



The *EthicsLab Essentials* provides a core curriculum designed to enrich ethics committee members through a podcast and website format. A podcast format was chosen due to its easy accessibility and learning schedule flexibility for the listener.

Episode: The Unrepresented Patient

Description:

Deciding for another is difficult. One of the most challenging ethical issues faced in clinical practice today is deciding for unrepresented patients – patients who have no advance directive or no family and friends who can make decisions on behalf of the patient (surrogate decision makers) when the patient cannot speak for themselves. The moral distress of clinicians can run high especially given the diverse and complex national legal environment surrounding these patients. Our expert clinical and legal guests, experienced in the daily life of the healthcare environment, will offer insight into these challenges and offer both an overview and practical solutions being tested today.

Process:

Have your ethics team members listen to this podcast prior to your regular ethics committee meeting. Then, at your meeting facilitate a discussion and application of the episode around the following questions.

Facilitation Questions:

1. How might the advice offered by the guests in the episode improve the approach your ethics committee has in consultations involving unrepresented patients?
2. What strategies could the ethics committee develop to proactively address ethical issues associated with unrepresented patients? How might these strategies align with similar operational goals?
3. What tools or resources could an ethics committee provide to clinicians to respond to the challenge of unrepresented patients?