



# IntegratedEthics In Action

Promising Practices — Emerging Champions

Issue 17

## National Compliance and Ethics Week An NCEHC and OAIC Partnership

**T**hink integrity first. In the coming weeks, you can expect to hear those words repeated more than a few times. That's because the National Center for Ethics in Health Care (NCEHC), in partnership with the Office of Accountability, Integrity and Compliance (OAIC), is preparing for the week-long celebration of the 2012 **National Compliance and Ethics Week**, May 6-12.

Part of VHA's core values, "integrity," means that we must always act with high moral principles, adhere to the highest professional standards, and maintain the trust and confidence of the Veterans and others we serve. OAIC reinforces VHA's commitment to integrity in business compliance, while NCEHC's IntegratedEthics (IE) initiative strengthens the integrity of our organization by improving ethics quality throughout VHA.

In 2012, National Compliance and Ethics Week is an opportunity for IE and OAIC to strengthen partnership with operational partners across VHA. NCEHC and OAIC send out a big thank-you to this year's national planning committee (see box).

For fun ideas to promote this important event, see the articles, "**Just In Time for Compliance and Ethics Week: New Ways to Engage Staff and Leaders Around Ethics**" below, and "**Ethics Jeopardy! Putting Fun into Compliance and Ethics Week**" on page 2. Also, please visit the IE VISN and facility SharePoint site at <http://vaww.infoshare.va.gov/sites/IntegratedEthics/default.aspx>.

— *Melissa Bottrell,*  
*Chief, IntegratedEthics*

### Compliance and Ethics Week National Planning Committee

Terry Brown, Program Analyst (VACO OAIC)  
Victoria Collins, CPAC Liaison (VACO OAIC)  
Denise Hoffman, OAIC Officer (Gainesville)  
Andrew Jackson, IE Program Officer (Chillicothe)  
Stephen Lombardo, Director of Compliance Improvement (VACO OAIC)  
Jonathan Ludwig, Program Analyst (VACO OAIC)  
Debra Miller, IE Program Officer (Saginaw)  
Teresa Presenza, OAIC Officer (Hampton)  
Cynthia Pride, OAIC Officer (New Jersey)  
Susan Ricker, OAIC Officer (Minneapolis)  
Basil Rowland, IE Manager, Field Operations (VACO NCEHC) (Co-chair)  
Diane Stahle, OAIC Officer (Ann Arbor)  
Cynthia Sutter, Ethics Consultation Coordinator (Salt Lake City)  
Aaron Testa, Communications Specialist (VACO OAIC) (Co-chair)  
Stephen Wear, IE Program Officer (Western New York)  
Denise Wishner, IE Program Officer (Long Beach)

## Just In Time for Compliance and Ethics Week: New Ways to Engage Staff and Leaders Around Ethics

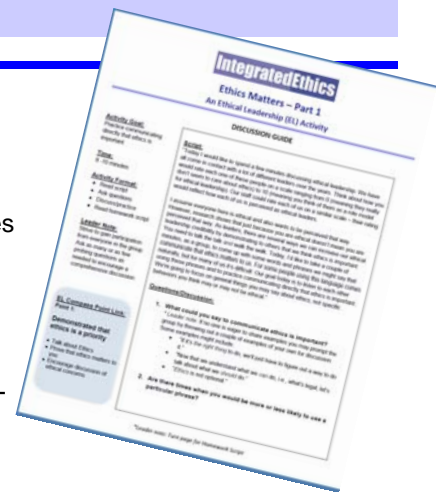
NCEHC has just released new ethics-related activities for facilities to use during Compliance and Ethics Week.

The first is a set of three Ethical Leadership Activities anchored to Ethical Leadership Compass Points #1 and #2: *Demonstrate that ethics is a priority* and *Communicate clear expectations for ethical practice*. It includes an introduction sheet describing the conceptual foundation for the activities, a suggested sequence, and procedures to ensure that learning can cascade throughout the organization. The NCEHC recommends that these short (8- to 15-minute) activities be introduced at an IE Council meeting and that leadership begin using them at their regularly scheduled meetings during Compliance and Ethics Week. To access these activities, please visit <http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/integratedethics/ELCtools.asp>

The new stand-alone activity, "Talk About Ethics," is designed to be used by anyone at any level. It challenges users to incor-

porate ethics-related phrases into their daily work and is a great way to get everyone talking about ethics. Consider sharing this activity at your next IE Council meeting, or handing out the activity at lunchtime events during Compliance and Ethics Week. After all, it's never too late to get people talking about ethics. To access this activity, please visit <http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/integratedethics/ELCtools.asp>.

