

# IT'S COMPLICATED: Supporting Health Care Decision- Making in Oncology

Jennifer Dunsford, RN, MN  
Director, Ethics Services, Winnipeg  
Health Region  
Chair, MB-PHEN

# Presenter Disclosure

- **Faculty:** Jennifer Dunsford
- **Relationships with commercial interests:**
  - **Employee of Winnipeg Regional Health Authority**

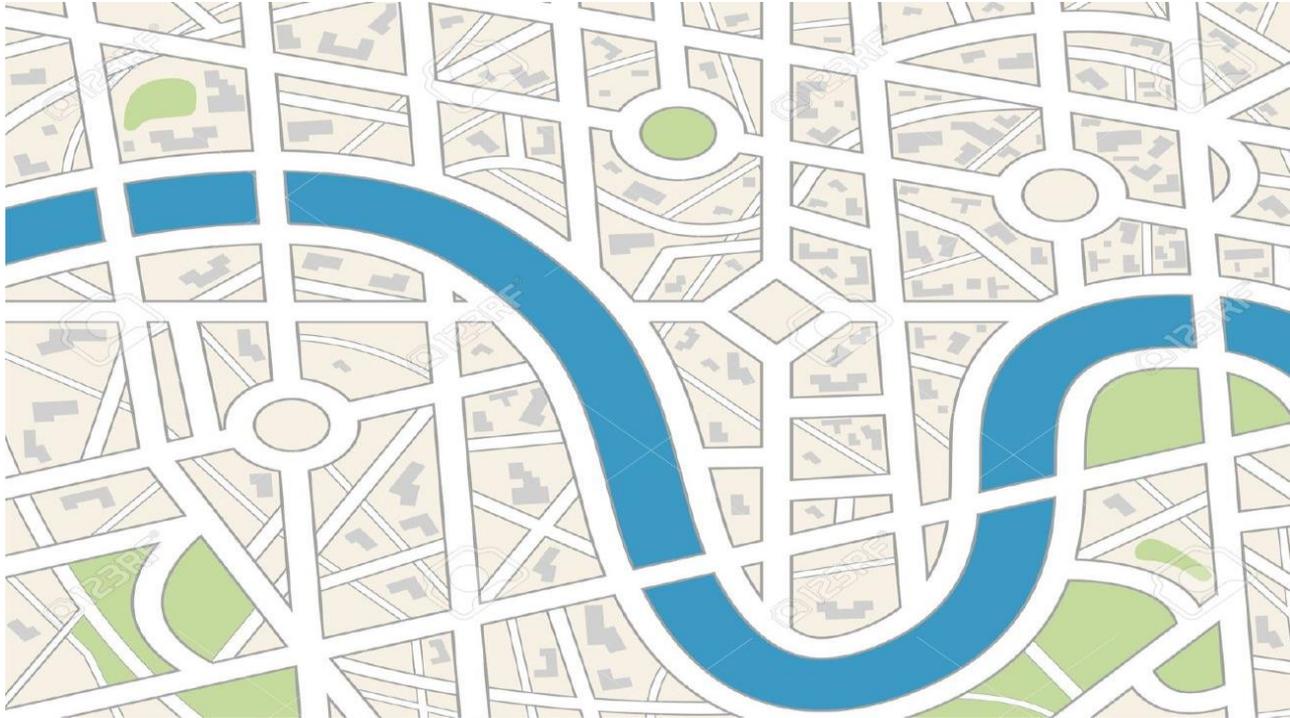
# Mitigating Potential Bias

- None required

# Goals

- Describe the nature of ethical issues in cancer care
- Examine some strategies for ethical decision making
- Describe ethical decision-making tools

