Supporting health care decision makers when there is conflict or uncertainty about the “best” thing to do.
This 2016-2017 Ethics Centre Summary of Activities report captures our efforts to support the people and groups served by our organization. While the report details the Centre’s significant contributions to the development of internal resources, it also reflects a broadening of the Centre’s outward-facing scope and commitment to patient and community care and service. Aligned with the organization’s preventative ethics strategy, the Ethics Centre directed attention toward serving uniquely vulnerable populations such as the victims of human trafficking, the hard-to-house, and community residents with increasingly complex behavioral and medical challenges who require institutional care. In order to bring activity reporting periods into line with financial years going forward, this summary of activities covers the period from January 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017.
HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CENTRE’S ACCOMPLISHMENTS THROUGH MARCH 2017 INCLUDE:

1. Created a Human Trafficking Working Group to develop a coordinated organizational response to help trafficked persons who present to our facilities

2. Developed and released a new online learning course “Compliance and Business Ethics” on the CLiC learning platform

3. Obtained certification of Covenant Health’s status as a World’s Most Ethical Company for 2016, and again for 2017

4. Covenant Health was recognized and profiled in the Alberta Public Interest Commissioner’s Annual Report as a positive example of Public Interest Disclosure Act compliance

5. Led mission discernments on the use of electronic recording devices, on the establishment of a secure complex care unit, and on the safe discharge of homeless patients

6. Developed and communicated the organizational response to the legalization of Medical Assistance in Dying
ETHICS COMMITTEES

Through the support and direction of the Ethics Centre, Covenant Health’s ethics committees have been active participants in the development of policy, education, and community engagement in 2016 and 2017. Across the board, our committees enhanced integration of ethics reflection in leadership and administration functions, deepened capacity for ethics reflection through staff and committee education, and generated awareness of and preparedness for the legalization of Medical Assistance in Dying.

Edmonton Area Clinical Ethics Committee

This is Covenant Health’s largest ethics committee, with representatives from six facilities in the capital region plus corporate. In addition to local site-specific issues, this committee also responds to the needs of smaller sites across the province, as well as issues arising from sites belonging to our sister organization, Covenant Care.

Highlights:
- Informed and supported the work of the Human Trafficking Working Group
- Informed and supported the development of the White Paper on Sexuality and Intimacy in Long-Term Care
- Two members represented Covenant Health at the Canadian Bioethics Society annual conference, May 2016
- Committee education included sessions on Goals of Care Designations, Competent Refusals of Nursing Care, Information and Privacy, and Conscientious Objection
- Confirmed a new committee chairperson, Kris Gray, March 2016
St. Mary’s Camrose Hospital Ethics Committee and Banff Mineral Springs Hospital Ethics Committee

Both of these committees are traditional single site committees that respond to the needs of the local site staff, physicians, patients, residents and families. Although ‘traditional’ in that these committees serve a single site, their impact is anything but common. These committees provide ethics reflection and analysis on issues that extend beyond purely clinical ethics concerns. Given the short distance between bedside decisions, administrative realities and community interests in rural communities, these committees respond to a diverse range of clinical, administrative and social ethics issues.

**Camrose Highlights:**
- Health Ethics Week Ethics Services “Meet and Greet” and new member recruitment
- Committee education related to medically administered nutrition at end of life
- Needs assessment for staff education pertaining to Covenant Health policy on Medical Assistance in Dying
- Initiated work to adapt and implement a community services staff pocket guide

**Banff Highlights:**
- Coordinated the annual BMSH Community Ethics Education Forum on the topic of Staff Experiences of Journeying with Patients through Medical Assistance in Dying
- Completion of the committee’s three year work plan to enhance committee capacity, provide onsite staff education and engage the Banff/Bow Valley community
- Provided consultation support and ethical analysis related to the complex discharge of homeless patients

Covenant Health Rural Ethics Network

The Rural Ethics Network is comprised of representatives from Covenant Health’s rural care facilities. Although the Network functions similarly to the other COV ethics committees, the Network also helps to identify trends in ethics issues specific to the practice and administration of health care in the rural context. The contributions of the Network inform and nuance the development of ethics policies and the Centre’s broader ethics education initiatives for rural staff and leaders.

