



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: Informed Consent: Supporting Patient Autonomy**

#### **Description:**

Informed consent is one of the foundational ethical principles in health care. Informed consent reflects a fundamental desire to support patient autonomy, or stated differently, the patients right to self-determination based on the dignity of each human person. More than merely a signature, informed consent depends not only on whether a patient has capacity, but also whether he she demonstrates comprehension, understanding, and voluntariness. Moreover, the standard for what clinicians should inform patients about the risks benefits and alternatives of treatment are no longer determined by what a responsible body of physicians deems important, but rather by what a reasonable patient deems important. In pursuit of this goal, the guests of this episode discuss the need for a collaborative communication process between clinicians and patients that integrates the best evidence, the patients values and preferences, and possibly even newer kinds of aggregate-level data.

#### **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. Which elements of informed consent most frequently come to mind in your ethics committee discussions? Which elements have you considered less frequently?
2. Dr. Jenny Heyl describes a patient undergoing palliative treatments, but the patient believes the treatments may cure her terminal condition. Can you think of similar patients from your experience? Considering the takeaways of this podcast, how might your ethics committee/consultant respond to a clinician requesting assistance from ethics with such a patient?
3. Dr. Kayhan Parsi suggests that health care organizations may have an opportunity to disclose higher-level data, such as health outcomes or frequency with which a given service is provided, to patients in the process of informed consent. What is the benefit to patients of expanding disclosure around such areas? What are the concerns?