

Healthcare Ethics in 2025 and Beyond: Innovation, Integrity, and Integration

FACULTY:

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SEPT
19-21

Oglebay Resort & Conference Center
Wheeling, WV

Co-sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Consortium Ethics Program, and the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine Center for Continuing Education in the Health Sciences.

The Consortium Ethics Program is a regional clinical ethics education network funded by its member institutions and supported by the University of Pittsburgh Department of Medicine

Healthcare Ethics in 2025 and Beyond Innovation, Integrity, and Integration

DATE: September 19—21, 2025

TIME: Starts: Friday, September 19

11:15 AM Registration

11:50 AM General Welcome & Introductions

12:00 PM Opening Session

Ends: Sunday, September 21

12:00 PM Adjournment

LOCATION: Oglebay Resort & Conference Center
Wheeling, WV

AUDIENCE: Physicians, Nurses, Social Workers, Pastoral Care and other Health Care Professionals with an interest in healthcare ethics.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW: As healthcare continues to evolve at a rapid pace, ethical practices must keep stride with emerging innovations, shifting cultural expectations, and increasingly complex care environments. This conference is designed for healthcare professionals, ethicists, administrators, and educators seeking to navigate the ethical dimensions of 21st-century healthcare.

This dynamic program will explore how cutting-edge technologies are reshaping ethical landscapes in ways that both reflect and challenge traditional bioethical principles. Participants will critically examine how advancements influence the patient-provider relationship and will learn practical strategies for maintaining professional integrity and ethical communication in the face of growing systemic and interpersonal pressures. Additionally, the essential role of interdisciplinary collaboration will be highlighted. Attendees will engage in sessions that promote the development of integrated ethical frameworks, encouraging the application of shared values and culturally responsive approaches across diverse healthcare settings. Through expert presentations, case-based discussions, and skills-building workshops, participants will gain tools to lead ethically grounded, innovative, and inclusive care in their organizations and communities.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES: At the end of this conference, participants should be able to:

1. Recognize how innovative technologies in healthcare have introduced new ethical challenges that both mirror and diverge from traditional healthcare ethics.
2. Identify practical methods and communication skills that support integrity in the patient-provider relationship amid modern healthcare challenges.
3. Develop plans for interdisciplinary collaboration that integrates ethical decision-making across healthcare settings, reflecting current cultural and technological dynamics.

In support of improving patient care, the University of Pittsburgh is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), 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 ____ 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 ____ contact hours.

Physician Assistant (AAPA) - The University of Pittsburgh has been authorized by the American Academy of PAs (AAPA) to award AAPA Category 1 CME credit for activities planned in accordance with AAPA CME Criteria. This activity is designated for ____ AAPA Category 1 CME credits. PAs should only claim credit commensurate with the extent of their participation.

Social Work (LSW, LCSW, LPC, LMFT) - ____ credit hours of continuing education is provided through co-sponsorship of Carlow's MSW Program, an approved provider of social work continuing education through the Pennsylvania Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors. These credit hours satisfy requirements for LSW, LCSW, LPC and LMFT renewal.

Carlow's MSW Program is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education and therefore a Pennsylvania pre-approved provider of professional continuing education for Social Workers (Section 47.36), Marriage and Family Therapists (48.36), and Professional Counselors (49.36) by the Pennsylvania State Board of Social Workers, Marriage & Family Therapists, and Professional Counselors.

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.

