff had difficulty arousing her and after learning of crack involvement in the home, a tox screen was ordered and it came back positive for cocaine. Concerns about safety in the home were communicated to hospital staff and the client was admitted. The client denied ever taking cocaine or even her prescribed meds on a regular basis.

The client was assessed by a psychiatrist and deemed capable and competent in her decision making. A social worker spoke with police and an officer was assigned to investigate the allegations of elder abuse, plus her taking an illegal substance especially because she was denying taking it.

Due to concerns over her lack of insight into the violence in her home, the pending eviction, and her living situation, the social worker was able to get a Turkish interpreter for another capacity assessment. The client failed the assessment on three levels:

- She denied any violence in her home
- She denied ever taking any illegal drugs even though the drug screening was positive
- She denied any housing issues

Based on this, it was evident the client has no insight into her present situation and did not appreciate the consequences in returning to an unsafe environment. She remained in hospital until she could be transferred to a long-term care home. The social worker contacted the Public Guardian and Trustee office and requested that they become her personal guardian and put a peace bond in place against the sons.

The social worker spoke with both sons and they each stated the other had force-fed their mother cocaine followed by a glass of milk and was violent to her. Two weeks later the sons were arrested and charged with aggravated assault and administering a noxious substance to their elderly mother.

This report is based on a case study published in the March 2008 issue of *Ethical Explorer*. It has been edited and condensed due to space limitations.

Mark Your Calendar for these Upcoming Events

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July 14 – 17, 2008

Clinical Ethics Summer Institute (CESI) 2008 will be held at the Art Gallery of Hamilton. Theme is “Building a Foundation for Effective Ethics Programs”.

CESI is designed to respond to the changing needs of Canadian healthcare organizations and the four-day program will allow delegates to: engage with expert faculty and colleagues in an interactive learning environment; improve ethical decision-making knowledge and skills; acquire concrete strategies and practical tools for delivering ethics programs; discover ‘made in Canada’ clinical ethics innovations; and become better prepared to meet and exceed ethics accreditations standards.

Topics will include: communities of practice; effective language and communication; conflict resolution; Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA) standards for ethics; ethical leadership; policy development; resource allocation; and effectiveness of ethics programs.

This event will be of interest to: healthcare professionals; administration staff; members of ethics committees; ethicists/consultants and graduate students.

Thursday, November 6, 2008

“Practical Ethics for Home-Based Care: A Conference in Honour of Saint Elizabeth Health Care on its 100th Anniversary” will be held at the University of St. Michael’s College on the downtown campus of the University of Toronto.

Organized by the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute, in collaboration with Saint Elizabeth Health Care, this day-long conference will be of interest to front-line workers in home-based health care, nurses, physicians, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, personal support workers, speech pathologists, and nutritionists.

Dr. Mary Vachon, recipient of the International Journal of Palliative Care Nursing’s 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award, is the keynote speaker.

The conference will offer interactive workshops on such issues as: mental health and crisis management in home care; cross cultural issues in home care; spirituality and home-based care; and the family as context in home-care. A multi-disciplinary panel will address the topic, “The Ethics of Delivery of Care in Difficult Situations.”

Home Health Care Expo a Huge Success

The Home Health Care Expo held April 8th at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre drew more than 1,500 visitors to the extensive exhibit area (including the CEN booth) and the information sessions. Presented by the Toronto Central CCAC, in partnership with the Family Caregiver Newsmagazine, the event was heavily promoted to the public, clients/patients and caregivers, health professionals and community-based support agencies throughout the City.

The CEN booth was a popular attraction for visitors and the volunteers looking after the booth, Kay McGarvey and Frank Wagner, were busy the entire day answering questions and handing out materials.



Frank Wagner greets visitors at the CEN booth.

Planning for Annual Meeting Now Getting Underway

CEN's 2008 Annual Meeting will be held in the Fall and planning is now underway. All members are invited to attend this important meeting and all are welcome to suggest ideas for presentations and discussion topics to be explored by the planning committee.

Forward your suggestions to Maria Chau via email: maria.chau@toronto.ccac-ont.ca

Looking for Submissions

We're always on the lookout for timely and interesting material to ensure each issue of CEN's quarterly newsletter *Ethics in Action* provides an up-to-date overview of activities and events in this fast-growing area of community health care.

News items related to community ethics, capsule reports on published articles, brief book reviews, case studies, viewpoints/opinions, reports on conferences/meetings and notices of upcoming events—these are all items we want for potential publication. All submissions are welcome.