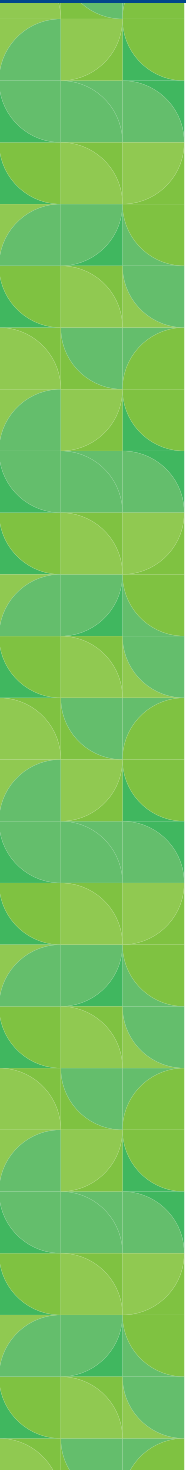




COVENANT HEALTH ETHICS CENTRE
SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES
2022-23



From the Chief Mission and Ethics Officer



It is my pleasure to present the Ethics and Discernment Center's Annual Summary of Activities. As I begin my role as Covenant's Chief Mission and Ethics Officer, I want to acknowledge the outstanding work of my predecessor, Dr. Gordon Self for his tireless efforts to foster and deepen an ethical and discerning culture at Covenant, including his executive sponsorship for the development and launch of the Ethics Center in 2014 and the expansion to the Ethics and Discernment center in 2021. He developed the Mission Discernment tool which is recognized as a leading practice by Accreditation Canada. His commitment to create capacity for Covenant to manage increasingly complex ethical decision-making both in clinical and organizational areas, policy support, and ethics education was unwavering. I look forward to continuing in this work and supporting the work of the Ethics and Discernment Center team as we respond to the evolving landscape of healthcare ethics.



As healthcare emerges from the pandemic it is apparent that many staff are experiencing effects from the emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual stress of the work environment during these challenging times. The staff of the Ethics and Discernment Center continue to dedicate their resources to supporting individuals, teams and departments with situational debriefs and Moral Distress care, as the Center remains focused on providing ethics consultations, education and capacity building for good ethical decision making.

In addition, this year the Ethics and Discernment Center team engaged the Covenant community in unique ways including facilitating discussions for the Synod of Synodality, quarterly ethics seminars, and participating in focus groups on systemic racism.

I see and hear every day the commitment to ethical integrity whether in leaders meetings, department meeting, situational debriefs or at the point of care. I am excited and grateful to continue to support the Ethics and Discernment Center in my new capacity, as we move forward in the ever-changing world of health care

Bonnie Tejada
Chief Mission and Ethics Officer



In Focus: Moral Distress and Staff Debriefing

During the Covid-19 pandemic health care staff experienced both being held up as heroes and being blamed for what many people believed was an infringement of their rights. Many healthcare workers left the field due to burnout and distress. As the pandemic demands decrease and restrictions are loosened there continue to many impacts on the workforce as recruitment and retention persist as a significant challenge issue. The healthcare field increasingly involves working in roles that are complicated by moral distress.

One of the causes of this distress is the ethical dilemma they face when experiencing harassment by the very people they are try is help and serve. The Canadian Medical Association Nation Physicians Survey found 8 in 10 physicians have experienced intimidation, bullying, and/or microaggressions in the workplace.

4 in 10 physicians reported that these experiences happen “frequently” or “often” with women significantly more likely to say they happen at least once a week.

The ethical dilemma experienced by staff can vary based on the many different scenarios. However, the root of the dilemma is based in the duty to care, maleficence (do no harm), fairness and justice. There is a need to discern and balance the harm, fairness, and justice for the patient/resident and for the staff involved.

Our values and mission call us to care with compassion and respect which our health care teams continue to do even when they feel hurt and abused by patients and residents. The harm this can do to our staff psychologically and emotionally over time cannot be underestimated.

Covenant has a policy of zero tolerance for abuse however our staff struggle to define what this zeros tolerance means in the context of duty to care. We are not alone in this struggle and there is little research on how to effectively resolve this issue considering the wide range of dynamics any practical situation can hold.

