Ethics Consultation Quality Assessment Tool

Part I: Initial Rating

Instructions:
- Read the ethics consultation record.
- Give the record an initial rating of acceptable (“above the bar”) or less than acceptable (“below the bar”) based on initial impressions.

_____ Acceptable  ______ Less than acceptable

Part II: Overall Holistic Rating

Instructions:
- Read the ethics consultation record carefully.
- Based on the following information about levels of quality, assign the record an overall numerical score based on the holistic scoring criteria.
- If necessary, adjust the initial rating to be consistent with the overall holistic rating.

___ 1 (Poor) ___ 2 (Less than adequate) ___ 3 (Adequate) ___ 4 (Strong)

In general, a score of 1 represents poor work. The consultation is significantly flawed to the degree that the conclusions and/or recommendations are not supportable. An ethics consultation in this category generally displays the following attributes:

- The ethics question is inadequate to focus the consultation response. The ethics question(s) contains one or more of the following major flaws: missing the most critical content, uninterpretable content, or grossly inappropriate content.
- The consultation-specific information is inadequate to inform the ethical analysis. Critical content is uninterpretable due to major omissions, confusing descriptions, glaring inconsistencies, or inappropriate subject matter or level of detail.
- The ethical analysis is inadequate to justify the conclusions and/or recommendations. The analysis contains one or more of the following major flaws: very confusing and/or grossly simplistic arguments, missing the most important argument(s), absent or very poor justifications for the most important arguments, major gaps in logic, or misapplication of ethics knowledge to consultation-specific information.
- The conclusions and/or recommendations are inadequate to support ethical practices. The conclusions and/or recommendations contain one or more of the following major flaws: recommends ethically unjustifiable options, makes no recommendations when one or more would be appropriate, or is unresponsive to the ethics question(s).

In general, a score of 2 represents less than adequate work. The consultation is flawed in some way(s) that raises significant questions about whether the conclusions and/or
recommendations are supportable. An ethics consultation in this category generally displays the following attributes:

- The ethics question is somewhat inadequate to focus the consultation response. The ethics question(s) contains one or more of the following flaws: missing some content, unclear content, or partially inappropriate content.
- The consultation-specific information is somewhat inadequate to inform the ethical analysis. Some critical content is difficult to interpret due to omissions, unclear descriptions, inconsistencies, or inappropriate subject matter or level of detail.
- The ethical analysis is somewhat inadequate to justify the conclusions and/or recommendations. The analysis contains one or more of the following flaws: unclear and/or unsophisticated arguments, missing important argument(s), inadequate justifications for arguments, gaps in logic, or questionable application of ethics knowledge to consultation-specific information.
- The conclusions and/or recommendations are somewhat inadequate to support ethical practices. The conclusions and/or recommendations contain one or more of the following flaws: failure to identify one or more of the most important ethically justifiable option(s), omits one or more of the most practical recommendation(s), or is not fully responsive to the ethics question.

In general, a score of 3 represents adequate work. The consultation is flawed in some way(s), but the flaws do not raise significant questions about whether the conclusions and/or recommendations are supportable. An ethics consultation in this category generally displays the following attributes:

- The ethics question is largely adequate to focus the consultation response. The ethics question(s) is generally complete and clear, but some minor aspect(s) are incomplete, vague, or inappropriate.
- The consultation-specific information is largely adequate to inform the ethical analysis. Critical content is generally complete and clear, but some information is difficult to interpret due to omissions, unclear descriptions, inconsistencies, or inappropriate subject matter or level of detail.
- The ethical analysis is largely adequate to justify the conclusions and/or recommendations. The analysis includes the most important arguments, but argument(s) are somewhat unclear, incomplete, or not well justified, or there are relatively minor gaps in logic or in the application of ethics knowledge to the consultation-specific information.
- The conclusions and/or recommendations are largely adequate to support ethical practices. The conclusions and/or recommendations are generally ethically justifiable and responsive to the ethics question, but are somewhat lacking in one or more of the following areas: the range of ethically justifiable options, the range of practical recommendations, or the degree of responsiveness to the ethics question.