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September 19-21, 2025

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19		
11:00 AM	Registration	Shenandoah Foyer
11:50 AM—12:00 PM	Welcome & Introductions Carrie Stott and Jody Stockdill	Shenandoah
12:00 PM—1:10 PM	From Bedside to Bots: Ethical Paradigm Shifts in Healthcare Since 2000 Aimee Zellers, PhD Abstract: TBD	Shenandoah
1:10 PM—2:25 PM	Ethics, Technology and the Patient as Moral Compass Rebekah Apple, DHSc Abstract: Financial incentives. Market competition. Meeting patient expectations. These are but a few reasons healthcare professionals are encouraged - some would say pressured - to implement technology on an ever-growing scale. How is patient trust affected by the increasing use of digital innovation? How does AI alter the clinician/patient relationship? This session will explore how decision-making processes are impacted by technological transformation within healthcare institutions.	Shenandoah
2:25 PM—2:35 PM	Break	
2:35 PM—3:35 PM	CONCURRENT SESSIONS: Session 1A: “What Do You Mean the Patient Refused?... Let’s Get a Psych Consult”— What Does Informed Refusal Really Mean? Denise Stahl, MSN, FPCN Abstract: This session will review the concept of informed consent from the perspective of a result of non-consent – frequently labeled ‘refusal’ in the healthcare setting. It is generally understood that the shift in healthcare from a patriarchal system to a shared decision-making model has been helpful in promoting patient autonomy. At the same time, it often causes moral distress for clinicians when trying to accept, understand, and respond to a patient’s decision to not move forward with a plan of care that is recommended. Participants will have the opportunity to share personal and professional challenges with these situations and learn valuable techniques and procedures that will support patient autonomy, as well as clinician duty and obligation.	Shenandoah
	Session 1B: VSED—Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking at the End of Life Rebekah Apple, DHSc Abstract: We use food to comfort each other, show affection, and ensure the health of those we love. End of life often brings “shutting down” of the human body, with attendant refusal from terminal patients to eat or drink. How to reconcile the instinctual approach toward food with the autonomy of a dying patient? This session will explore current views on the refusal of food and fluids at the end of life from the perspective of healthcare professionals, terminal patients, and their loved ones.	Spruce
3:35 PM—3:45 PM	Break	
3:45 PM—5:00 PM	Patient Expertise and Medical Authority: Navigating Knowledge Disparities in the Clinician-Patient Relationship Jamie Watson, PhD Abstract: Bioethicists have long focused on mitigating the knowledge gap between clinicians and patients, bringing nuance to duties associated with informed consent and dissent, and, more recently, addressing deficiencies in health literacy. These concerns treat one side of the clinician-patient relationship, with the aim of protecting the patient from over- or under-treatment and ensuring that care aligns with their goals and values. But what happens when the patient knows as much as the clinician (or more) about their condition, as sometimes happens with chronically ill patients? What happens if clinicians do not accept the patient’s authority to speak to issues with which the patient (but not the clinician) is intimately familiar? This presentation explores the types of epistemic advantages patients might have over their clinicians and how clinicians can accommodate patient expertise in care planning.	Shenandoah
5:00 pm	Adjourn for the Day	

