



SaskEthics

An Ethics Newsletter for Catholic Healthcare Organizations in Saskatchewan

Relationship-centered care needed

Dear *SaskEthics* Readers,



Have you ever heard of relationship-centered care? It's a concept that has been around since the 1990s, and yet I find that it is still relatively unknown. The phrase was adopted at a point when philosophies of care were moving away from paternalism and toward patient-centered care. However, several scholars worried that in moving towards patient-centered care, we were forgetting the heart of healthcare: the relationship between the healthcare provider and the patient. In 2006, after over a decade of thought on this issue, Mary Catherine Beach and Thomas Inui defined relationship-centered care as “care in which all participants appreciate the importance of their relationships with one another” (2006).

As an ethicist, relationship-centered care has always resounded with me because I firmly believe that ethics is a discipline that must be lived out in relationships. The dilemmas that our staff are faced with

every day are unsolvable until we form connections with the people around us.

Imagine a patient who routinely asks her nursing staff to provide care in unsafe ways, for example by asking them not to use a lift to transfer her to a commode. A paternalistic nurse might respond to such a demand by telling the patient that either she will be transferred with the lift, or she will have to have a catheter placed. Alternatively, a nurse focused purely on patient-centered care might feel that she is obligated to make the transfer despite her own safety concerns.

By contrast, a relationship-centered nurse would draw a boundary around her own safety, and recognize the need to further investigate why the patient is making this request. She might use this opportunity to share with the patient, “I cannot lift you alone, and I can appreciate that the lift is not comfortable. Is there something else I could be doing to help you through this?”

Relationship-centered care aims to respect the dignity of both the patient and the health care professional, which sets the stage for them to be able to problem solve challenging situations together.



St. Paul's Hospital



Catholic Health
Association of Saskatchewan

As a philosophy of care, patient-centered care has had a critical role articulating the fundamental rights of our patients, residents and clients. Relationship-centered care builds on this foundation, and emphasizes the relationships that must be honored to provide quality care.

How do you build relationships with the people you care for? Have you been part

of a challenging situation that would have fallen apart if someone hadn't been willing to do the vulnerable work of building a relationship?

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The poster features a background of two large, stylized hands reaching towards each other, one in orange and one in yellow. At the top center, the logos for Catholic Health Alliance of Canada and Alliance catholique canadienne de la santé are displayed. The main title is 'GET TO THE HEART OF IT' in purple, with the subtitle 'being - caring - doing' in a cursive font. Below this is the theme 'Awakening our capacity to be present in a broken world'. Three columns of text describe the conference's focus. At the bottom, five circular portraits of speakers are shown with their names: Dr. Christina Maslach, Dr. Michael Yellow Bird, Dr. Kathleen Ledoux, Dr. Michael West, and Dr. Michael Reiter. The footer contains the event details: 'CHAC NATIONAL CONFERENCE | MAY 11 – 12, 2023 | MONTREAL, QUEBEC' and 'with regional gatherings and a virtual option'.

Catholic Health Alliance of Canada Alliance catholique canadienne de la santé

GET TO THE HEART OF IT
being - caring - doing

Awakening our capacity to be present in a broken world

This conference will explore the heart of our promise as Catholic health care and how we live our call to compassion—individually and as a community.

We will focus on getting to the heart of what it means to do our best as a Catholic ministry for the people we serve, as we work to recover from the challenges health care organizations have faced and we revitalize our workforce.

The conference will provide an opportunity to explore how we can grow our teams in challenging times and foster hope, compassion and resilience in ourselves, our ministry and our organizations.

Dr. Christina Maslach Dr. Michael Yellow Bird Dr. Kathleen Ledoux Dr. Michael West Dr. Michael Reiter

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