

Teaching ethics to critical care trainees: the University of Toronto experience

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Critical Care training and practice include frequent encounters that require physicians to balance patient centered values with professional and societal values. At the University of Toronto, there has been a long-standing interest in teaching clinical ethics at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

A unique program has evolved within the interdepartmental Critical Care program that has allowed trainees to regularly discuss ethical issues with their peers, an expert in the faculty (N. Lazar) and external experts from law, philosophy and other humanities. The curriculum is focused on an understanding of the philosophy of medicine as grounding for decision making in clinical and academic practice. Monthly seminars are organized by a resident volunteer, usually presented by 1 or 2 trainees and attended by both university residents and international fellows. Themes are chosen to enhance participants' understanding of hot-button topics, such as organ donation after cardiac death, rather than a fixed curriculum.

Positive outcomes have included 3 graduate students gaining educational experience prior to a career in clinical ethics and regular citations following Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada program reviews. An example curriculum covering 2 years will be presented.