

Fact Sheet for Patients/Legal Guardians

Patient Care Ethics Committee

What is the Patient Care Ethics Committee?

The Patient Care Ethics Committee (PCEC) is an ethics committee that provides independent advice to health care professionals including doctors, nurses, midwives, and allied health workers at the Women's and Children's hospital (WCH) and related institutions about ethical issues concerning patient care.

Who is on the Patient Care Ethics Committee?

The Committee consists of a broad range of experienced staff from the WCH (doctors, nurses, midwives, allied health, and an ethicist) and one lay member (a member of the public who does not work in healthcare) who has a police check and has signed a confidentiality agreement.

Why is my, my child's or my unborn baby's case going to the Patient Care Ethics Committee?

The WCH is committed to providing treatment and care that is in the best interests of patients. Sometimes in complex situations, knowing what is in a patient's best interest is difficult. This can be for many reasons such as not having a clear diagnosis for the patient, not knowing how a patient's illness will progress or there are different views about what would be best for the patient. Often what is best for a patient in part depends on the things they like or their values.

In these cases, the PCEC aims to support our families, doctors, nurses, midwives and other healthcare workers by carefully listening to all of the concerns and providing advice from an independent point of view.

What kinds of issues are considered by the PCEC?

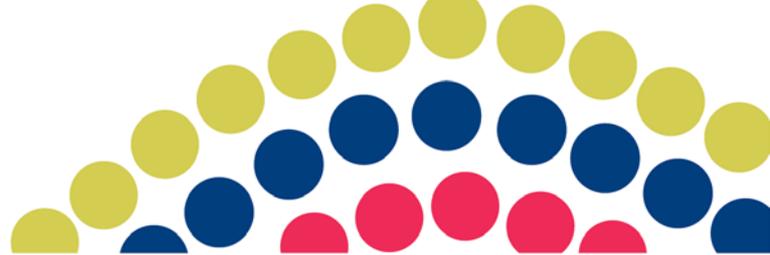
The PCEC provides support for ethical issues families or healthcare workers may have that relate to patient care. Common things the Committee considers are,

- when families and the healthcare team caring for you or your family member have a different view about what is in the best interests of you or your family member, or
- the health condition is complex, so families and/or healthcare workers are interested in having an independent view from a group who is not involved in the care.

Will my views be listened to by the PCEC?

Yes absolutely. If you wish, two members of the PCEC will meet with you or your family, before the PCEC meeting. You can bring along a support person or persons if you like.

At the meeting we will listen to your views—what you think is important for us to know, what you are concerned about and what you would like to happen about your or your family member's care.



More information can be found at
http://www.wch.sa.gov.au/services/professionals/ethics_support/index.html
 Women's and Children's Hospital
 72 King William Rd, North Adelaide SA 5006
 Telephone (08) 8161 6149



Government of South Australia
 Women's and Children's
 Health Network

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We will take what you tell us back to the PCEC so that all of the members of the committee know what is important to you. To ensure we get it right we will take notes during our meeting.

Do most families meet with the PCEC if their case is going to the committee?

Yes, most families choose to meet with two members of the committee, but a few choose not to.

Other options for patients or families are sharing your views with the PCEC via email or letter. Some families send the Committee documents or articles they would like Committee members to consider.

What happens at the meeting?

The meeting has two parts.

During the first part of the meeting, members of the PCEC meet with the doctors, nurses and other health care workers caring for you or your family member. The doctors, nurses and other workers tell the PCEC members their views and answer any questions members of the PCEC might have.

During the second part of the meeting, the doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers leave the meeting so that the members of the PCEC can discuss all the information they have and come up with some independent recommendations.

Sometimes the PCEC meets several times if new information needs to be reviewed, such as a second opinion.

Once noted by the hospital Executive, the PCEC recommendations are sent to the main doctor caring for you or your family member. Your doctor will then discuss the PCEC recommendations with you.

How soon will a meeting occur?

Whilst the committee will make every attempt to accommodate urgent cases, meetings will be dependent on the availability of both PCEC members and members of the treating team.

Please note, the PCEC is an advisory Committee only and does not have executive powers.