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

8:15 AM	Registration / Continental Breakfast	Shenandoah Foyer
8:30 AM—9:30 AM	Digital Dilemmas and Human Connections: Ethics at the Intersection of Technology and Palliative Care Karl Bezak, MD, HMDC University of Pittsburgh Abstract: TBD	Shenandoah
9:30 AM—9:40 AM	Break	
9:40 AM—10:40 AM	CONCURRENT SESSIONS: 2A: Psychosis, Voice Hearing, and the Ethics of Trusting Patient Reports Laura Guidry-Grimes, PhD, HEC-C Abstract: Whether in an outpatient setting, emergency department, medical floor, or psychiatric hospital, ethical uncertainties often arise when trying to partner with patients who have symptoms of psychosis and voice hearing. Healthcare professionals may strive to avoid paternalistic leanings, but may nonetheless not know how and whether to trust these patients' reports regarding their medical needs, vulnerabilities, values and priorities, or relationships. This presentation will discuss experiences of psychosis and voice hearing with an emphasis on first-person perspectives. We will explore strategies for avoiding diagnostic overshadowing and epistemic injustice, and these strategies will be applied through clinical case discussions. Supporting patients' agency and epistemic position will be analyzed, especially in relation to duties of beneficence, fidelity, and non-abandonment.	Shenandoah
	2B: Guardianship in Practice: A Guide to When, Why, and How to Navigate Guardianship in Patient Care Libby Moore, PhD Abstract: Providing quality ethics consultation services requires that the consultant be able to identify his or her own relevant moral values and intuitions including how these might influence the process or analysis of an ethics consultation. This interactive session will provide participants an opportunity to explore, reflect thoughtfully, and gain an understanding of their personal moral values, intuitions, and biases. Participants will be guided through various images, works of art, and literary passages to elicit underlying moral instincts which may have bearing on ethics consultation services.	Spruce
10:40 AM—10:45 AM	Break	
10:40 AM—11:45 AM	CONCURRENT SESSIONS: 3A: Ethics and Interpreter Services: Overcoming the Challenges of Language-Discordant Care Jamie Watson, PhD, HEC-C Abstract: Language-discordant care occurs when patients' preferred language differs from that of their care team. The standard of care for minimizing language-discordant care is to involve a trained medical interpreter to participate in care discussions. Unfortunately, family members or members of the care team who speak both languages often decline the offer of a professional interpreter, preferring to manage the conversations themselves. This presentation highlights the ethical challenges with both trained and untrained medical interpretation and offers strategies for more effective use of professional interpreters to ensure thorough, informed, patient-centered care discussions.	Shenandoah
	3B: Unbefriended, Uninvited: End of Life Doulas and Equal Access to the "Good Death" Adele Flaherty, PhD Abstract: In response to a global population with increasingly complex issues at the end of life, a movement in the U.S. has emerged incorporating doulas into end-of-life care. End-of-life (EOL) doulas are not just focused on the quality of life, but also the quality of death. Like birth doulas who provide support for pregnant patients and their families surrounding the birth process, EOL doulas offer similar services for the dying and their families by alleviating physical and mental discomfort. This session will explore the role of EOL doulas in the care of the 'unrepresented' patient population.	Spruce

11:50 AM—12:50 PM	CONCURRENT SESSIONS: 4A: Vaccine Hesitancy and Responses Michael Deem, PhD Abstract: TBD	Shenandoah
	4B: What We Say Matters: Communication Skills That Build Trust and Ease Suffering Karl B. Bezak, MD, HMDC Abstract: TBD	Spruce
12:50 PM—1:20 PM	LUNCH	Allegheny
1:20 PM—2:30 PM	Uncertainty, Ethics and AI in Medicine – Can AI Improve Patient Care? Alex London, PhD Abstract: Uncertainty is pervasive in medicine and how to address it in a responsible manner is a fundamental ethical concern. Recent advances in artificial intelligence (AI) have sparked considerable interest in using new technologies to better address uncertainty and to promote safer, more effective, more efficient, and more equitable health services. This talk considers some of the unique challenges to realizing this vision that arise at key choice-points across the lifecycle of AI development and deployment.	Allegheny
2:30 PM	Adjourn for the Day	
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21		
8:15 AM	Registration /Continental Breakfast	Shenandoah Foyer
8:30 AM—9:30 AM	Anti-Ableism in Clinical Practice Laura Guidry-Grimes, PhD, HEC-C Abstract: Ableism — the devaluation and marginalization of people viewed as disabled or mentally/physically "atypical" — remains a pervasive problem in healthcare. Ableism operates at multiple levels, including the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic. There is ample evidence that healthcare professionals (even while well-intentioned) tend to associate disability with low quality of life, lack adequate training on relevant laws and models of disability, and feel uncomfortable or unsure in how to ensure equitable treatment of disabled patients. This presentation will start with an overview of these concerns and the empirical evidence that ought to inform practice. We will then closely examine clinical situations (in a consult, rounding, and eligibility committee) that prompted questions regarding potential ableism. We will discuss strategies that any healthcare professional in their role can use to challenge or disrupt ableism.	Shenandoah
9:30 AM—9:40 AM	BREAK	
9:40 AM—10:40 am	CONCURRENT SESSIONS: 5A: I Know There's an App for That... but, is That Really OK? – A Discussion About Digital Therapeutics in Healthcare Denise Stahl, MSN, FPCN Abstract: This session will introduce participants to the emerging field of digital therapeutics. Together, the group will consider and reflect about their use in various populations and care settings. As societal expectations have progressed to include technology in every aspect of daily life, the role of technology in healthcare treatment remains unclear. Application of ethical principles to the prescription of digital therapeutics will offer an opportunity for consideration and discussion of potential risks and opportunities.	Shenandoah
	5B: Emerging Technologies and Trauma-Informed Care Aimee Zellers, PhD Abstract: TBD	Spruce

