



Center for
Bioethics & Health Law

Bridging Values and Experience: Difficult Discussions in Healthcare

Friday, April 11, 2025 | 8:00 am – 3:30 pm | Breakfast @ 7:30 am
Passavant Hospital Foundation Conference Center
700 Cumberland Woods Drive, Allison Park, PA 15101

Why Don't They Understand: Thinking through Conflict with Seriously Ill Patients

Robert M. Arnold, MD
Vice Chair for Professional Development and Professor and
Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman Chair
Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Articulating the Muddy Middle in the Medical Assistance in Dying Debate

Madeline Li, MD, PhD
Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto
Head of Psychosocial Oncology, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre

The Financial Toxicity of Cancer Care

Lauren Ghazal, PhD
Assistant Professor, School of Nursing
Associate Member, Cancer Prevention & Control
University of Rochester

Communicating Alzheimer's Disease Biomarker Test Results: Implications for Patients and Families

Jennifer Hagerty Lingler, PhD, MA
Professor and Vice Chair for Research
Department of Health & Community Systems
University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing

Difficult Discussions and Difficult Decisions: Pregnancy After a "Lethal" Fetal Diagnosis

Jennifer Braverman, MD, MA
Assistant Professor Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine
University of Colorado

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT AND OBJECTIVES

Clinicians will be able to anticipate patient/family questions, concerns, and demands related to the conference topics, and will be able to prepare to discuss the topics effectively. Interprofessional healthcare team stress should be reduced. The need to call for ethics consultation may be reduced or the need for such consultation may be identified earlier prior to escalation of emotion, stress, and adversarial position-taking.

THE 32nd ANNUAL HEALTHCARE ETHICS CONFERENCE

Providing attendees with an opportunity to learn from national and local experts about pressing medical ethics issues, the Center's annual Medical Ethics Conference features morning lectures and afternoon sessions. It is designed for clinicians and researchers, health policy analysts, lawyers, clergy, clinical ethicists, bioethicists, scholars, patient rights advocates, community members, and students of the health and social sciences and the humanities.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

7:30 – 8:00 am **Registration and Continental Breakfast**

8:00 – 8:15 am ***Introduction: Values, Experience, and Expertise***

Lisa S. Parker, PhD
Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote Professor of Bioethics
Director, Center for Bioethics & Health Law
University of Pittsburgh

Abstract: This conference will address ethical issues in medicine that necessitate difficult discussions—clinician-patient, intrafamilial, or society-wide discussions. This brief introduction will consider these issues while outlining the path forward the conference intends to forge.

8:15 – 9:15 am ***Why Don't They Understand: Thinking through Conflict with Seriously Ill Patients***

Robert M. Arnold, MD
Vice Chair for Professional Development and
Professor and Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman Chair
Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Abstract: Conflict over treatment decisions regarding seriously ill patients is common and results in clinician stress and family dissatisfaction. Stone et al have provided a model for thinking through conflicts focusing on what happened (the facts), our reactions (feelings) and its impact on our identity. The goal of this talk is to provide practical skills that will help you avoid these conflicts and build relationships with families that are likely to come to more goal-concordant care.

Following this presentation, participants should be able to:

- Identify three reasons why seriously ill families/patients ask for things clinicians may deem unreasonable
- Define a 'headline'
- Gather information about an incapacitated patient's values

9:15 – 9:30 am **Break**

9:30 – 10:30 am ***Articulating the Muddy Middle in the Medical Assistance in Dying Debate***

Madeline Li, MD, PhD

Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto
Head of Psychosocial Oncology, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre

Abstract: Vocal advocacy positions for or against medical assistance in dying (MAiD) have the benefit of clarity. The middle position of support for assisted dying in clinically appropriate circumstances is muddier to describe, but likely reflects what most people think. This presentation will illustrate the role of shared decision making and professional integrity in safeguarding the muddy middle practice of MAiD.

Following this presentation, participants should be able to:

- Discuss what maintains polarized views about MAiD
- Understand the impact of clinician value judgments on MAiD assessments
- Illustrate the role of shared decision making and professional integrity in conversations with patients about MAiD

10:30 – 11:30 am *Panel*

Robert M. Arnold, MD
Vice Chair for Professional Development and
Professor and Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman Chair
Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Madeline Li, MD, PhD
Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto
Head of Psychosocial Oncology, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre

Julie Childers, MD
Professor of Medicine
University of Pittsburgh

Abstract: Panelists will speak on ethical issues and communications challenges in delivering bad news / serious diagnoses and discussing end-of-life care options.