# Ethics



**...a roadmap for doing  
the right thing.**

# What is ethics?

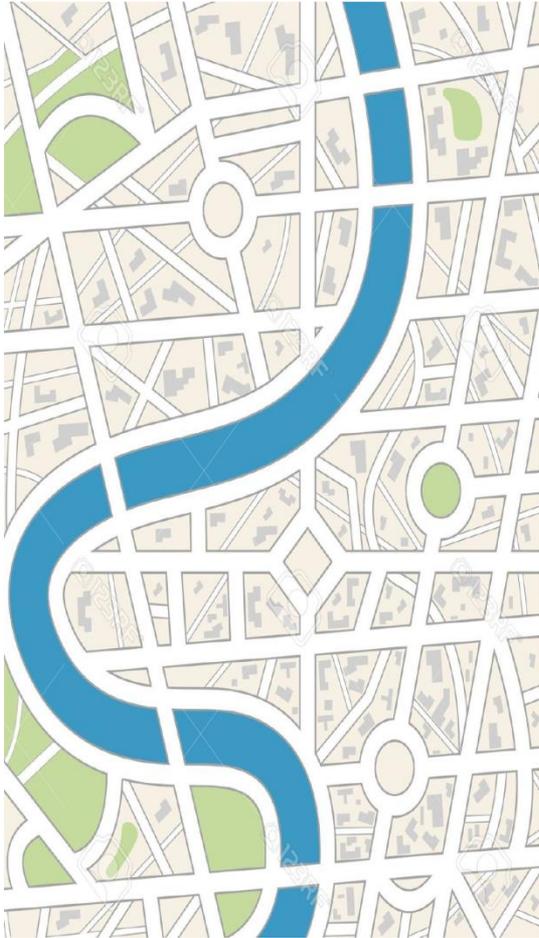
Ethics is about right and wrong and the reasons we give for our decisions and actions.

Ethics is an approach to decision making. It is about the criteria for deciding what is right and what is wrong, what is good and bad.

Ethics is a process for exploring and clarifying options.

Philip Hebert, *Doing Right*

# Ethical Dilemma



Choices are difficult when

- There is disagreement about what is important
- Any option compromises an ethical principle
- Choosing one thing means another is impossible

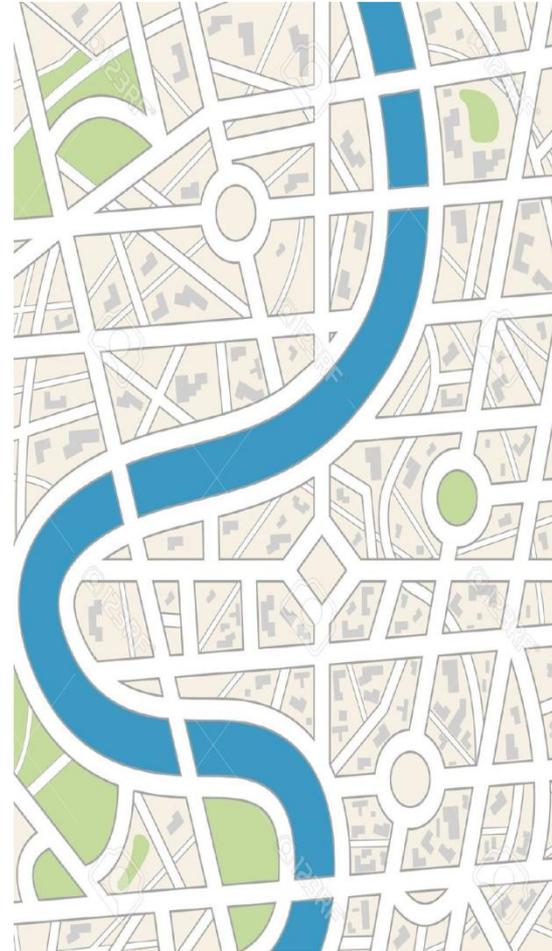
Goal: to arrive at a solution that you can live with.

# Case Study

Patient is a 24 year old woman with severe developmental disabilities. She is diagnosed with high grade B-cell lymphoma She has a very involved and loving family who insist she receive a full course of treatment. She is almost certainly unable to provide consent to treatment, and unlikely to understand how to manage her line or the side effects of the chemo. The team is feeling conflicted about the benefits of this treatment for this patient.

# Ethical Considerations

- Values
- Principles
- Rules
- Consequences
- Virtues
- Relationships



# Values in Healthcare

- Personal
- Societal
- Community
- Organizational
- Professional Codes of Ethics



# Ethical Principles

## Ethical Principles

- Autonomy
- Beneficence
- Non-Maleficence
- Justice



# Rules, Duties and Obligations

- Legal
- Professional
- Corporate
- Community
- Personal integrity & authenticity



# Consequences

- Net benefits
- Harms and risks
- Long term and short term
- For the individual
- For the community



# Virtues



Morally excellent character traits:

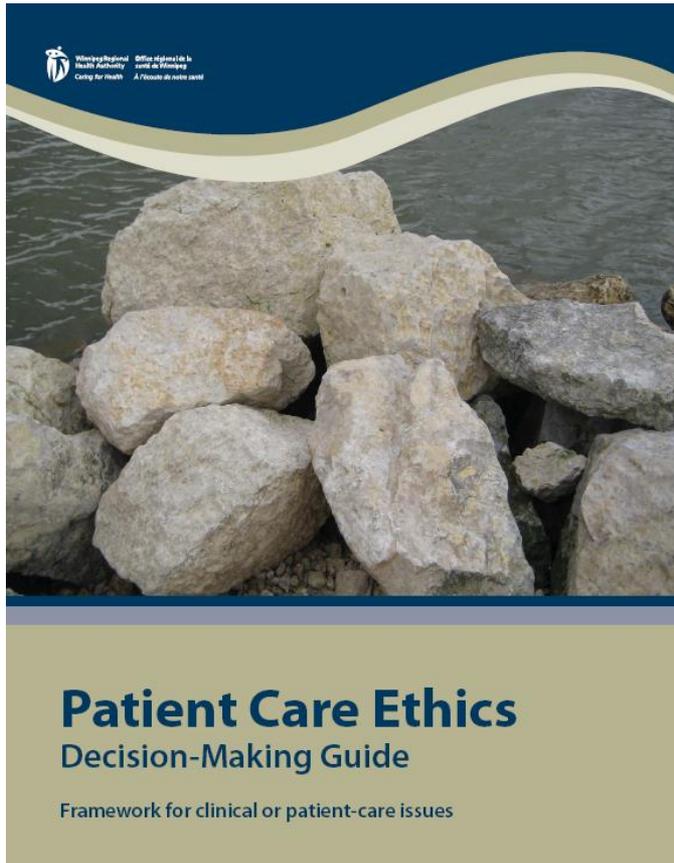
- Patience
- Honesty
- Integrity
- Reliability
- Empathy

# Relationships

- Dignity
- Empathy
- Respect
- Caring
- Power
- Context



# Ethics Decision Guide



Available on WRHA website

WRHA Ethics Services

204-926-7124

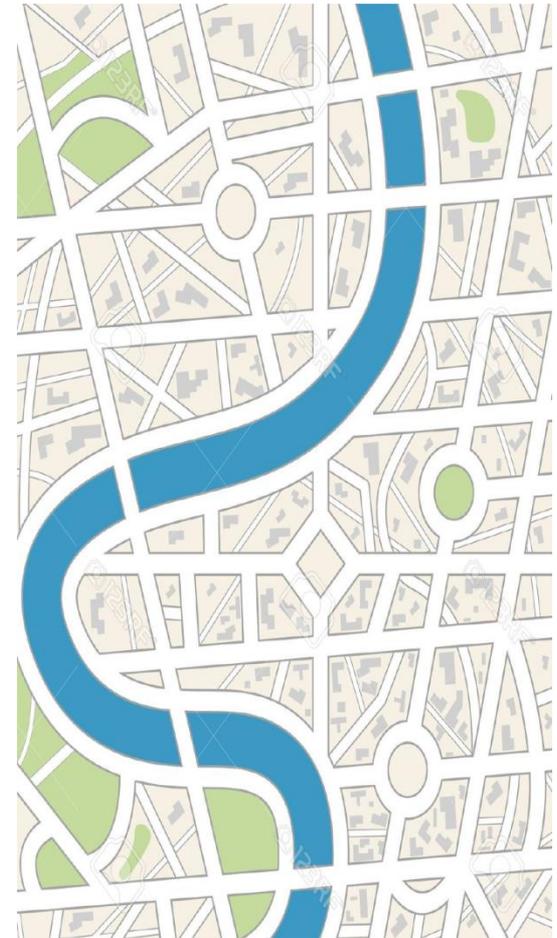
[ethics@wrha.mb.ca](mailto:ethics@wrha.mb.ca)

[www.wrha.mb.ca/about/ethics/index.php](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/about/ethics/index.php)

# How to raise an ethics issue

## Where to start?

- A trusted colleague
- A supervisor
- A professional code of ethics
- An ethics committee or ethics consultant
- Decision-making frameworks



# When in Doubt – Call Us!

[ethics@wrha.mb.ca](mailto:ethics@wrha.mb.ca)

204-926-7124

<http://www.wrha.mb.ca/about/ethics/index.php>

# Your Reflections

