

Florida Hospital Ethics Committees: A Survey

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Abstract

Background: Ethics committees are a part of many hospitals, especially now that hospital accreditation organizations require the presence of an ethics representative or team. While a number of studies have been published about the nature of hospital ethics committees, this study will take a new step by recording the current status of Floridian ethics committees in regards to their financial stability, use of resources, and institutional support. One goal of this study is to collect data that will allow each ethics committee to discover how they compare to other Floridian ethics committees. Another goal is to discover whether common sentiments exist about changing the standards and how appropriate change may be. The ultimate hope is that ethics committees and hospitals around the state will be able to use this information to improve the quality of services and make a difference in patient care.

Design: Cross-Sectional Survey Methods: A 52-question survey instrument was developed and entered into SurveyMonkey. A link to the survey was sent to all Florida hospitals through email and mail in addition to a cover letter. Hospitals that had not responded after two months were telephoned.

Results: 32 hospitals responded out of 212. All but one responder were members of ethics committees. The majority felt that the funding and resources made available by the hospital to provide services is not adequate.

Conclusion: This study provides evidence that there is heterogeneity amongst a sample of Florida hospital ethics committees, and suggests that further work should be done to quantify the status and needs of ethics committees around the state.