“For me it is just acknowledgement – would have meant a lot for me if the person who saw the racism – just acknowledged they heard it or called out [the patient that stated the racist comment]” and said it was not appropriate. Then, after, maybe check in with me. Those are basic empathy pieces that [we do not know because we do not have the tools to talk to the patients].

As an organization Covenant is committed to Diversity and Inclusion and to providing a safe work environment for our staff. As with any challenging issue there must first be a commitment to tackle the problem and to have the hard conversations that shine a light on the events we witness or experience and acknowledge the harm being done. These conversations are taking place at all levels of our organization and will continue. The actions taken to resolve these challenges will look different for each scenario whether at the unit level in an acute care hospital or a long-term care setting or from a policy and guideline or best practice perspective.

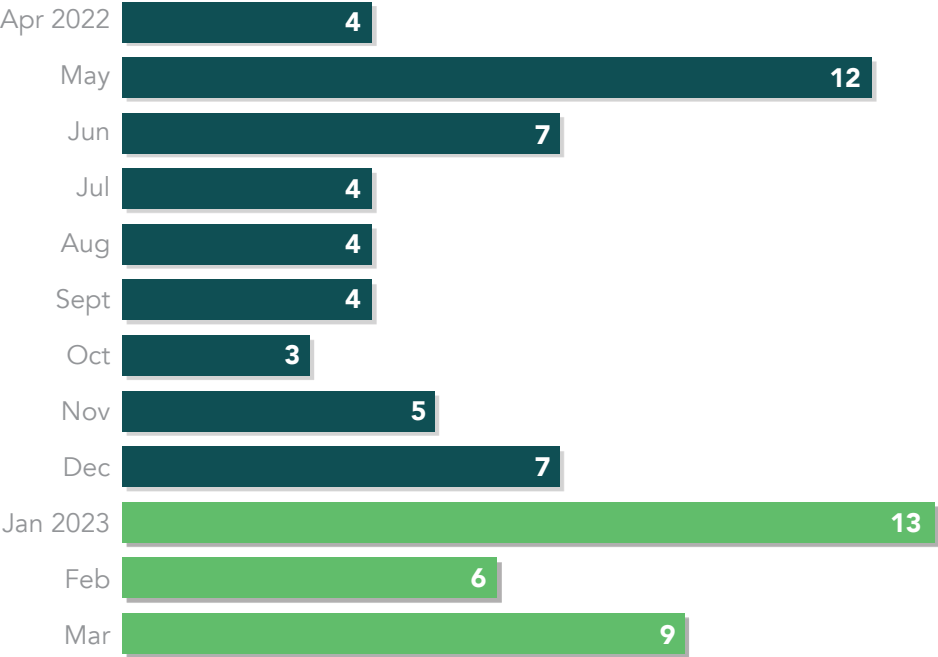
Addressing harassment, abuse and racism is everyone’s responsibility. We must all take an active role in finding solutions or risk losing our amazing, dedicated team members who can no longer tolerate an antagonistic work environment.



Ethics Consultation Stats

The core business of the Ethics & Discernment Centre continues to be our 24-hour, province-wide ethics consultation service. Clinical ethics consultations contain structured discussions led by a member of the ethics team. Consultations are guided by Covenant Health’s ethical decision-making framework, and the Catholic Health Ethics Guide (Catholic Health Association of Canada 2014). The data below reflects consultation services undertaken by the Ethics & Discernment Centre from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.