**Highlights:**
- Initiated and supports the Centre’s ongoing work related to rural homelessness and the complexity of discharging homeless patients from rural facilities
- Identified trends in challenges related to substitute decision-making, medically administered nutrition and Medical Assistance in Dying
- Informed and supported the Centre’s work on Human Trafficking
- Sponsored member education related to Personal Directives and the Role of Agents in decision-making for incapable residents and patients
The core business of the Ethics Centre continues to be our 24-hour, province-wide ethics consultation service. Clinical ethics consultations contain structured discussions led by a member of the ethics team. Consultations are guided by Covenant Health’s ethical decision-making framework, and the Health Ethics Guide.

### Requested Consultations by Month

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Consultations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2016</td>
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<td>Mar 2017</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Supporting positive and constructive patient-provider relationships is the core of our day to day focus.
CONSULTATION REQUESTS BY LOCATION

- Urban: 75%
- Rural: 25%

CONSULTATION REQUESTS BY URGENCY

- Non-Urgent: More than 24hrs
- Urgent: Within 24hrs
- Stat: Immediate

CONSULTATION REQUESTS BY TYPE OF SUPPORT PROVIDED

- Coaching: 77%
- Debriefing: 9%
- Facilitation: 8%
- Referral: 6%

CONSULTATION REQUESTS BY CARE CATEGORY

- Acute: 57%
- Long-Term Continuing: 29%
- Supportive Living: 8%
- Homecare/Community: 6%
CONSULTATION REQUESTS BY TOTAL TIME SPENT

- **0-1 HOURS**: 25 cases
- **1-3 HOURS**: 46 cases
- **3-5 HOURS**: 13 cases
- **5-10 HOURS**: 1 case
- **10+ HOURS**: 2 cases

CONSULTATION REQUESTS BY THEME

- **Policy/Process/Organizational Issues**: 17%
- **Professional Ethics**: 14%
- **Withholding/Withdrawing/Refusing Interventions**: 12%
- **Medical Assistance in Dying**: 10%
- **Complex Discharge/Transfer/Placement**: 9%
- **Goals of Care**: 5%
- **Living at Risk/Unsafe Behaviours**: 5%
- **Health Care Provider Communication**: 4%
- **Early Induction**: 2%
- **Resource Allocation**: 2%
- **Resource Allocation**: 2%
- **Privacy & Confidentiality**: 2%
- **Conflict Between Advocate/Patient/Care Team**: 7%
- **Capacity/Consent/Informed Decision-Making**: 7%
- **Exceptional Behaviours – Patient**: 2%
- **Exceptional Behaviours – Family**: 2%

ETHICS CENTRE SUMMARY REPORT
Ethisphere

Covenant Health was recognized by the Ethisphere® Institute as a World's Most Ethical Company™ for the second year in a row (2016, 2017). Ethisphere ranks and benchmarks participating companies from around the world against a comprehensive set of ethics standards and leading compliance business best practices. The designation is a testament to Covenant Health’s commitment to improve clinical and organizational ethical practices.

Medical Assistance in Dying

In May 2016, the new Covenant Health policy “Responding to Requests for Medical Assistance in Dying” was released. Developed with significant input from the Ethics Centre, this policy states that Covenant Health will support persons in our care who seek more information regarding options, including palliative and hospice care, but will not participate in or provide Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID). The ethics centre offers a number of virtual resources related to MAID, and is actively involved in supporting staff who receive requests for MAID by patients or residents in Covenant Health facilities.

Human Trafficking

The working group on Human Trafficking has been connecting with local stakeholders and international organizations to develop a trauma-informed strategy for helping suspected victims of human trafficking who present to Covenant Health facilities. A CLiC module for emergency department staff is currently in development, and there have also been a number of presentations and events to educate front-line staff.