For questions or feedback, please contact Beth Ritter, IE Health Education Specialist, at [beth.ritter@va.gov](mailto:beth.ritter@va.gov) or 206-658-4269.



Please visit the Compliance and Ethics Week Webpage:  
<http://vaww.cbi.va.gov/ceweek.asp>

# Ethics Jeopardy! Putting Fun into Compliance and Ethics Week

Andrea Gengler, M.B.A., IntegratedEthics Program Officer, Compliance and Business Integrity Officer, VA Central Iowa Health Care System

When planning for Compliance and Ethics Week 2011, IntegratedEthics Program Officer Andrea Gengler and her IE Committee knew they wanted to do something different. They had already hosted Open Houses featuring posters on compliance and ethics topics, shared crossword puzzles, and given out refreshments.

From a small group discussion emerged the idea to host *Ethics Jeopardy!* Teams would consist of four members, and all facility employees would be eligible to compete. Every participant would receive a gift bag emblazoned with Compliance and Ethics Week logos, and the first-place team would win lunch with a quadrad member of their choice.

"When I pitched the idea to facility Director Donald Cooper, he was completely on board," said Ms. Gengler. "He then elicited participation from the other members of the quadrad. We are fortunate to have full leadership support for our IE and compliance programs."

Using a PowerPoint game template from a colleague, Ms. Gengler created *Ethics Jeopardy!* It had five columns: "Fiscal,"

"CBI" (Compliance and Business Integrity), "Ethics," "IE," and "True/False" (a catch-all category). Although she developed most of the questions and answers, the Deputy Chief Financial Officer wrote the Fiscal column, and a Regional Counsel Staff Attorney ensured that the answers pertaining to the Hatch Act were written appropriately. (The Hatch Act concerns federal employees' involvement with partisan political activities.) She then spread the word through daily e-mail announcements, and asked leadership to inform their staffs.

Buzz began building even before the first game was held. In fact, employees began calling Ms. Gengler to ask what documents they could study to prepare for the game.

Once the games began, there was more buzz. "Employees returned to their services with gift bags, and others started asking, 'What is Compliance and Ethics Week?' 'What did you do?'" Ms. Gengler said this fostered a healthy spirit of competition and bonding among department members. "They would say, such-and-such a department is not going to beat us, we're going to get so-and-so (who is knowledgeable) on our team."

The winning team was from the Logistics Department. When given a choice between the Chief of Staff, the Associate Director for Patient Care Services/Nurse Executive, the Associate

citement and enthusiasm, and proved to be a fun way to educate a broader range of employees on compliance and ethics topics. "This was a new idea; it had never been done before. More importantly, the game targeted a completely different population compared to the Open House. They came from different services and a wider spectrum of



Andrea Gengler (left) poses with the 2011 winning *Jeopardy!* team from the Logistics Department and facility Director Donald Cooper (right).

Director for Operations and Resources, or the Director, the team members chose to have lunch with Mr. Cooper, the Director. Discretionary funds from the Canteen picked up the tab. The winners received a traveling trophy.

"I think by offering the lunch with leadership, it sent a clear message to employees that leadership supports and endorses compliance and ethics programs — and that these programs are important. The prize was also important in that it gave frontline staff some one-on-one time with leadership of the organization. The winning team enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity." Ms. Gengler said.

Looking back, Ms. Gengler believes that the program generated a lot of ex-

positions. Our participants ranged from frontline entry-level folks all the way up to the Administrative Officer to the Director." Moreover, the education continues: since last year, the game has been available to facility staff on the IE SharePoint site.

Now, almost a year later, Ms. Gengler notes that *Ethics Jeopardy!* — and lunch with the Director and other activities — have had more broad ranging impacts. "I think people are feeling more comfortable asking questions concerning compliance and ethics. For example, we are seeing more ethics consultation requests, and leadership and service line chiefs are asking us to deliver more presentations at staff meetings."