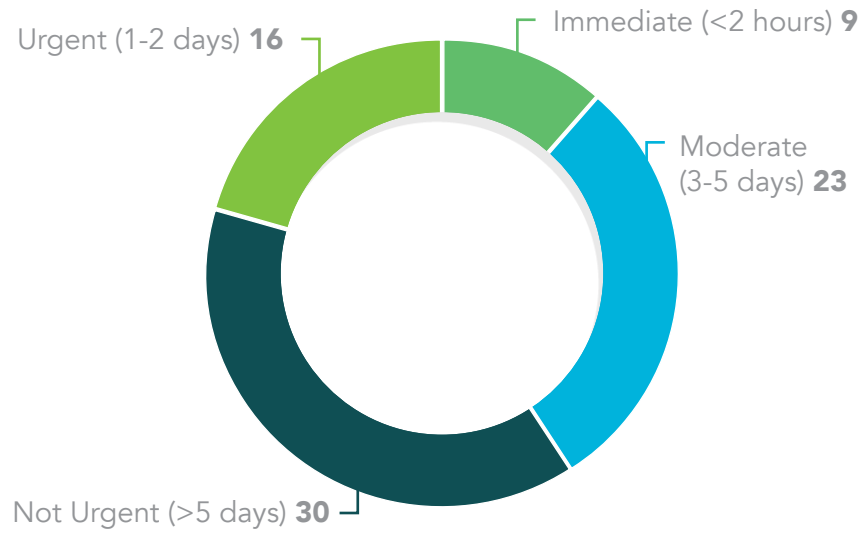
Consultation requests by month



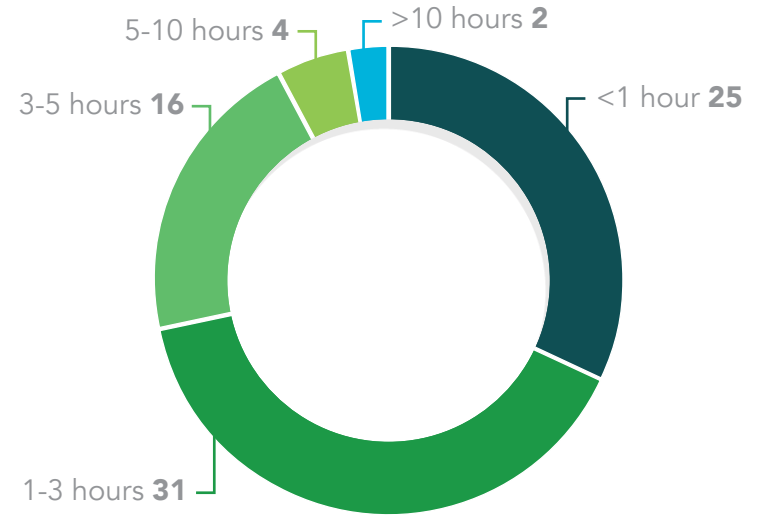
78

requests were made in the last year.