In general, a score of 4 represents strong work. The consultation may have minor flaws, but overall the conclusions and/or recommendations are easily supportable. An ethics consultation in this category generally displays the following attributes:
• The ethics question is adequate to focus the consultation response. The ethics question(s) is complete, clear and appropriate.
• The consultation-specific information is adequate to inform the ethical analysis. Content is complete, clear, consistent, and appropriate in subject matter and level of detail.
• The ethical analysis is adequate to justify the conclusions and/or recommendations. The analysis is generally clear, complete, well justified, logical, balanced, and appropriate in the application of ethics knowledge to the consultation-specific information.
• The conclusions and/or recommendations are adequate to support ethical practices. The conclusions and/or recommendations are ethically justifiable, practical, and responsive to the ethics question.

Part III: Feedback on Key Elements

Instructions:
• Carefully assess each of the four elements.
• Consider the main element and the sub-elements.
• Check the most appropriate level for each element.
• Provide narrative feedback by citing specific positive features and opportunities for improvement.

Key Element 1: Ethics Question – The ethics question(s) adequately focuses the consultation response. Specifically, the consultation record adequately:
  a) clarifies the ethical concern(s) (uncertainty or conflict about values) that gave rise to the consultation request
  b) identifies whose values are uncertain or in conflict
  c) identifies the decisions(s) or action(s) in question

Descriptions of Quality Levels for the Ethics Question

Overall, the ethics question(s) is:

_____ inadequate to focus the consultation response. The ethics question(s) contains one or more of the following major flaws: missing the most critical content, uninterpretable content, or grossly inappropriate content.

_____ somewhat inadequate to focus the consultation response. The ethics question(s) contains one or more of the following flaws: missing some content, unclear content, or partially inappropriate content.

_____ largely adequate to focus the consultation response. The ethics question(s) is generally complete and clear, but some minor aspect(s) are incomplete, vague, or inappropriate.
_____ adequate to focus the consultation response. The ethics question(s) is complete, clear, and appropriate.

Positive features and opportunities for improvement:

**Key Element 2: Consultation-Specific Information** – The consultation-specific information adequately informs the ethical analysis. Specifically, the consultation record adequately:

a) conveys the most important information about the medical and social facts, patient preferences, values and interests, and other parties’ preferences, values, and interests (i.e., relevant information necessary to inform the analysis and recommendations that answer the question)

b) reflects appropriate sources and processes used to obtain relevant medical and social facts, patient preferences, and/or other parties’ preferences

**Descriptions of Quality Levels for Consultation-Specific Information**

Overall, the consultation-specific information is:

_____ inadequate to inform the ethical analysis. Critical content is uninterpretable due to major omissions, confusing descriptions, glaring inconsistencies, or inappropriate subject matter or level of detail.

_____ somewhat inadequate to inform the ethical analysis. Some critical content is difficult to interpret due to omissions, unclear descriptions, inconsistencies, or inappropriate subject matter or level of detail.

_____ largely adequate to inform the ethical analysis. Critical content is generally complete and clear, but some information is difficult to interpret due to omissions, unclear descriptions, inconsistencies, or inappropriate subject matter or level of detail.

_____ adequate to inform the ethical analysis. Content is complete, clear, consistent, and appropriate in subject matter and level of detail

Positive features and opportunities for improvement:
Key Element 3: Ethical Analysis – The ethical analysis adequately justifies the conclusions and/or recommendations. Specifically, the consultation record adequately:

a) articulates valid and compelling arguments and counterarguments based on the consultation-specific information (e.g., inclusion of different stakeholders’ perspectives) and consultation-relevant ethics knowledge (e.g., ethical standards, empirical literature, precedent cases)

b) analyzes the ethical concern(s) (uncertainty or conflict about values) with focus (avoiding extraneous, distracting information) and depth (providing sufficient details as appropriate to the consultation)

c) reflects appropriate weighing and balancing of arguments and counterarguments

Descriptions of Quality Levels for Ethical Analysis

Overall, the ethical analysis is:

_____ inadequate to justify the conclusions and/or recommendations. The analysis contains one or more of the following major flaws: very confusing and/or grossly simplistic arguments, missing the most important argument(s), absent or very poor justifications for the most important arguments, major gaps in logic, or misapplication of ethics knowledge to consultation-specific information.