Owing to the success of last year's game, another *Ethics Jeopardy!* is being planned for this year's Compliance and Ethics Week. "It will have new questions," Ms. Gengler said. "And, yes, we are happy to announce that the quadrad members are again available for lunch with the winning team, demonstrating their ongoing support of our compliance and ethics programs."

# Looking Outside the Box: VA/University of Chicago Fellows Receive In-Depth Training and Knowledge on Health Care Ethics Consultation

Yakov Gertsberg, M.D., Ethics Consultation Coordinator, Jesse Brown (Chicago) VA Medical Center

Roger Cole, M.D., Ethics Consultant, Salisbury (North Carolina) VA Medical Center

Cindy Sutter, A.P.R.N., Ethics Consultation Coordinator, Salt Lake City VA Medical Center

According to the winners for 2011-2012, the VA/University of Chicago Fellowships in Health Care Ethics Consultation offers ethics consultants an opportunity to gain new knowledge, new tools, and an enhanced understanding of how to deal with the complex ethical issues that often arise in consultations.

When asked how the Fellowship impacted her, Cindy Sutter said, "Because you learn the philosophical underpinnings, you find yourself responding to ethical situations in a different manner, looking outside the box instead of in the conventional and patterned ways." For Roger Cole, M.D., the Fellowship served to enrich his knowledge base of clinical ethics, and he has applied this knowledge to both his care of patients and the education of residents and ethics teams. Yakov Gertsberg, M.D., noted his "improved capacity to handle difficult ethical dilemmas and work through complex consultations in an organized fashion."

The Fellowship is a competitive, one-year, intensive training opportunity for physicians and other experienced health care professionals who wish to enhance their ability to serve as leaders in health care ethics consultation within VHA. A joint venture between VA and the University of Chicago, the Fellowship includes a five-week, full-time summer training program at the university with a cohort of non-VA fellows that is followed by case conferences, virtual meetings, and mentoring sessions with university faculty and staff from the NCEHC's Ethics Consultation Service.

The structured curriculum includes courses on Clinical Ethics, Conceptual Foundations of Health Law, and Analytic Philosophy, as well as seminars on research in progress. Monthly sessions are held with NCEHC's ethics consultants to review consultations using the CASES approach, with the goal of supporting and expanding the Fellows' understanding of CASES and their skill in and documenting consultation activities in ECWeb, VHA's quality improvement database for ethics consultation.

The Fellows reported receiving many benefits from the program. "The most memorable part was the case confer-

ences," said Dr. Cole. "I received exposure to areas where I did not have a strong background, such as moral philosophy, medical legal issues, and the history of clinical ethics."

"The material presented by the University of Chicago ethicists was helpful in supplementing the theoretical background, but when it comes to discussing ethics consultation, the VA's approach is much more structured," said Dr. Gertsberg. "CASES is powerful in that it really enables us to systemically address ethical dilemmas in our consultations."

Dr. Cole agreed. "The CASES approach is a very well-thought-out way of approaching clinical consultation and is very helpful. The monthly conference calls with the NCEHC ethics consultants also

*Ms. Sutter applied for the Fellowship because "in-depth knowledge of ethics is hard to come by on your own, and this was a chance to receive solid academic preparation to do better."*

taught us a lot about how to approach our own consultations."

Ms. Sutter enjoyed learning from people of diverse backgrounds and practice areas, such as pediatrics and obstetrics. As a result of the Fellowship, she brings more breadth and depth to her consultation work at VHA. "Now that I have more information, I can give evidence-based responses to questions when previously I may have just offered an opinion." Dr. Gertsberg appreciates that the Fellowship gave him a theoretical basis for his ethics consultation work and connected him to people locally and nationally in the VHA system.

Aside from personal enrichment, the Fellows also brought plentiful knowledge back to their facilities and VISNs. Dr. Gertsberg noted that his team is now more thorough in researching applicable ethics knowledge and incorporating it into the consultation summary notes. He also communicates a lot more with ethics consultation coordinators across his VISN to spread knowledge and to brainstorm about problems.