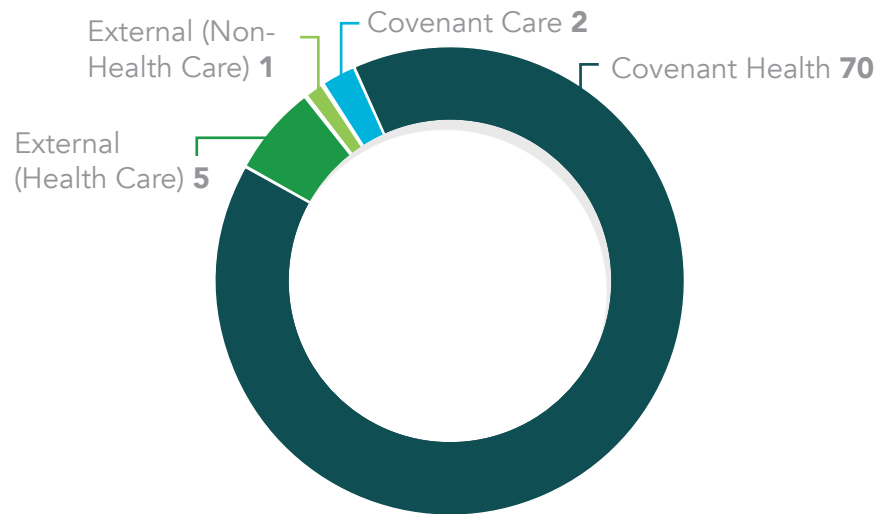
Consultation request by urgency



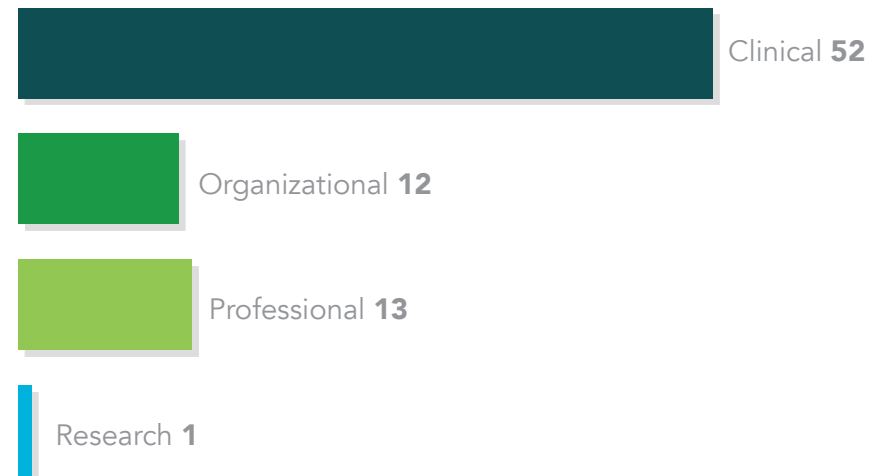
Consultation request by total time spent



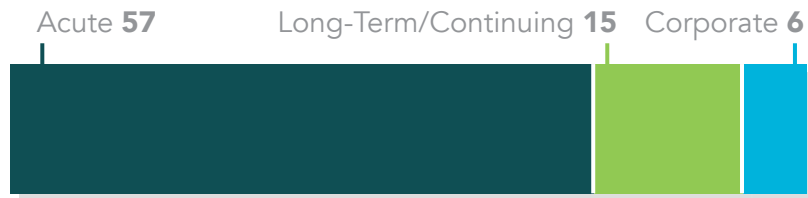
Consultation request by organization



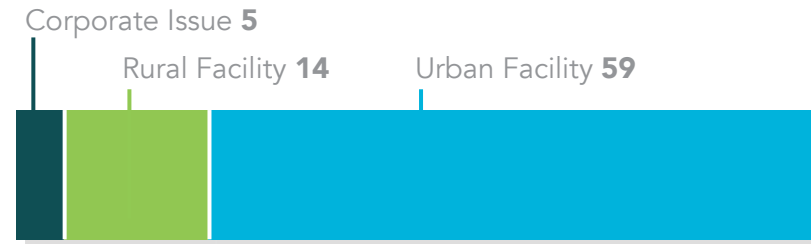
Consultation request by Consult Category



