

Mayo Clinic Clinical Ethics Consultation Service

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Abstract:

This presentation introduces the Mayo Clinic Clinical Ethics Consultation Service, emphasizing the integral role of nurses in clinical ethics. Led by Kari Cambern, a nurse administrator, and Ellen Case, a clinical ethics program manager, the session outlines how ethics are embedded in nursing practice. Nurses collaborate with patients, families, and healthcare teams to develop individualized care plans aligned with patient values. They apply ethical principles—autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice—while upholding the American Nurses Association Code of Ethics.

The presentation details the structure and function of the Clinical Ethics Consultation Service at Mayo Clinic Rochester, Minnesota, which supports patients and care teams in navigating complex ethical dilemmas. The service is accessible to any care team member or patient representative and has seen a 58% increase in consultations over five years. It employs an interdisciplinary dyad model of physician and allied health consultants to ensure holistic, unbiased evaluations.

A case study of “Miss T,” a patient with fluctuating capacity and no advance directives, illustrates ethical challenges in surrogate decision-making and treatment over objection. The presentation addresses how the team assessed her capacity, consulted her sister as a surrogate, and proceeded with low-risk, high-benefit treatment, restoring her decision-making ability.

The presentation also covers the ethics of withholding resuscitative services (DNR/DNI), emphasizing informed consent and collaborative decision-making. Key takeaways include the nurse’s role in identifying ethical concerns, the value of dedicated ethics resources, and the importance of timely, team-based ethical assessments.