_____ somewhat inadequate to justify the conclusions and/or recommendations. The analysis contains one or more of the following flaws: unclear and/or unsophisticated arguments, missing important argument(s), inadequate justifications for arguments, gaps in logic, or questionable application of ethics knowledge to consultation-specific information.

_____ largely adequate to justify the conclusions and/or recommendations. The analysis includes the most important arguments, but argument(s) are somewhat unclear, incomplete, or not well justified, or there are relatively minor gaps in logic or in the application of ethics knowledge to the consultation-specific information.

_____ adequate to justify the conclusions and/or recommendations. The analysis is generally clear, complete, well justified, logical, balanced, and appropriate in the application of ethics knowledge to the consultation-specific information.

Positive features and opportunities for improvement:
Key Element 4: Conclusions and/or Recommendations – The conclusions and/or recommendations adequately support ethical practices. Specifically, the consultation record adequately:
   a) identifies and explains the range of ethically justifiable options
   b) makes practical conclusions and/or recommendations that are ethically justifiable and responsive to the ethics question(s)

Descriptions of Quality Levels for Conclusions and/or Recommendations

Overall, the conclusions and recommendations are:

_____ inadequate to support ethical practices. The conclusions and/or recommendations contain one or more of the following major flaws: recommends ethically unjustifiable options, makes no recommendations when one or more would be appropriate, or is unresponsive to the ethics question(s).

_____ somewhat inadequate to support ethical practices. The conclusions and/or recommendations contain one or more of the following flaws: failure to identify one or more of the most important ethically justifiable option(s), omits one or more of the most helpful recommendation(s), or is not fully responsive to the ethics question.

_____ largely adequate to support ethical practices. The conclusions and/or recommendations are generally appropriate, ethically justifiable, and responsive to the ethics question, but are somewhat lacking in one or more of the following areas: the range of ethically justifiable options, the range of helpful recommendations, or the degree of responsiveness to the ethics question.

_____ adequate to support ethical practices. The conclusions and/or recommendations are appropriate, ethically justifiable, helpful, practical, and responsive to the ethics question.

Positive features and opportunities for improvement:
Part IV: Supplemental Factors

NOTE: These factors are not intended to be used in determining the overall rating, but may be used when raters are unable to arrive at consensus with respect to whether a consultation is "acceptable" or "less than acceptable."

Instructions:
- Read factors 1-8 below.
- Provide additional comments in the text box below on the supplemental factors as applicable.

1. The ethics consultant(s) and their role(s) in the consultation are clearly identified.
2. The ethics consultation indicates that the ethics consultant communicated the ethical analysis, conclusions, and/or recommendations to the key participants, including the patient (as appropriate).
3. If applicable: the ethics consultation documents a process of facilitation and/or mediation, and the process seems to be appropriately executed.
4. The ethics consultation indicates that the ethics consultant(s) followed up over time, when appropriate.
5. The ethics consultation identifies underlying systems issues when applicable.
6. The ethics consultation is organized and presents a coherent narrative.
7. The ethics consultation generally uses appropriate grammar, punctuation, and avoidance of uncommon acronyms or abbreviations.
8. The ethics consultation suggests that the ethics consultant(s) demonstrated appropriate professional behavior and attributes (e.g., did not take over medical management of the patient, maintains confidentiality, avoidance of bias in choice of language).

Additional Comments:

Address each of the supplemental factors, as applicable.