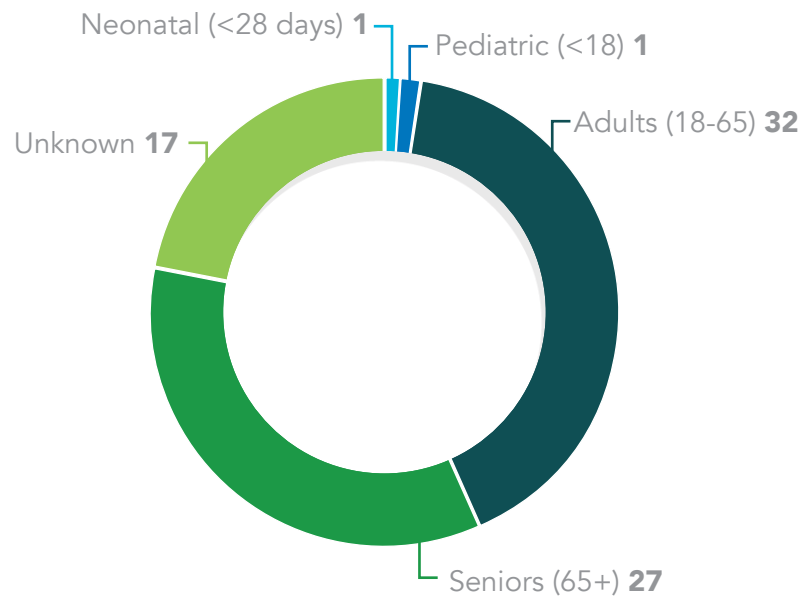
Consultation request by Care Category



Consultation request by Care Setting



Consultation request by population



Consultation request by Type of Support Provided



Consultation request by Site/Facility Demographics

Facility with <50 beds **5**



Facility with 100-200 beds **16**



Facility with 200-300 beds **9**



Facility with 300-400 beds **30**



Facility with 400-500 beds **2**



Facility with 50-100 beds **9**



Not Applicable **7**



Consultation Request by Theme



- | | |
|---|---|
| Alternative/Complementary Interventions 2 | Goals of Care 6 |
| Capacity/Consent/Informed Decision-making 8 | Health Care Provider Communication 3 |
| Complex discharge/transfer/ placement 5 | Living at Risk/Unsafe Behaviours 8 |
| Conflict between Advocate/ Patient/Care Team 4 | MAID Medical Assistance in Dying 1 |
| Complex Family/SDM behaviors 3 | Policy/ Process/ Organizational issues 12 |
| Challenging/"non-compliant"/abusive patients 8 | Professional Ethics 12 |
| Early Induction 2 | Withholding/ Withdrawing/ Refusing Interventions 4 |

Highlights



The Ethics Centre Team

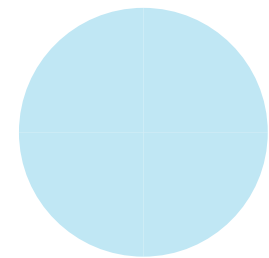
2022-23 was a year of transition for the EDC team. We offered our best wishes to two wonderful members of the EDC family as they each embarked on new and exciting paths. Dr. Gordon Self retired in December after serving 40 years in Catholic Health Care—nineteen of those as the leader of Mission, Ethics and Spirituality at Covenant. We also said farewell to Director of Diversity, Ethics and Volunteerism, Meaghan Ellis, as she transitioned to a new role in Diversity and Inclusion leadership in Ontario. Both Meaghan and Gordon were instrumental in setting the foundation upon which the Ethics, Diversity and Mission of Covenant Health continues to be built. We are filled with gratitude for the support and presence they shared with us over the years.

We are also pleased to welcome familiar faces in new ways in the EDC. Bonnie Tejada, previously serving as Director of Mission and Spirituality, is Covenant's new Chief Mission and Ethics Officer. We are grateful for the support from and many years of collaboration with Bonnie and are excited about new opportunities to grow and flourish as a Centre under her executive leadership. In this season of transition, Jon Gilchrist, Clinical Ethicist with the EDC, has stepped into the role of Interim Director, Diversity and Ethics to provide support and visioning in the months ahead. This change has translated into another great gift to the EDC; we are very excited to welcome Cecilia Marion to the role of temporary Clinical Ethicist. Cec brings years of Senior Leadership experience across a number of faith-based leadership contexts, and we are delighted to have her join the team in this transition time.

MAID

Covenant continues to provide quality, compassionate care to all patients and residents verbalizing a request for Medical Assistance in Dying, supporting them until such time discharge to home or to another AHS setting for the procedure can take place.

Considering the legislative amendments that came into force in 2021, and an awareness of forthcoming changes that will apply to individuals for whom mental illness, 2022 was an opportunity to reflect on the organization's experience thus far. In his published article, Lessons learned about MAID from a Catholic healthcare perspective, Dr. Self reflected Covenant's efforts to remain engaged in self-reflective practices and self-examination. His words reflect the sensitivity that is necessary to meaningfully respond to requests for Medical Assistance in Dying, and the 'lessons learned' highlight the nuance required to navigate moral and ethical tensions within non-provider organizations. ([Access to article here](#))





Diversity and Inclusion

John Humphry Centre for Peace and Human Rights—Systemic Racism Assessment

The results of the systemic racism assessment by the John Humphry Centre for Peace and

JOHN HUMPHREY CENTRE
for PEACE and HUMAN RIGHTS

Human Rights were shared with the organization, identifying 28 key recommendations to help address crucial barriers to fostering a truly inclusive psychologically safe care and work environment for all. These recommendations, ranging from broad systemic and structural change to specific education needs, highlight areas in need of attention such as relationship building, building a diverse workforce, advancing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, and executive-level commitment to this work. The recommendations are informing the strategic approach being developed to guide organization action and accountability.