10:40 AM—10:45 AM	Break	
10:45 AM—11:45 PM	When AI Can No Longer Help: Agency Transfer Agreements for Assistive AI Systems Alex John London, PhD Abstract: As the populations of many high-income countries age there is growing interest in artificial intelligence (AI) systems that would support older adults and extend their ability to live independently. This includes AI systems that function as personal assistants helping to manage finances, pay bills, organize health-related information, assist with medications, monitor health status, manage schedules, or call for emergency assistance. This talk identifies strategies that AI systems might use to extend the decisional capacity of older adults and with this their ability to manage important cognitive tasks required for independent living. It then introduces the idea of an “agency transfer point,” defined as the point at which responsibility for a specific task must be transferred to another person because the older adult’s cognitive decline exceeds the ability of an AI system to extend their decisional capacity for that task. As the ability of AI systems to provide such support increases, so does the probability that some individuals will reach an agency transfer point while living independently. This talk provides an ethical analysis of strategies for addressing the risks to older adults from being in a situation where they are no longer capable of managing a task, but no agent has been identified to assume responsibility for that task. This includes a discussion of requiring, as a condition for using such systems, that older adults create an “advance directive” that identifies the person to whom they prefer to	Shenandoah
11:45 PM—12:00 PM	Wrap up and Evaluation	Shenandoah
12:00 PM	Conference Adjournment	

FACULTY BIOGRAPHIES

FACULTY:

Rebekah Apple, DHSc is the Director of the Master of Medical Management program at Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy.

Rebekah is responsible for the direction and strategy refinement for a degree program exclusively for physicians and serves as faculty for the Organizational Ethics course in the Master of Medical Management program. She works closely with faculty, staff, and external stakeholders to develop and deliver curriculum designed to increase physicians' business, management, ethics, and leadership acumen. Rebekah has served as health care advisor, educator and ethicist for over ten years in academic, clinical, and association environments.

Rebekah has customized world-known psychometric assessments to suit the clinician population and provides education on a consultant basis to hospitals and health systems throughout the country.

Rebekah currently teaches bioethics to first- and third-year medical students at the University of Pittsburgh and serves on three UPMC ethics committees. She teaches Applied Ethical Analysis to students in varied degree programs at Heinz College as well as the Leadership, Communications, and Organizational Culture graduate course for Mercy College of Ohio.

She holds a Masters in Bioethics from the University of South Florida and a doctorate in Health Science from A.T. Still University.

Karl B. Bezak, MD, HMDC

Michael J. Deem, PhD is Associate Professor in the Department of Human Genetics and Core Faculty in the Center for Bioethics & Health Law at the University of Pittsburgh. He is also Interim Program Director of Pitt's Multidisciplinary Master of Public Health and holds a Secondary Faculty Appointment in the Department of Community Health Services and Rehabilitation Sciences. He completed a PhD in philosophy at the University of Notre Dame, and the Pediatric Ethics and Genomics Fellowship at Children's Mercy Hospital. Dr. Deem's primary research interests lie in bioethics (especially pediatric ethics and ethical issues in genetics/genomic medicine), philosophy of biology and medicine, and public health ethics. Having taught ethics to genetic counseling, nursing, and medical students for several years, he also pursues research on interprofessional ethics education. Dr. Deem previously served as CEP Director from September 2021-June 2023.

