

Expressions of Interest (EOI) are invited from people with skills, experience or interest in the development of clinical ethics support services at Barwon Health.

Introduction:

International developments indicate that providing Clinical Ethics services, to assist clinicians to negotiate ethical issues that arise in clinical practice, is beneficial and reflects best practice to support high ethical standards and consumer centred care.

"Clinical Ethics" refers to the ethical aspects of clinicians practice and decision making in their day to day procedures and deliberations. Ethics is present in all aspects of patient care and ethical concerns can arise in both particular cases and more general issues.

In keeping with international developments and best practice in patient and staff care, Barwon Health is establishing a Clinical Ethics support service.

Background:

New developments in medical treatment, technological advances and identification of new health threats are giving rise to more complex moral questions.

There is growing national and international recognition of the benefits of access to clinical ethics support services in assisting health care professionals to negotiate the complex dilemmas that arise in contemporary clinical practice.

Implementation of a clinical ethics service can support hospitals and clinicians in several ways; Clinical Ethics Services (CESs), such as clinical ethics committees and consultants, can work towards raising awareness and knowledge of ethical issues that can arise in clinical medicine, and can provide a mechanism for resolving conflict, tension or uncertainty in decision making. CESs have the potential to contribute to health service policy development and assist hospital staff in the management of ethically challenging cases, in the form of education or a consultation service for staff and patients.

The number of clinical ethics committees in the USA and UK has grown rapidly in the last decade and CE services are now increasingly available across Canada, Europe and Asia. Clinical ethics support is available in a few Australian hospitals and reports suggest that where these services are available, they have contributed to better patient outcomes, clinician satisfaction and improved ethics literacy across their host institution. The Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC), has released a consensus statement to highlight the importance of CESs for the delivery of quality healthcare in Australia and states that "the establishment and maintenance of clinical ethics capacity in hospital, community-based and other clinical settings is a core function of health services." (The Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC) of NHMRC 2015).

BARWON HEALTH CLINICAL ETHICS SERVICES

Purpose and Structure:

The purpose of implementing Clinical Ethics services at Barwon Health is to promote a culture of ethical reflection and practice and to support clinicians and patients by providing education and advice through consultation. Clinical ethics support at BH will be provided through a Clinical Ethics Committee (CEC) and Clinical Ethics Response Group (CERG). These Clinical Ethics services will align with the National Safety and Quality Standards including Standard 15. The Clinical Ethics Committee and the Clinical Ethics Response Group are advisory in nature. Membership of the Clinical Ethics Committee and Clinical Ethics Response group will include representative of the hospital executive, community members, consumer members, and Barwon Health staff from nursing, medical (including junior medical staff), allied health, pastoral care and legal services.

CLINICAL ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Clinical Ethics Committee (CEC) will respond to ethical issues that arise within the clinical setting or broader community. Ethical issues related to Barwon Health include matters that affect patients and families, health practitioners and other staff members. The CEC will provide advice about the ethical aspects of Barwon Health policies, guidelines and procedures, and oversight of the Clinical Ethics Response Group (CERG) through review of case consultation notes. The Clinical Ethics Committee will also oversee a clinical ethics education program offered at BH and to regional partners. The CEC will primarily address and respond to issues raised by Barwon Health staff members, but may also provide advice to the wider region when requested. Clinical ethics committee meetings will take place every three months.

CLINICAL ETHICS RESPONSE GROUP

The Clinical Ethics Response Group (CERG) aims to facilitate decision making and discussion of ethical issues and to provide timely ethics advice and support to clinicians regarding ethical issues that arise from current clinical cases. The CERG also seeks to promote awareness and provide education about clinical ethics. The CERG is an advisory service only and does not direct treatment decisions. CERG meetings will take place as needed, often with short (<1 week notice).

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST for any of the above categories of membership are invited:

EOIs should be sent by email to clinicaethics@barwonhealth.org.au and should include:

- A letter detailing interest in the clinical ethics committee and relevant skills.
- A short *curriculum vitae* or summary of education and relevant work experience.

For further information, please contact the Research Development Unit on (03) 4215 3374 or by email RDU@barwonhealth.org.au.