Advisory Bodies

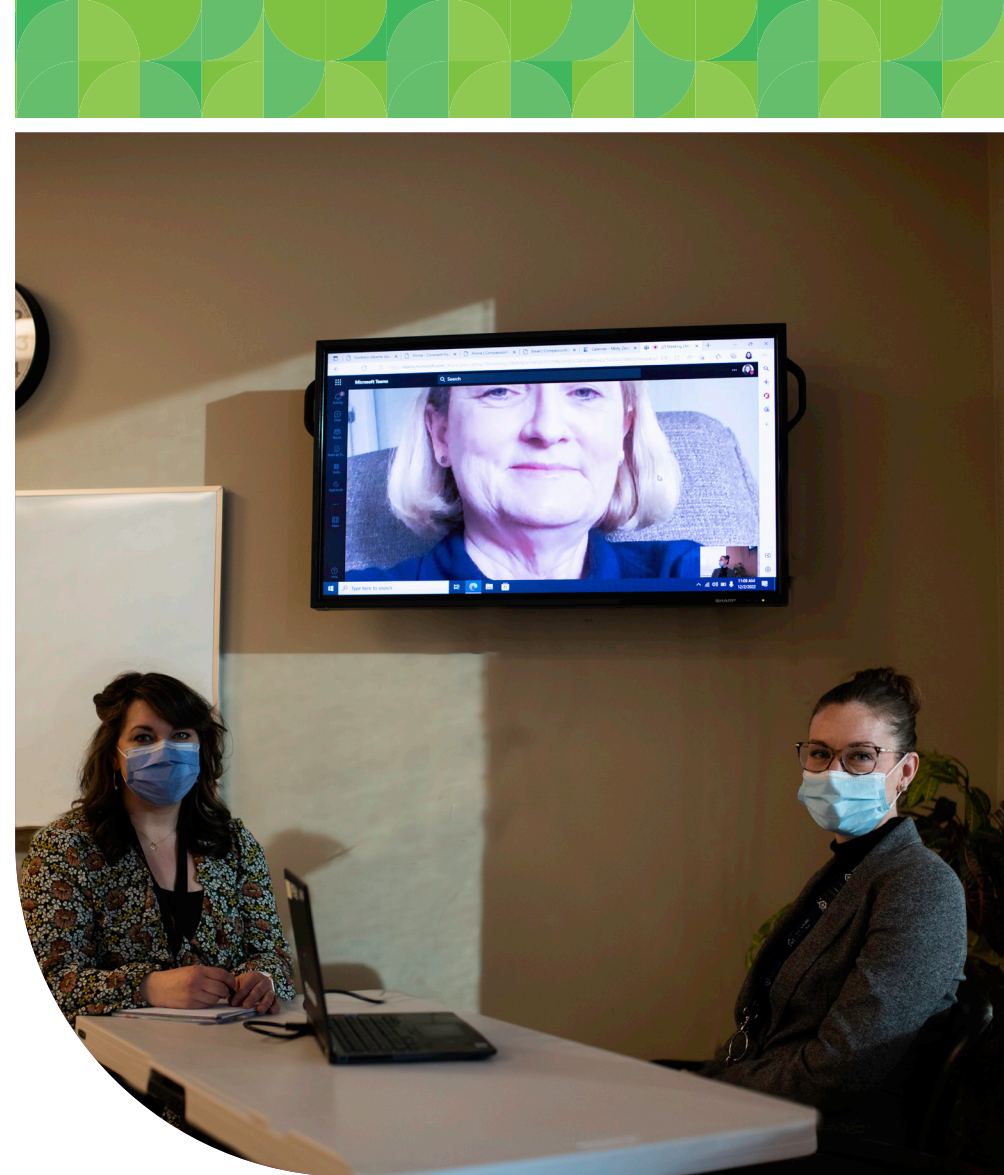
This year saw growth in engagement by staff in the Black, Indigenous and LGBTQ2S+ advisory bodies, in addition to increased participation in Covenant's Diversity and Inclusion Council. The advisory bodies have played an essential role in advising and supporting organizational acknowledgment of significant moments within the year such as Pride Month, Indigenous History Month, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and Black History Month. Advisory Body members hold up and support the daily integration and expression of values of inclusivity, respect and welcome for all amid our many and varied differences.

