Domains of Ethics in Health Care

Shared decision making with patients (how well the organization promotes collaborative decision making between clinicians and patients)

- Decision-making capacity (ability of the patient to make his/her own health care decisions)
- Informed consent process (providing information to the patient or surrogate, ensuring that the decision is voluntary, and documenting the decision. Note: informed consent for research is included under the domain of Ethical Practices in Research)
- Surrogate decision making (selection, role, and responsibilities of the person authorized to make health care decisions for the patient)
- Advance care planning (statements made by a patient with decision-making capacity regarding health care decisions in the event they lose capacity in the future)
- Limits to patient choice (choice of care setting, choice of provider, demands for unconventional treatment, etc.)
- Other (topics about shared decision making with patients that do not fit in the categories above)

Ethical practices in end-of-life care (how well the organization addresses ethical aspects of caring for patients near the end of life)

- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation [CPR] (withholding or stopping resuscitation in the event of cardiopulmonary arrest, including DNAR/ DNR orders)
- Life-sustaining treatments (the initiation, limitation, or discontinuation of artificially administered fluid or nutrition, mechanical ventilation, dialysis, surgery, antibiotics, etc.)
- Medical futility (a clinician’s judgment that a therapy will be of no benefit to a patient and that it should not be offered or should be withdrawn)
- Hastening death (intentionally or unintentionally, e.g., euthanasia, assisted suicide, or the doctrine of double effect)
- Death and post-mortem issues (determination of death, organ donation, autopsy, disposition of body or tissue, etc.)
- Other (topics about ethical practices in end-of-life care that do not fit in the categories above)

Ethical practices at the beginning of life (how well the organization promotes ethical practices with respect to preconception, conception, pregnancy, and the perinatal period)

- Preconception and conception (assessment of reproductive capacity, cryobanking of sperm, ova, and embryos, fertility medications, assisted reproductive technologies, preconception sex selection, gestational surrogacy, etc.)
- Pregnancy (genetic testing and diagnosis, the balance between the health of the mother and the fetus, forced interventions during pregnancy, etc.)
- Perinatal period (labor-inducing drugs, elective cesareans, extraordinary medical interventions for premature infants, perinatal care at the threshold of viability, etc.)
- Other (topics about ethical practices at the beginning of life that do not fit in the categories above)
Patient privacy and confidentiality (how well the organization protects patient privacy and confidentiality)

- Privacy (protecting individuals' interests in maintaining personal space free of unwanted intrusions and in controlling data about themselves)
- Confidentiality (nondisclosure of information obtained as part of the clinician-patient relationship)
- Other (topics about patient privacy and confidentiality that do not fit in the categories above)

Professionalism in patient care (how well the organization fosters behavior appropriate for health care professionals)

- Conflicts of interest (situations that may compromise the clinician's fiduciary duty to patients, including inappropriate business or personal relationships. Note: financial conflicts of interest relating to the government employee's duty to the public are included under the domain of Ethical Practices in Government Service; conflicts of interest relating to the researcher's duty to research are included under the domain of Ethical Practices in Research)
- Truth telling (open and honest communication with patients, including disclosing bad news, adverse events, etc. Note: truth telling related to informed consent is included under the domain of Shared Decision Making with Patients; truth telling relating to leadership, human resources, or business integrity is included under the domain of Ethical Practices in Business and Management; truth telling relating to communications with the public is included under the domain of Ethical Practices in Government Service; truth telling among staff is included under the domain of Ethical Practices in the Everyday Workplace)
- Challenging clinical relationships (staff management of relationships with patients and/or their families and loved ones who present challenging or disruptive behaviors, requests, or demands. Note: challenging clinical requests, demands, and choices related to treatments and procedures are included under the domain of Shared Decision Making with Patients)
- Diverse cultural/religious perspectives (clinician interactions with people of different ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, etc.)
- Interprofessional relationships (recognition and respect for unique cultures, values, roles, and expertise of other health care professionals; development of cooperative and trusting relationships among professionals)
- Other (topics about professionalism in patient care that do not fit in the categories above)

Ethical practices in resource allocation (how well the organization demonstrates fairness in allocating resources across programs, services, and patients)

- Systems level/macroallocation (fairness in allocating resources across programs and services)
- Individual level/microallocation (fairness in allocating resources to individual patients or staff)
- Other (topics about ethical practices in resource allocation that do not fit in the categories above)

Ethical practices in business and management (how well the organization promotes high ethical standards in its business and management practices)

- Leadership (behaviors of leaders in support of an ethical environment and culture)
- Human resources (fairness of supervisory management of employees)
- Business integrity (support for the oversight of business processes, compliance with legal and ethical standards, and promotion of business quality and integrity)
- Other (topics about ethical practices in business and management that do not fit in the categories above)
Ethical practices in research (how well the organization ensures that its employees follow ethical standards that apply to research practices)

- Research integrity (conduct of research and reporting of results)
- Societal value (value of research to the advancement of science and to society at large)
- Risks and benefits for human subjects research (adequate protections of human subjects and the appropriate balance of risks and benefits)
- Selection of human subjects (equitable recruitment and selection, including for vulnerable populations, etc.)
- Informed consent for human subjects (providing information to research participants/others, ensuring that the decision is voluntary, participation incentives, approach to documentation, etc. Note: informed consent for clinical care is included under the domain of Shared Decision Making)
- Privacy and confidentiality for human subjects (protection and disclosure of personal information of research subjects)
- Other (topics about ethical practices in research that do not fit in the categories above)

Ethical practices in the everyday workplace (how well the organization supports ethical behavior in everyday interactions in the workplace)

- Respect and dignity (employee privacy, personal safety, respect for diversity, respectful behavior toward others, etc.)
- Ethical climate (openness to ethics discussion, perceived pressure to engage in unethical conduct, etc.)
- Other (topics about ethical practices in the everyday workplace that do not fit in the categories above)

Ethical practices in government service (how well the organization fosters behavior appropriate for government employees)

- Government ethics rules and laws (ethics rules, regulations, policies, or standards of conduct that apply to federal government employees, e.g., bribery, nepotism, gift and travel rules)
- Other (topics about ethical practices in government service that do not fit in the category above)