

A Decision Making Tool for Patients and Families Facing Difficult Healthcare Decisions

Sometimes it can be difficult to know what the right health care decision is, for either yourself or a loved one. Working through the questions below on your own or with your health care team can help clarify priorities, values and perspectives and make it easier to discuss these with your health care provider and reach your decision.

This tool helps:

- Identify and discuss personal values, wishes and beliefs that influence your health care goals for you or your child;
- Support discussions about prolonging life and exploring what quality of life means to you in the context of your health or the health of your child;
- Establish clear goals of care that are well understood and shared by the patient, family and health care team.

1. Clarify the decision

- What decision do you face? State the problem as you see it.
- Do you want to make this decision yourself? Or share this decision with someone else? Would you rather someone else decides?

2. Gather the relevant information

- What facts are not known?
- Do you know enough to make a decision? What else would you like to know?
- Who else might you like to speak with?
- When do you need to decide?
- What are the consequences for decisions I make now for options down the road?

3. Are you clear about which benefits and risks *matter most* to you?

- What does quality of life mean to you?
- As you think about the future what matters most to you?
- Is spirituality or cultural beliefy important to you in understanding you or your child's illness?
- Is a past experience shaping your perspective?
- Where do my values fit into this decision?

4. Which options are available to you?

- Consider each option by asking questions like:
 - Will this option change the outcome for me/my child?
 - What will it be like for me/my child to go through this?
 - Could it make me/my child feel worse? If so, for how long?
 - What is the likely impact of this decision on us as a family/our support system/ our community?

5. Evaluate your options

- What are the benefits and risks of each option?
- How much do they matter?
- What other services, support or information would be useful to you?
- Do you have enough support, information and advice from others to make a choice?

6. Decision

- Discuss your decision with your health care providers and family members/supports.

The Ethics Service is available to provide assistance to patients and their families as they reflect on their goals, consider their options and make decisions regarding their care in discussions with their health care team. The steps outlined above provide a way to work through this process in a systematic, structured way that can help make sure that patient and family values and perspectives are always at the centre of health care decisions.

Notes

1. Clarify the decision

2. Gather the relevant information

3. Are you clear about which benefits and risks *matter most* to you?

4. Which options are available to you?

5. Evaluate your options

6. Decision