Adele Flaherty, PhD

Laura Guidry-Grimes, PhD, HEC-C is an Associate Staff Bioethicist at Cleveland Clinic with regional responsibilities at Lutheran and Marymount Hospitals in northeast Ohio. She is also a Clinical Assistant Professor at Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine. Previously, she worked as faculty and as a clinical ethicist for the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and Arkansas Children's Hospital in Little Rock, AR, and she started her career at MedStar Washington Hospital Center in Washington, DC. Her research interests focus on how patients can be rendered vulnerable in clinical settings, disability bioethics, and psychiatric ethics. She received her PhD in Philosophy from Georgetown University in 2017.

Alex John London PhD Alex John London is the K&L Gates Professor of Ethics and Computational Technologies at Carnegie Mellon University. An elected Fellow of the Hastings Center, Professor London's work focuses on ethical and policy issues surrounding the development and deployment of novel technologies in medicine, biotechnology and artificial intelligence. His book, *For the Common Good: Philosophical Foundations of Research Ethics* is available in hard copy from Oxford University Press and is available in PDF as an open access title. He is a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Expert Group on Ethics and Governance of AI whose "Guidance on Large Multi-Modal Models" was published in 2024 and whose report, "Ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health" was published in 2021. From 2022–2023 he was a member of the U.S. National Academy of Medicine Committee on Creating a Framework for Emerging Science, Technology, and Innovation in Health and Medicine, whose report "Toward Equitable Innovation in Health and Medicine: A Framework" was published in 2023. He is currently a co-leader of the ethics core for the NSF AI Institute for Collaborative Assistance and Responsive Interaction for Networked Groups (AI-CARING).

Libby Moore, PhD

Denise Stahl, MSN, FPCN is the former Vice President of Palliative Care for Elara Caring. In this role, she was responsible for driving clinical leadership engagement, transformation and change management, and program growth to enhance health outcomes related to serious illness care in community. Prior to joining Elara Caring, Denise held senior leadership positions at Sidekick Health, AccentCare, CareMore/Aspire, Optum, VA Healthcare, and The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Denise is an Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist with more than 30 years of experience working in serious illness and end of life care. Denise is an active advocate for serious illness care and has served the boards of the American Academy of Home Care Medicine, Hospice and Palliative Credentialing Center, Alliance for Excellence in Hospice and Palliative Nursing, Hospice and Palliative Nurses Foundation, and the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association. Denise is a widely recognized educator for clinicians and providers working in end-of-life care and is known locally, regionally and nationally for her expertise in serious illness care.

Jamie Watson, PhD, HEC-C is Associate Staff Ethicist at Cleveland Clinic whose primary research interests are in expertise studies, health literacy, and moral distress. Dr. Watson has extensive experience as a clinical ethics consultant in both adult and pediatric settings, teaching health care staff and students, and working as a plain language writer for health information. In addition to a number of articles and books on expertise and the profession of clinical ethics, he is the author of "Talking the Talk: Enhancing Clinical Ethics with Health Literacy Best Practices" (HEC Forum, 2019) and "COVID-19 Consumer Health Information Needs Improvement to Be Readable and Actionable by High-Risk Populations" (with Alison Caballero and Katherine Leath, *Frontiers in Communication*, 2020), and he is co-editor of *Moral Expertise: New Essays from Theoretical and Clinical Bioethics* (Springer 2018) with Laura Guidry-Grimes.

Aimee Zellers, PhD Dr. Aimee Zellers is the Interim Associate Provost and a tenured Associate Professor of Philosophy at Carlow University, where she has taught since 2013. She also has served Carlow in a variety of roles including Chair of the Art, Communication, and English Department (2022 – 2023), Co-Chair of the University Faculty Assembly (2021 – 2023), and as the Michele R. Atkins Endowed Chair for Ethics Across the Curriculum (2013 – 2016).

She earned her PhD in Healthcare Ethics from Duquesne University in 2015. Prior to earning her MA in Philosophy at Duquesne University in 2010 she completed a BA in history and philosophy at Clarion University of Pennsylvania in 2008. Aimee's scholarship interests are twofold. The first area is ethics and emerging health technologies. The second, ethics pedagogy, stems from her passion and dedication as an educator. She has presented locally, nationally, and internationally in both research areas.

