

From the Winter 2002 Newsletter

FROM THE FIELD

If there is any ethics related activity you feel the Center should be aware of, please let us know by clicking [here](#).

Veterans in Partnership Network (VISN 11) establishes a Corporate Ethics Committee

The Veterans in Partnership Network (VISN 11) has established an innovative program called the Corporate Ethics Committee to identify and address clinical and organizational ethics issues VISN-wide. This program may serve as a useful model for others wishing to develop Integrated Ethics Programs at the Network level.

The Corporate Ethics Committee is charged with the mission to promote ethical health care and operational practices VISN-wide, and to support VHA's goal of putting quality first until first in quality. Prior to the first meeting of the committee, which reports directly to the Executive Leadership Council, over 50 members of the VISN facilities' leadership attended the National Center for Ethics in Health Care training program on "Establishing Integrated Ethics Programs in VHA".

As a result of this training program, the committee established five goals to achieve its mission: 1) identify, develop and disseminate best practices in health care ethics, 2) assist in the analysis of VISN-wide ethical issues, 3) promote sound ethical decision making processes throughout the VISN, 4) support facility development of integrated ethics programs, and, 5) assure that VISN 11 ethics policies are developed and communicated.

As a first step, the Corporate Ethics Committee surveyed both executive leadership and clinical ethics leadership in the facilities to identify the most significant ethical issues and how frequently they occur. The most significant ethical issue for both executive teams and ethics committees was confidentiality, followed by the ethical corporate climate, meeting needs of the whole person, quality end-of-life care, disclosure, consent, honesty, substitute decision-making, and use of restraints and seclusion.

Portland VAMC launches a new type of "Ethics Rounds"

The Education Sub-Committee of the Portland VA Medical Center's Clinical Ethics Committee has launched a new type of "Ethics Rounds" that other facilities may wish to emulate. To improve their effectiveness, the committee proactively identifies areas for targeted educational interventions.

In recent months, the Education Sub-Committee of the Portland VA Medical Center's Clinical Ethics Committee has sought out clinical areas within the

Medical Center that need or would especially benefit from ethics education. Examples of their efforts include conducting quarterly Surgical Resident conferences, mini-sessions with Surgical Intensive Care Unit Nurses, and a quarterly hospital wide Ethics Seminar Series on new or less common ethics subjects (Law & Ethics, History of Medical Ethics, Pharmaceutical Ethics, Emergency Room Ethics, ICU Ethics, Capacity & Competency), and providing information about VHA National Center for Ethics in Health Care Hotline Calls to specific target audiences. The variety and number of staff attending these different programs has been impressive. To reach staff members whose schedules do not permit attendance, the Ethics Seminar Series sessions are video-taped and made available in the library and other sites within the Medical Center. An apparent effect of this effort is that the range of individuals and program areas generating questions and consults for the Clinical Ethics Committee is becoming broader and more diverse.