

ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR CATHOLIC HEALTH AND AGED CARE

Health Care in the Catholic Tradition

Life is a gift from God and health care is integral to the mission of the Church. Catholic Health Australia is committed to developing a culture which affirms life and healing, a culture which promotes the common good through just and compassionate health, aged, disability and community services.

Our concern for others is motivated by the belief that proper respect for human beings entails respect of their dignity as people created and loved by God. The sanctity of their lives is an inevitable consequence of this.

A ministry to the sick, frail and dying is complex. Together with others who are engaged in health care, we offer expertise and experience and are committed to acting in the best interests of patients, residents and clients. We also acknowledge the spiritual significance of health, illness, suffering and death. This leads us to understand health care as more than a scientific pursuit: it is an endeavour to care for the whole person, often beyond the limits of science.

This Code is addressed to all healthcare practitioners working in Catholic health and aged care organizations. It also serves as a practical guide for anyone working in health care, and for all who wish to deepen their understanding of, and reflection on, the theological and ethical context in which good health care is provided.

The Seven Basic Principles are as follows:

- I. **Respect For Persons Within a Culture of Life** Our care for people who are sick, aged or disabled is founded on love and respect for the inherent dignity of every human being.
- II. **Health Care and The Mission of the Church** Catholic health and aged care is called to respond to a person's healthcare needs with compassion and in fidelity to the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him.
- III. **The Goals of Health Care**
The goals of health and aged care are:
 - To promote health and prevent disease;
 - To deepen our understanding of the causes of disease and to develop new forms of treatment;
 - To save life, cure illness or slow the progress of disease;
 - To relieve suffering and disability;
 - To care for people when they are sick, disabled, frail or elderly; and finally
 - To assist a person in his or her transition from this life in the hope of the resurrection, while also caring for those who grieve that person's passing.
- IV. **Justice In Health Care** Everyone has the right to receive essential health and aged care services. These services should be allocated justly across a society, with special provision for the most disadvantaged or most vulnerable to being neglected.

- V. **Collaboration in Health and Aged Care** In the provision of health and aged care, patients, residents, practitioners, family and carers become a small community united in working for a person's good. The relationship which unites them is best understood as one of trusting collaboration in a common purpose.
- VI. **Respect For Personal Embodiment** Because the human person is a unity of body and spirit, a person's body is not an instrument to be manipulated in isolation from the authentic good of the person. Human sexuality and procreation in particular are personal, not just biological realities.
- VII. **Solidarity and the Mystery of Suffering and Death** Illness, disability and suffering are never good in themselves: health care properly seeks to relieve them. There are however, limits to what health care can achieve. Even when suffering and death cannot be eliminated, they can nonetheless acquire a positive, life-giving and redemptive value, especially from the perspective of religious faith.

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A full copy of the Code of Ethical Standards for Catholic Health and Aged Care Services in Australia © CHA is available from the Director of Mission.