# The importance of ethics committees

Sociology, Ethics

Healthcare institutions operate to uphold the rights and well-being of patients. In practicing patient care, members of health care organizations face actions and decisions that should be aligned with ethical issues maintained by health care facilities, such as hospitals, to look after the best interests of patients. To oversee the ethical issues that health care facilities should observe consistently, establishing ethics committees is necessary.

In order to determine the importance of ethics committees in the field of health care and medicine, it is relevant to go over the history of the establishment of ethics committees, the varied and significant roles played by ethics committees in health care and medicine, the principles upheld by ethics committees, and the magnitude of ethics committees in health care facilities and the field of medicine. Ethical issues frame health care and the field of medicine.

Health care ethics is primarily based on principled obligations that health care and medicine should provide for human beings, as well as the binding obligations to constitutional laws. Health care ethics ensure that health care policies, services, programs, and practices are in line with moral obligations to human beings and political obligations to the state, while keeping in mind the sole purpose of health care and medicine – to improve the quality of life.

With the unending and increasing issues and choices that members of health care organizations and the field of medicine must face and decide on each day, there is a need to put up ethical standards and norms to abide by to avoid inconsistencies, conflicts, and disagreements. The requirement for ethics committees was formalized in 1992 by the Joint Commission (O'Reilly,

2008). Ethics committees are composed of various members of health care institutions. Members of ethics committees include " physicians, nurses, psychologists, lawyers, administrators and supervisors, families, and the community" (Fremgen, 2005).

Ethics committees are in charge of overseeing practices and operations within health care facilities regarding the services provided for patient care. Primarily, ethics committees in contributing or improving health care policies employed by facilities by thorough analysis and research and the formulation of ethical procedures or guidelines that the health care facility and all its members must observe at all times. These procedures or guidelines are patient-centered – one which puts forth the best interest of the patient.

Ethics committees uphold ethical health care principles and practices by intervening in conflicts within the health care facility, especially when it comes to decision-making and ethical issues. The ethics committee reexamines a particular situation and arrives at a counsel or a suggestion as to how the parties involved will go about solving the problem. The result of the ethics committee's reexamination is based on ethical laws and principles endorsed by the state and the health care facility to put the patient's concerns above all.

In some instances, the ethics committee also reviews the quality and kind of health care services received by the patient in order to determine whether it was based on guiding ethical principles or not. (Fremgen, 2005) Ethics committees are influential in determining the fairness, reliability, morality, and integrity of health care facilities. It serves as a quality control committee, keeping health care services, practices, and operations in check,

in order to make sure that they comply with ethical principles related to health care and medicine.

Through ethics committees, health care facilities are able to sustain a mission, vision, goals, and objectives that are within the limits of what is ethical for health care facilities to provide. This ensures that the quality of health care services provided to patients meet their needs, demands, and expectations and it defends what is morally upright in relation to patient care. Ethics committees keepprofessionalismin the work place in check, and it guides major ethical choices and decisions in the field of health care and medicine.

With the realization of the significant roles and responsibilities that ethics committees carry out, it is therefore of great importance to health care facilities or organizations to establish an ethics committee that will serve as a consultant or a guide in putting health care practices and operations in line with ethical laws and principles. It does not only add value or integrity to health care facilities, but it also ensures that patient care is provided for, qualitatively and ethically.