Each residency program should ensure that there are clear objectives in biomedical ethics. These objectives should be reflected in a defined curriculum integrated into the educational program and evaluated by the evaluation system of the Residency Program Committee.

**OBJECTIVES**

Objectives should include a working knowledge of biomedical ethics as it relates to the specialty or subspecialty, including basic principles and processes which facilitate the development of appropriate ethical attitudes and behaviour in physicians in a variety of different medical settings. In developing appropriate objectives the Residency Program Committee should consider the following:

1. **Knowledge**
   
a. awareness of the major ethical theories, perspectives and principles;
   b. knowledge of ethical issues which are commonly encountered in practice including:
      - informed choice (consent or refusal) in competent and incompetent patients (including decision making for and with pediatric patients and assessment of capacity and substitute decision making)
      - confidentiality
      - allocation of resources
      - end-of-life care (including knowledge of concepts such as quality of life, dying with dignity, and brain death)
      - truth-telling
      - dealing with medical error and mishaps
      - professional conduct, including confidentiality, boundary issues, and competence
      - conflict of interest
      - dealing with differences in value systems, e.g. between individuals or institutional vs. personal values;
   c. knowledge of relevant professional codes of ethics;
   d. knowledge of law as it applies to ethical decision making in medicine, particularly law on consent and confidentiality;
   e. identification of the ethical dimensions of discipline-specific issues as they arise, eg. new technologies and therapies;
   f. awareness of the ethical issues arising in the teaching and learning environment;
   g. awareness of the ethical components of medical research including experimental design and valid consent.
   h. An understanding of the social determinants of health and the impact of social justice on health status and on the utilization of the health care system.
2. **Attitudes**

   a. an appreciation of the presence of ethical dimensions in all medical decision-making;
   b. respect for diversity and differences including race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical status;
   c. a heightened awareness of the patient's and the resident's religious and cultural beliefs and values that may influence ethical decision making.
   d. An understanding that health care is delivered through interdisciplinary teams and that consideration of a wide variety of ethical notions including cultural differences should be incorporated into the decision making process.

3. **Skills**

   a. the ability to identify and analyse ethical issues when making decisions;
   b. the ability to acknowledge uncertainty and the possibility of error in ethical decision making;
   c. the ability to communicate effectively to promote full discussion of ethical issues, including the encouragement and support of patients and families and other health professionals in making ethical decisions. This will include the ability to understand the appropriate mode of communication;
   d. the ability to recognize and deal with conflict;
   e. the ability to develop mature professional relationships with patients and their families, other health care providers and other physicians.

**SETTINGS**

Settings suitable for biomedical ethics teaching and learning include:

1. Role model relationships and mentoring: Faculty-patient-resident in ambulatory settings, eg. office and outpatient department.

2. Team or group interactions involving multiple health care professionals e.g. CTU, teaching rounds and seminars, small group management sessions.

3. Formal educational sessions: institutional rounds, grand rounds.

4. Participation on institutional ethics committees, research ethics boards.

**EVALUATION**

1. **Resident Evaluation**

   The Residency Program Committee should identify those areas of the biomedical ethics curriculum to be evaluated and ensure that appropriate evaluation methods are included in the program in-training evaluation system.

   The program should separately assess:
a. the knowledge, attitudes, and skills the resident has in discussing and dealing with the ethical components of practice and clinical research, and
b. the personal ethical behaviour of the resident.

2. **Program Evaluation**

The biomedical ethics component of the program should be reviewed at least once a year by the Residency Program Committee and must be reviewed at the time of an internal review by the University Postgraduate Medical Education Committee and when a survey by the Royal College takes place.

**RESOURCES**


Revised: January 2003