Consortium Ethics Program Seminar Series

Thursday, January 13, 2022

9:00—10:30 am: Ethics of Continuous Deep Sedation in Care for Patients with Terminal Illness

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Abstract: Palliative sedation therapy is undertaken when other methods of relieving patient suffering at the end of life have failed. If symptoms such as pain, dyspnea, and agitated delirium cannot be managed with the conventional range of palliative resources, a patient is put into a state of reduced consciousness so that he or she is no longer *aware* of the symptoms. Most guidelines for sedation practices recommend the principle of "proportionality," according to which sedative drugs should be adjusted so that "suffering is palliated with a minimum suppression of the consciousness levels." Much more controversial is the practice of "continuous deep sedation" which, with no attempt at proportionality, puts patients rapidly into a state of unconsciousness and maintains that state until death. As a medical intervention that results in irreversible loss of consciousness and terminates in death, critics have argued that CDS amounts to "slow euthanasia" and that labelling the practice a form of palliative care is confused or deceitful. This session will examine some key ethical questions that arise from the use of palliative sedation therapy in terminally ill patients, with a particular focus on continuous deep sedation.

10:30 am – noon: Ethical Issues in Cancer Genetics and Precision Cancer Medicine

Jonathan M. Marron, MD, MPH
Pediatric Hematology/Oncology, Boston Children's Hospital
Instructor in Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School

Abstract: This session will discuss ethical and social issues arising from the use of precision medicine and tumor testing within the context of oncology.

On-line via Zoom—Registration Required

Contact Jody Stockdill at cep@pitt.edu for additional information.