



Training healthcare professionals to deal with ethically challenging situations

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Rationale



- **Ethical dementia care is not an option but a fundamental component of good care.**
- **Often, situations arise when we want to do the right thing but no one is quite sure what the right thing is and then there is the question “Right for whom?”**
- **Importance of ethical reflection and of taking responsibility**
- **Addressing and challenging unethical care practices**

Target group and setting



- Health and social care professionals of all levels and responsibilities who are faced with an ethical dilemma and concerned about finding an ethical way to deal with it.
- The residential care and hospital setting

Aim of the guide



- To enable professionals to reflect on a range of ethically challenging situations
- To empower professionals to tackle those they encounter
- To enable professionals to reflect on the approach they adopt
- To enable professionals to justify the approach adopted to themselves and anyone who might ask

Methodology



- **Multidisciplinary group covering several countries (BE, LU, FR, POR, FIN, IRE, UK, CZ, NL)**
- **Face-to-face discussions**
- **Circulation of a draft within the working group until we reached consensus**
- **Independent review of final draft by healthcare professionals in Scotland, Finland and Portugal**
- **Last adjustments and finalisation of the text.**

Content and structure



- **Background information**
- **An ethical framework for reflection**
- **Guidelines for organisations (to create an ethical infrastructure)**

(structured around vignettes, commentaries, exercises and support documents)

General guidelines to facilitate ethical decision making



- Complexity and constraints
- The lived experience
- The interpretive dialogue
- The normative framework
- Informed conscience

Structured approach to tackling ethical dilemmas



1. The situation
2. The people involved
3. The context
4. How the situation is experienced

Structured approach continued)



5. The dialogue with everyone concerned
6. Key values and principles
7. Realistic option/what to do
8. Justification and what can be learned with hindsight

Building an ethical infrastructure



It is essential that those responsible for the organisation/provision (rather than the direct/person-to-person delivery) of dementia care build an organisational ethical infrastructure (i.e. a general context/environment allowing ethical analysis and empowering professionals who have to tackle ethical dilemmas with skills and opportunities to share their thoughts).

Suggestions to help build an ethical infrastructure



- Build up a practice of moral deliberation/reflection.
- Integrate this into your organisation's vision and objectives.
- Involve people with dementia and informal carers in your ethical infrastructure.
- Consider teaming up with other organisations and sharing ethical expertise (e.g. an ethics advisor or ethics board) if yours currently lacks the necessary means.

Building an ethical infrastructure (cont.)



- Work on capacity building in ethics (e.g. training in ethics and in ethical reflection).
- Provide staff with the necessary time and support to discuss ethically sensitive situations.
- Create an environment in which staff will feel safe to reflect on situations.
- Involve and value staff of all levels, not just those in higher positions, in your ethics committee.
- Consider ethics in all work and in all reports.

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Further developments



- **Copies of the final printed report distributed to national Alzheimer associations in 32 countries**
- **French translation by Fondation Médéric Alzheimer**
- **Being used in Ireland in a university course for gerontology students**
- **Being used in some UK nursing homes**