**Introduction to Ethics**

The systematic study of ethics by medical students is increasingly recognized as an important part of medicine training. Physicians encounter ethical dilemmas everyday in their clinical work. In order to resolve these dilemmas, physicians need to integrate their medical experience and clinical judgment with ethical principles. For example, awareness of the concept of autonomy increases our ability to develop an appropriate plan of care for a patient with dementia from Alzheimer’s disease. There are many basic ethical concepts such as valid consent; rationality and paternalism are necessary to understand in order to resolve to clinical dilemmas in a consistent and accurate manner. Your assignment is to systematically analyze an ethical case of your choice, with a partner, and to present this analysis to your small group.

Dr. James Bernat, Professor of Neurology and director of the Clinical Ethics Program at DHMC, has written several books on ethical theory and practice. He has outlined the major ethical theories and principle on Blackboard for background reading. To access the course materials posted on Blackboard, point your browser to: http://blackboard.dartmouth.edu/ and sign in using the same credentials as you would to access Blitzmail (your DND name and password). Once you are on the portal page, select the "On Doctoring” link in the section of My Courses. The materials for the course are located in the various course sections. He is also happy to answer any specific questions you have about your case via blitzmail and can be reached at James.L.Bernat@Hitchcock.ORG.

Effective patient care should be grounded in pertinent evidence from the body of medical knowledge; that is, how we treat patients should be based on facts as reported in the medical literature. (This concept is called "evidence-based medicine").

**Goals of this assignment:**

1. Understand basic ethical principles and concepts
2. Demonstrate ability to systematically analyze a case using ethical principles
3. Identify appropriate resources and find information efficiently and effectively; develop basic MEDLINE searching skills.

**Website in order to complete this assignment (from the University of Washington):**

http://eduserv.hscer.washington.edu/bioethics/topics/index.html

**The Assignment:**

1. Choose an ethical issue(s) of interest to you and a small group partner. Then choose a related case either from your preceptor practice, personal experience or from the University of Washington website listed above.
2. Discuss your case and the ethical issues you plan to review with your facilitator to make sure they have not already been chosen by another pair of students and that they are adequately focused for this assignment.
3. Contact your library advisor to schedule a tutorial (approximately 45 minutes) with your partner at a mutually agreeable date and time to complete the assignment. Please note: this library session is mandatory in order to receive credit for the assignment. At the individual session, you will work with your library advisor to assess the various resources, including MEDLINE, and find information that best addresses your question.
4. Combine the decision making tools on the website, listed under “Paradigm – 4 boxes” and information found during your library search to analyze your case.
5. With your partner, prepare a 15-20 minute discussion of the case to present in small group.