## 2011-2012 Fellows:

John Billig, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, VA Minneapolis Medical Center

Elizabeth Vig, M.D., Geriatric Medicine and Palliative Care, VA Puget Sound Health Care System

Tiel Keltner, J.D., Presidential Management Fellow, Office of the Principle Deputy Under Secretary for Health

## The NCEHC has awarded 2012-13 Fellowships to:

Padmashi Rastogi, M.D., Staff Physician, VA North Texas Health Care System

Hosana Jean-Etienne, LMSW, Social Worker, Northport VA Medical Center

Shajuna D. McMillan, Pharm.D., Clinical Pharmacist, Durham VA Medical Center

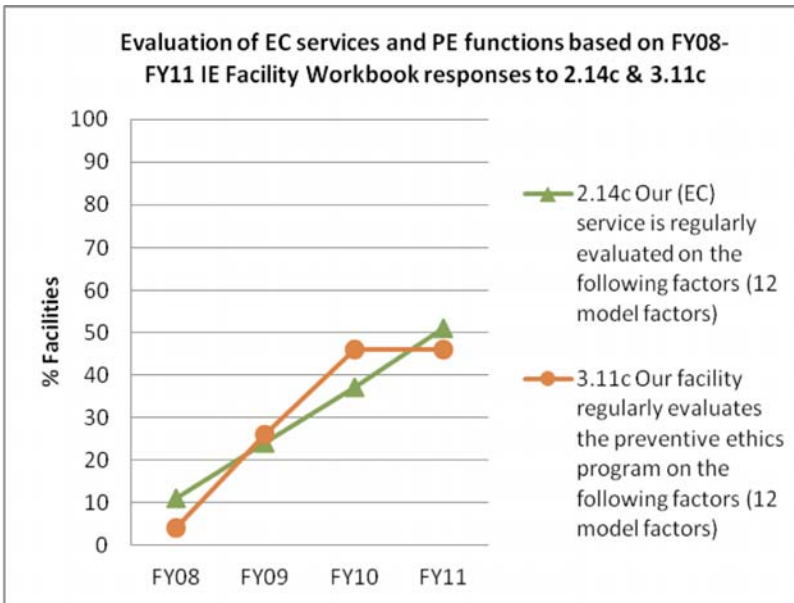
Dr. Cole has begun creating educational modules and giving lectures on biomedical ethics, competing interests, truth telling, confidentiality, and surrogate decision making for VA audiences. He has also served on a couple of administrative investigation boards and has been invited to be a non-voting member on resource management committees "to add an ethics voice." Looking forward, he plans to identify and address areas where consultants feel they are deficient, and to develop more formal ethics education for surgical residents because, he says, "I am a surgeon and that's my passion."

Ms. Sutter has handled more consultation requests from the business side and done in-services with staff. She has also streamlined the number of people on her facility's ethics consultation service, choosing to give more in-depth training to fewer members.

While all three Fellows laud the program, they emphasize that its requirements (including that for travel) are intense and, as such, are not to be taken lightly. "Applicants really should feel passionate about making patient care better because the program comes with sacrifices," said Dr. Cole.

At the same time, the rewards spread tangibly beyond the individual Fellows to include their facility's entire IE program. The Fellowship stipulates that the Fellow's home facility must commit to support the Fellow to work on IE-related leadership activities at least 50% of their time for a minimum of three years beyond the Fellowship year. "Receiving this commitment from the station for time to do ethics work is critical in making sure activities are put in place and carried forward," said Ms. Sutter.

# Data Point: IntegratedEthics Facility Workbook



In 2007, IE set out to use a structured approach to improving VHA ethics programs. Despite being one of the harder areas to improve, we're seeing good growth in evaluation of Ethics Consultation services and Preventive Ethics functions, thanks to the widespread application of IE tools such as **ECWeb**, the **EC Proficiency Assessment Tool**, and the **IS-SUES cycle**, as well as **EC and PE Critical Success Factors**. Due to these and other improvements, IE is now widely recognized for its efforts in evaluating model elements of its ethics programs in VHA.

