A Supportive Service When Making Difficult Decisions

Our vision at Maple Grove Hospital is **together, health care the way it ought to be.** All members of the health care team strive to promote healing and relieve the suffering of every patient. We are committed to supporting patients and their loved ones.

Sometimes very difficult decisions about a patient’s treatment plan must be made. Rather than just asking, “What can be done?”, it is also important to consider, “What should be done?” These decisions, called “ethical dilemmas,” are often stressful and worrisome. They involve personal values and morals that come from unique life experiences, spiritual or religious beliefs, and family customs, or traditions. Examples of ethical dilemmas include:

› Complex and end-of-life decisions about foregoing aggressive treatment and allowing natural death
› Disagreement within a family about the right actions
› Rights and responsibilities of patients and medical decision makers
› Disagreement between the health care team and family about right actions
› Balance of harm versus benefits for high-risk procedures

When you face an ethical dilemma regarding a treatment plan, our staff can help. The Ethics Committee is made of up of a caring group of people committed to supporting the patient’s well-being. Ethics Committee members include physicians, administrators, nurses, social workers, and chaplains. Members have a broad knowledge of ethical principles and extensive experience in helping make difficult decisions through respectful, compassionate conversation.

**If I am facing a difficult decision about the treatment plan, who is available to help me?**

Your health care team is the first place to seek help. Feel free to discuss your questions with your physicians and nurses because they know the treatment plan best. You can also share your concerns with a hospital social worker or a chaplain, who provide care and counseling to all individuals and their loved ones. Family conferences can also be arranged so that you can receive input from the whole care team at one time.

Many concerns can be resolved when the family and the healthcare team work together. However, sometimes it may be helpful to discuss your ethical questions with another group of professionals. The Ethics Committee is available to provide consultation for that purpose.

**Who may request an Ethics Committee consultation?**

The patient, the immediate family or a member of the health care team may request a consultation with the Ethics Committee.
How can I request an Ethics Committee consultation?
Talk with any member of the health care team, and ask to speak with the ethics committee. Discuss your questions and concerns so that they can be shared with the committee. If you think a consultation would be helpful, an Ethics Committee member will support the decision making process.

What happens after I request the consultation with the Ethics Committee?
A member of the Ethics Committee will gather information to understand the ethical issues you are facing. He or she will talk with you and your healthcare team. If necessary, the Ethics Committee member will organize a meeting with physicians and nurses to discuss your concerns and questions. You are welcome and encouraged to attend this meeting, but if you do not feel comfortable, you are not required to do so. The meeting is an opportunity to share concerns and seek answers to questions. Ethics Committee members are dedicated to helping you and the health care team understand each other’s concerns and identify options and possible solutions.

The final responsibility for decisions about the treatment plan belongs to you and the health care team. The Ethics Committee offers an opportunity to discuss the difficult decisions that you must make about the treatment plan. After an Ethics Committee consultation, you and the health care team continue to work together. The Ethics Committee will be available for follow-up as needed.