Consultation Support and Shared Learning

With greater awareness comes increased desire for learning and support to navigate 'new' and uncertain experiences. To better understand and support the learning needs of staff and leaders, we started capturing Diversity and Inclusion consultation requests arising within the organization. Between September 2022 and March 2023, we received over 30 requests for support on a range of Diversity and Inclusion topics. The two primary types of consultation requests included coaching support and information-seeking/wayfinding. We are pleased to observe through this process that passion and interest in the work of Diversity and Inclusion continued to grow this year through all levels of the organization.

Interpretive and Translation Services

Covenant Health offers interpretive services for a wide range of languages by phone, video, and in-person for patients, residents and families receiving care within our facilities. In 2022-23 the organization increased its capacity for video remote interpretation at the bedside and in clinics with 119 devices across the organization now having a video remote interpretation app downloaded and accessible. In addition, we have clarified and strengthened our processes for accessing in-person interpretive services and way-finding supports for staff seeking interpretive services.



Education and Equipping

Provincial On-Call Ethics Team

What began as a pilot project in the spring of 2020 to support staff amidst growing pandemic concerns, the Provincial On-call Ethics Team (POET) has become a key feature of Covenant Health's ethics services program. Not only has this program increased capacity for clinical ethics consultation support across the organization, it has also grown the confidence and ethical leadership capabilities of each of the team members.

This year we conducted semi-structured one-to-one interviews with each of the consultants to learn the impact of participation on individual members and the team as a whole. The key themes we identified include: (1) Increased confidence and skill to support ethically complex and uncertain situations within their own departments and teams; (2) Deeper knowledge of and ability to connect others to timely expertise and organizational resources; (3) improved skill in navigating ethical decision-making in their personal lives.

Quarterly Ethics Seminars

The Quarterly Seminars offer another approach to educating and equipping people with ethics knowledge. These seminars delve into the philosophical ideas that inform and challenge the work we do in health care, education, and social services. The series that began in 2021 with the ideas of "Trust" and "Knowledge" was completed in May 2022 with the final idea, "Power". In October 2022, we resumed with the next set of three ideas: Rights, Responsibility, and Free Will (to be presented in June 2023). Each Quarterly had two main speakers who presented the background, central features, and tensions of each idea. Participants were then able to discuss how the philosophical idea was evident in their work and to identify challenges in the translation of philosophical ideas into real life interactions.

The Quarterly Seminars have been an opportunity to extend our influence to other agencies and services with similar service missions. We have had participants not only from within the Covenant family but also from Catholic Education, Catholic education, and other faith-based or secular agencies. Participants joined from the local area as well as other provinces across Canada.

Health Ethics Week – November 6-12, 2022

Every year the Canadian Bioethics Society hosts the National Health Ethics Week. Each health institution is encouraged to set time aside to support awareness of ethics services available and to promote conversations that engage people in the ethical issues that affect the environment we work.

The past years have been challenging to gather and connect in person and health care staff have been working in challenging times filled with ethical dilemmas. The Ethics & Discernment Center staff recognize the stress the staff have been carrying by the nature of the consults we receive. Health Ethics week was an opportunity to offer appreciation and recognition to the staff and to reconnect and support awareness of the service and support the Ethics & Discernment Center can offer. Eleanor Stewart, Ogechukwu Ezeh, and Cecilia Marion visited many units at the Misericordia and Grey Nuns Hospital offering gratitude for the staff's dedication, beverages, snacks, and a chance for conversation. We were met with warm welcomes and had many heartfelt conversations. It is always humbling to witness in the moment the compassion and commitment of the Covenant staff.