## IntegratedEthics Customer Service Survey

In its efforts to better serve the IE community, the NCEHC is currently conducting a customer service survey. If you subscribe to the IE listserv or participate in the Improvement Forum calls, you may already have seen the survey link. Please take a moment to complete the survey, and share the survey link with your IE colleagues: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/IEFieldFeedback>

## IntegratedEthics Featured as a "Cornerstone" for Organizational Health in VHA Workforce Succession Strategic Plan

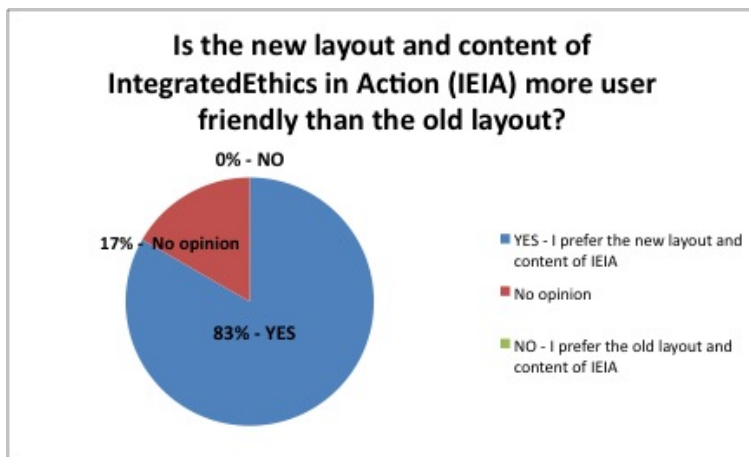
IntegratedEthics is described as a "best practice" in the Organizational Health chapter of the 2012 edition of the VHA Workforce Succession Strategic Plan. Included under the section, "Safe Cooperative Work Environment," IE is recognized for measuring ethical practices and identifying opportunities to improve ethics quality through analysis of results from the IE Staff Survey. In addition to reporting on findings from the survey, the IE section emphasizes the essential role that leaders play in supporting practices which ensure an ethical environment.

Published on February 10, 2012, the strategic plan presents VHA's succession planning processes and strategic plans for fiscal years 2012-2017. Its stated purpose is to help VHA prepare for upcoming challenges posed by the eligibility for retirement of 40% of its current full- and part-time workforce, including 82% of its executive-level leadership, at a time when the changing demographics of the Veteran population – particularly the increasing numbers of elderly and female veterans – create the need to provide new approaches to providing their health care. The plan can be accessed on the VHA Succession Planning SharePoint site at [http://vaww.succession.va.gov/Workforce\\_Planning/WorkforcePlanningLibrary/2012%20VHA%20Workforce%20Succession%20Strategic%20Plan%20\\_EBook.pdf](http://vaww.succession.va.gov/Workforce_Planning/WorkforcePlanningLibrary/2012%20VHA%20Workforce%20Succession%20Strategic%20Plan%20_EBook.pdf).

## IntegratedEthics in Action Poll: Preliminary Results

IntegratedEthics in Action (IEIA) is currently conducting a reader poll to learn what content is most useful for our readers and whether the new layout is more user-friendly. Of the 18 responses received so far, more readers prefer the new layout (see pie chart below). Our readers also request that IEIA continue to publish educational offerings and announcements for new tools and trainings, and to share best practices from facilities across VHA.

To allow for maximum participation, the poll will remain open until April 30, 2012. Your input and feedback is highly valuable. Please complete this very short survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/newIEIA>.



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Save the Date: NCEHC Readies Another Preventive Ethics "Beyond the Basics" Workshop

Following the success of the first presentation in 2011, the NCEHC will provide another face-to-face Preventive Ethics Beyond the Basics Workshop this fiscal year.

This hands-on 1.5-day training will provide active and experienced Preventive Ethics coordinators with an opportunity to expand their skills and knowledge. Participants will also network among colleagues to build a community of coordinators and IntegratedEthics champions. While not intended as a train-the-trainer program, participants will be encouraged to share the workshop materials and what they have learned with other team members at their facility.

The Workshop will cover practical topics, including:

- Determining whether a request is appropriate for an ISSUES cycle
- Prioritizing among ethics issues
- Describing the ethics quality gap between current and best ethics practice
- Developing an effective refined improvement goal
- Understanding the cause(s) of an ethics quality gap

The Workshop will emphasize active learning. Through plenary sessions, breakout activities, and discussions, participants will have ample opportunity to discuss practical issues with faculty and fellow attendees. Resource materials will be provided for use during and after the workshop.