Following this panel, participants should be able to:

- Identify ethical challenges in communicating bad news / serious diagnoses to patients and their families
- Understand family and patient perspectives when they are not supportive of / not understanding clinician recommendations
- Emphasize informed and shared decision making when discussing end-of-life options

11:30 am – 12:30 pm **Lunch**

12:30 - 1:30 pm *The Financial Toxicity of Cancer Care*

Lauren Ghazal, PhD
Assistant Professor, School of Nursing
Associate Member, Cancer Prevention & Control
University of Rochester

Abstract: This talk will review the rising costs of cancer care and current concepts related to financial toxicity. Strategies to mitigate this growing problem will be reviewed.

Following this presentation, participants should be able to:

- Recognize the rising impact of cancer-related financial hardship.
- Differentiate three main components of financial toxicity.
- Describe three consequences of financial toxicity.

1:30 – 1:45 pm Break

1:45 – 2:45 pm *Communicating Alzheimer's Disease Biomarker Test Results: Implications for Patients and Families*

Jennifer Hagerty Lingler, PhD, MA
Professor and Vice Chair for Research
Department of Health & Community Systems
University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing

Abstract: This presentation will describe the challenges associated with communicating Alzheimer's disease (AD) biomarker testing results to patients and families, followed by an overview of findings from empirical research on psychological reactions to learning one's AD biomarker status. Data from a recent NIH-funded randomized controlled trial of communicating neuroimaging-based AD biomarker results will be presented and future directions discussed.

Following this presentation, participants should be able to:

- Explain the ethical and clinical challenges associated with communicating AD biomarker test results.
- Discuss the psychological impact of learning one's AD biomarker status.

2:45 – 3:45 pm *Difficult Discussions and Difficult Decisions: Pregnancy After a "Lethal" Fetal Diagnosis*

Jennifer Braverman, MD, MA
Assistant Professor
Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine
University of Colorado

Abstract: This talk will explore ethical considerations in counseling patients facing the unthinkable - a prenatal diagnosis of a severe or life-limiting condition. The talk will highlight how prenatally-diagnosed conditions may be classified as "lethal," and the implications that designation can have for access to the full scope of reproductive care, including abortion and perinatal palliative care.

Following this presentation, participants should be able to:

- Explore whether it is ethical to refer to a prenatally diagnosed condition as "lethal."
- Explain how the legal landscape may impact decision-making after a prenatal diagnosis, and how this varies by state.
- Understand how a life-limiting prenatal diagnosis might impact delivery planning and options for perinatal palliative care.

3:45 pm Conference Adjournment

COURSE DIRECTORS

Lisa S. Parker, PhD

Dickie, McCamey & Chilcote Professor of Bioethics

Director, Center for Bioethics & Health Law

University of Pittsburgh

Jonathan Fuller, MD, PhD

Assistant Professor of History and Philosophy of Science

University of Pittsburgh

Valerie Violi Satkoske, PhD, MSW

VP of Mission Effectiveness, Spiritual Care, & Ethics / UPMC Mercy

VP of Ethics UPMC

CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

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The information presented at this program represents the views and opinions of the individual presenters. Reasonable efforts have been taken intending for educational subject matter to be presented in a balanced, unbiased fashion and in compliance with regulatory requirements. However, each program attendee must always use his/her own personal and professional judgment when considering further application of this information, particularly as it may relate to patient diagnostic or treatment decisions including, without limitation, FDA-approved uses and any off-label uses.

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University of Pittsburgh Provost's Year of Discourse and Dialogue

CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDIT

In support of improving patient care, the University of Pittsburgh is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.

Physician (CME)

The University of Pittsburgh designates this live activity for a maximum of 6 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Nursing (CNE)

The maximum number of hours awarded for this Continuing Nursing Education activity is 6 contact hours.

Social Work

As a Jointly Accredited Organization, University of Pittsburgh is approved to offer social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program. Organizations, not individual courses, are approved under this program. State and provincial regulatory boards have the final authority to determine whether an individual course may be accepted for continuing education credit. University of Pittsburgh maintains responsibility for this course. Social workers completing this course receive 6 continuing education credits.

Other health care professionals will receive a certificate of attendance confirming the number of contact hours commensurate with the extent of participation in this activity.

This program has been approved by the **Pennsylvania Continuing Legal Education Board** for 6 hours of substantive credit.