Book Club

Reading books together is recognized as a way to share ethical reflection. To that end, we extended an invitation across Covenant for anyone to join us in reading books that inspire us and provide us with a window on lived experiences. In June, to celebrate Indigenous History Month, we featured 4 books by Indigenous authors (*The Inconvenient Indian*, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, *From the Ashes*, and *Five Little Indians*) and held a book club wherein each book was discussed by staff members from across the organization. In January, we held another book club that featured the book, *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. Again, we had participants with various roles offering their thoughts and reflections on the book's theme of regret, life choices, and living your best life.

Journal Club

In March 2023, members of our various ethics committees joined in reading journal articles on trauma-informed ethics consultation. Our purpose was to examine a trend in ethics consultation and consider implications for our ethics practice. The Journal Club also serves as a venue for focused discussion on emerging themes in consultation with support from published case histories.

Synod

Covenant Health was invited to participate in Pope Francis' Synod on Synodality, a two-year global process of listening to the Catholic community. The key question, "How is journeying together happening in your work in Covenant Health?", supplemented with the sub-question, "How are you continuing the healing journey of Jesus?", guided our listening sessions across Covenant Health where we engaged with members of the Board, Corporate Services, Patient Relations, Spiritual Care, Ethics committees, Diversity and Inclusion, Indigenous Advisory, and clinical professionals. Eight listening sessions were completed with a total of 45 participants. Participants offered their thoughts and reflections on who is voiceless in our presence, what barriers exist to speaking out, what areas in our Mission are neglected, and how we welcome and respect different traditions. Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share in an environment of deep listening and respect. Themes from the Covenant sessions were forwarded to the Archdiocese for inclusion in the report prepared by Dr. Eugenia Pagnotta-Kowalczyk for the national submission to the Vatican.

Acknowledgments

We were honoured this year, once again, by the many hours and efforts contributed to the work of the Centre by dozens of volunteers. Our report is, if nothing else, an acknowledgment of the commitment and support of both Covenant Health's staff and physicians as well as our gracious, dedicated community. We acknowledged the significant contributions to the Ethics and Discernment Centre of the following groups and individuals:

Banff Mineral Springs Hospital Ethics Committee Members

Dr. Eleanor Stewart	Nancy Cowtun	Moar-Bell
Dr. Dino Smiljic	Nancy Barnes	Tonya Carson
Dr. Peter Baylis	Muhannad Alabbas	Richard Kline
Margie Smith	Sandy Penrose	Melissa Mason
Lori Thorburn	Max Marlow	
Sarah Lonz	Margarette	

Bonnyville Health Centre Ethics Committee Members

Anita Layh	Elizabeth Moon
Alena Thompson	Leah Synowec
Derrick Lee	Sherry Lucas

Covenant Health Rural Ethics Network Members

Lora Maygard	Anita Lay	Nicholas Wasylowich
Sherry Irwin	Jim Wilson	Krista Bilyk
Sherry Lucas	Reno Giumond	Kim Weinkauff

Edmonton Area Ethics Committee Members

Arthur Peterson	Dr. Eleanor Stewart	Ogechukwu Ezeh
Barbara Roemer	Dr. Gordon Self	Sandy Ayre
Ben Olsen	Joby Scaria	Scott Stewart
Bonnie Tejada	Jon Gilchrist	Karen Hansen
Cecilia Marion	Josh Stachniak	Jacqueline Hills
Claire Johnson	Larry MacKay	Jacqueline Thompson
Danean Millard	Marjorie Charest	
Deborah Kirkpatrick	Mark Vigrass	

St. Mary's Camrose Hospital Ethics Committee Members

Jim Wilson	Kyla Joyce	Kathy Henderson
Cherylyn Antymniuk	Karen Burton	Shelly Dalueg
Irine Sware	Glenda Shiell	Stacey Lynn Brewster

Provincial On-call Ethics Team

Anita Layh	Jon Gilchrist	Peter Baylis
Bonnie Tejada	Karen Hansen	Sandy Ayre
Cecilia Marion	Nicholas Wasylowich	Scott Stewart
Eleanor Stewart	Ogechukwu Ezeh	

Quarterly Seminar presenters and contributors

Cecilia Marion	Dr. Jennine Wismark	Scott Stewart
Dr. Donald Langford	Josh Stachniak	
Dr. Eleanor Stewart	Jon Gilchrist	