Sexuality & Intimacy in Long-Term Care

In autumn 2016, the Ethics Centre undertook an initiative to investigate ethical issues relating to sexuality and intimacy of residents in long-term care facilities. With the help of a visiting clinical ethics fellow from the Centre for Clinical Ethics in Toronto, a focus group discussion with key informants was facilitated, and a strategic review of domestic and international policies and guidelines was undertaken. Work on this initiative is ongoing, with the intention of producing a background paper in autumn 2017 to help support administrators and clinicians caring for residents in long-term care.
EDUCATION

One of the central mandates of the Ethics Centre is to provide ethics education to Covenant Health staff and physicians. In order to fulfill this mandate, we offer a variety of educational sessions and resources, including:

• New electronic resources, such as Ethics Made Real articles addressing misunderstandings about Catholic hospitals and Medical Assistance in Dying, or supporting the flu shot and handwashing campaigns. We also published a new In a Nutshell article on competent patients’ refusal of nursing care.
• Online education, including a new CLiC module on Compliance and Business Ethics (added December 2016).
• Educational sessions aimed at clinicians, including presentations on Goals of Care and on defining our response to Medical Assistance in Dying.
• The Ethics Speaker Series, open to all staff and community members, with invited presentations on healthcare responses to human trafficking and on journeying with patients, residents and families.
• The Ethics Book Club, discussing literary works with ethical dimensions.
• Annual Ethics Education Day for ethics committee members (June 2016).
ACTIVE PARTNERS IN COLLABORATION

For the Ethics Centre, living our values involves - amongst other things - being active partners in collaboration with other areas of Covenant Health. Some of our contributions to organizational projects and priorities include:

• Providing oversight, accountability and leadership support to the Edmonton Area Clinical Ethics Committee, the Covenant Health Ethics Network, the St. Mary’s Hospital (Camrose) Ethics Committee, the Banff Mineral Springs Hospital Ethics Committee, and the Human Trafficking Working Group.

• Membership, representation and participation on the Employee Support and Wellness Continuum Committee, the Exceptional Situations Protocol Committee, the Misericordia Community Hospital Surgery Goals of Care Committee, the Misericordia Community Hospital Perioperative Experience Subgroup, the Medical Marijuana Working Group, the Palliative and End-of-life Care Quality Council, the Intranet Steering Committee, the Diversity & Inclusion Committee, and the Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre Winter Round Dance Planning Group.

• Participation in the Corporate Orientation sessions for new staff, the Mission Formation assessment round, the IT Strategy Development and Engagement working group and the Covenant Health Coaching to Lead Program.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND THANKS

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Jon Gilchrist  Caitlin Congdon

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Josef Chu  William Patterson  Jim Wilson
Charlotte Ewanowich  Diane Semotiuk

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Donna Brown  Deb Kirkpatrick  Josh Stachniak
Jane Christensen  Sarah Kosowan  Scott Stewart
Bryce Clarke  Bonnie Launhardt  Michelle Stone
Meg Hagerty  Brenda Madsen  Kelly Strand
Mary Jo Harland-Gregoire  Ralph Magnus  Bonnie Tejada
Dr. Lori Harper  Sheila McNary  Mark Vigrass
Karen Harrison  Dr. Thamarai Moorthy
Heather Gallant  Beryl Parsons

BANFF MINERAL SPRINGS HOSPITAL ETHICS COMMITTEE:

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Peter Baylis  Diane Gibson  Tamara Wewetzer
Susan Bruce-Walsh  Glenn Matthews  Dr. Priscilla Wilson
Shelley Buchan  Natalie Palmer
Nancy Cowtun  Sandy Penrose
CAMROSE ETHICS COMMITTEE:
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Karen Burton       Kathy Henderson  Kim Roberts
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Shelly Dalueg       Kimberly Lorenz  Jim Wilson

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Frances Galambos  Cindy Mulherin

Rochelle Maurice, Centre for Clinical Ethics
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