Exploring the Ethical Decision-Making Process of Pre- and Post Licensure Health Care Providers in an Interprofessional Context

Christine Houston
Faculty of Health Sciences, Nursing, George Brown College

The prevalence of ethical issues within the health care system coupled with an expected rise in an aging population, suggests a need to better understand the ethical decision making (EDM) process affecting persons receiving and providing health care 1, 2. Without a collaborative process between multi-professionals engaging in the EDM, the patient and the health care provider may be limited to one professional perspective or be confused by conflicting language and values. Developing interprofessional ethics education is a complex process, which leads the researchers through an iterative research process consisting of 2 phases. This research project focuses on phase one of this 2-phase study as a foundation for informing interprofessional ethics curriculum development and as a means to better understand the EDM process affecting persons providing health care services in the long-term care setting. Phase one consists of pilot testing a questionnaire to be used to collect baseline data for not only phase 2 of this project, but also for future research in the area. This questionnaire will specifically explore EDM policies and codes of conduct; ethics education and interprofessional education experiences; and demographic data of pre-licensure and post licensure multi-professionals, and unregulated health care providers in an academic (George Brown College) and long term care context (Retirement Residences REIT). The questionnaire will provide an initial mechanism for active participation of the researchers in becoming familiar with the EDM issues facing students enrolled in health sciences programs at George Brown College (GBC), and health care providers working in the long-term care sector, in an interprofessional context.

Benefits to GBC: Understanding and developing ethics curriculum in an interprofessional context will leverage our respective organizational strengths and commitments as health care educators and health care providers. GBC is actively engaged in interprofessional education initiatives one of which includes developing ethics curriculum, as part of the Interprofessional Health Education Innovation Fund grant awarded to GBC by the Ministry of Training, College and Universities in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care earlier this year. This project also benefits GBC students by involving them as part of the research team. Finally, the project supports GBC’s Academic Strategy in relation to its goal of building research capacity; the expertise of Dr. Peter as senior researcher on the project will provide the needed support for project success.

Benefits to the community: This project contributes to and supports the Health Force Ontario Objectives for increased interprofessional health education and collaborative practices within GBC’s, and the University of Toronto’s academic organizations. Additionally, our community partner, Retirement Residences REIT (RRR) will benefit from our collaboration in the development of interprofessional practice. This approach in the areas of education and care delivery aligns with RRR’s goals to promote a collaborative culture, improve client-centred practice; develop leaders at all levels to enhance professional development as a platform for employee satisfaction and retention and demonstrate their values.

References