



Defense Health Agency (DHA) Clinical Communities Speaker Series

2026 FEB CCSS: Operational Medicine: Preparing the Force for Mission Readiness

2026 FEB CCSS S05: Beyond the Battlefield: Ethical Frontiers in Operational Medicine

Resource List

[Complexities of Autonomy in Military Medical Ethics: A Brief Report](#) (2024) explores complex ethical challenges that arise in military medicine. Originating from a session at the Fallen Surgeons Military Educational Symposium, this article uses case studies to highlight ethical issues related to combat care. Military surgeons must weigh multiple factors in determining the most appropriate course of action in difficult ethical scenarios. Enabling and facilitating discussions of these scenarios helps prepare military medical providers for the situations they are likely to encounter. Presenting ethical cases also fosters meaningful dialogue among experts in military medical ethics, supporting the development of sound decision-making in high-stakes environments.

[An Overview to Military Medical Ethics](#) (2022), provides an overview of military medical ethics and its implications for the practice of healthcare workers within a military health system. Key ethical issues that arise during conflict are examined, focusing on obligations under international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions. While military medical ethics might be most challenging during conflict, it is important not to ignore those issues that may arise during clinical practice in garrison healthcare. This includes biomedical research on military subjects or within military scientific laboratories. The foundational challenge of dual loyalty between professions can create tensions for ethical medical practice. This article concludes by emphasizing the need for training and education in military medical ethics and identifying issues for further debate.

["4 Box" Approach to Complicated Clinical Ethical Questions](#) (2021) outlines a systematic method for conducting and documenting clinical ethics consultations in a healthcare setting. The authors propose a process that begins with a consultation request, followed by a thorough chart review, and then a series of conversations with healthcare professionals, including bedside nurses, physicians, social workers, and primary care physicians. A key component of this process is direct interaction with the patient and their family to understand their values and wishes. The proposed format for documenting the consultation includes sections for demographic information, the specific ethics question, a narrative of the case, an assessment of the ethical issues, a discussion of relevant ethical principles, and clear recommendations. The goal of this structured approach is to ensure a comprehensive and systematic investigation into ethical dilemmas, fostering clear communication and collaborative decision-making among all parties involved.

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Health Ethics and Governance Unit](#) (2024) provides a focal point for the examination of ethics issues raised by the organization. The unit also supports member states in addressing ethical issues that arise in their own countries. Issues addressed include global bioethics topics, public health surveillance, developments in genomics, human subject research, and fair access to health services. This unit's work is particularly important in the context of contemporary health challenges and addresses difficult questions in areas such as resource allocation, new technologies, decision-making in clinical care, and public health. The WHO Ethics and Governance Unit develops guidance for policymakers and governments on a diverse range of bioethics issues and also produces resources for national and local ethics committees.



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References

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