I. Description

Procedure for accessing the Hospital Ethics Committee

II. Rationale

It is the policy of the University of North Carolina Hospitals to provide a resource to help the Hospitals’ staff, patients, and families consider ethical questions related to hospitalization and treatment. The Hospital Ethics Committee will provide ethics case consultation, education, and policy review services concerning ethical issues needing discussion.

III. Policy

A. Procedure

1. The Ethics Committee Consultation Service will be available during weekday business hours. Requests made on nights, weekends, or holidays will be responded to on the next business day. Requests for ethics consultation should be made by calling the Ethics Committee Administrator (843-1470.).

2. The Ethics Committee brochure, “Help When You Have to Decide,” should be available in all patient care units. Any UNC Hospitals staff member, physician, patient, or patient’s family member is entitled to request an ethics consultation.

3. Designated members of the Ethics Committee will handle consultation requests, determining how to manage them based on careful consideration of the interests of all concerned.

4. Requests for consultation should be documented in the patient’s medical record by the healthcare provider. The healthcare provider should note the date on which the ethics consult took place. The nature or content of the request should not be documented in the medical record.

5. The Ethics Committee will maintain records of all ethics consultation requests and the nature and content of relevant ensuing discussions for future reference. All ethics consultation requests and discussions will be held in strictest confidence.

6. The ethics consultant or consultation team leader will make recommendations to the medical staff, patient, and/or patient’s family on the ethical issues discussed. These recommendations are advisory only and are not binding on staff or patients.

7. The Hospitals Ethics Committee will not be the primary body addressing ethical issues involving research on human subjects. Research ethics questions should be directed to the Office of Human Research Ethics (Institutional Review Board) at 966-1344.