The course is intended for coordinators with at least one year of experience leading their teams. Participation is limited to two attendees per VISN. Applications will be provided to IE VISN Points of Contact in late May 2012. Applicants will need to receive concurrence from their facility IE Program Officers and Directors before submitting their applications to their VISNs for final selection. VISNs should inform the NCEHC of their nominated participants by June 15, and the participant list will be finalized by June 29. The Workshop includes funding for participants' travel expenses.

## 2012 Online Facility Workbook Available for Access

The IntegratedEthics Facility Workbook for fiscal year 2012 is now available. Each year, the Workbook helps facilities assess their current ethics programs, identify strengths and opportunities for improvement, set goals, and develop quality improvement plans.

The Web-based Workbook allows users to enter their information into a database and submit their responses to the NCEHC electronically.

The report has four sections. Usually, the IE Program Officer completes the IE Program and Ethical Leadership sections, while the Ethics Consultation and Preventive Ethics Coordinators complete their respective sections. However, the IE team can designate any member to complete any section — or one individual can complete the entire Workbook. While working on the report, team members can view the section(s) they are working on, as well as content in the other sections. In this way, the electronic format gives IE teams flexibility in how they complete and review the report.

Program Officers should ensure the Workbook is completed and submitted to the NCEHC by June 30, 2012. Please use the following link for access: <http://htm.va.gov/IntegratedEthics/questions/> <<http://htm.va.gov/IntegratedEthics/questions/>> . If you have any questions about using the electronic Workbook, please contact Basil Rowland ([Basil.Rowland@va.gov](mailto:Basil.Rowland@va.gov) or 757-809-1129).

**IE Staff Survey Tentative Dates:  
July 23rd—August 20th, 2012**

## VISN Points of Contact and Senior Leads to Meet May 23

The annual IE VISN Point of Contact and Senior Leads Meeting will be held on May 23, 2012, from 8 am-12 noon PDT (9 am- 1 pm MDT, 10 am-2 pm CDT, 11 am-3 pm EDT). This year's meeting will be held virtually over a combination of V-Tel, voice-only, and Live-Meeting. Topics will include: the current state of IE; 2013 IE field metrics; IE Handbook 1004.06 update; and the Office of Inspector General Combined Assessment Program Review Process and experience to date. Please contact Beth Ritter, IE Health Education Specialist, at [beth.ritter@va.gov](mailto:beth.ritter@va.gov) or (206) 658-4269 with any questions or to designate an alternate attendee from your VISN. (VISN POCs who are unable to attend are encouraged to send an alternate in their place.)

## Reminder: New Function Coordinator Orientation Training in May

The next IntegratedEthics New Function Coordinator Orientation Training will be held May 14<sup>th</sup>-15, 2012. To facilitate the transition of new function coordinators into their roles, the NCEHC recently revised this training to be delivered in two parts over two days via LiveMeeting and teleconference calls. Day 1 is a general orientation for all functions; Day 2 focuses on specific learning for IE Program Officers, Ethics Consultation Coordinators, and Preventive Ethics Coordinators. We plan to provide Continuing Education Units at the May session. More information (including the EES registration link) will be provided through IE listserv announcements. Individuals who are new to their IE roles or who would like an IE refresher are encouraged to attend.

Please contact Beth Ritter, IE Health Education Specialist, at [beth.ritter@va.gov](mailto:beth.ritter@va.gov) or (206) 658-4269 with any questions.

## Calling All Ethics Consultants: Take a Survey on Identifying the Patient's Surrogate in the CPRS

The NCEHC is interested in understanding the challenges that staff members may face when seeking to identify the patient's surrogate decision maker in CPRS. The surrogate is defined in VHA Handbook 1004.01, *Informed Consent for Clinical Treatments and Procedures*, as the "individual(s) authorized to make health care decisions on behalf of a patient who lacks decision-making capacity."

To help the NCEHC learn more about this issue and improve business practices, ethics consultants are invited to participate in a short, anonymous survey about their experience. The link for the survey is: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/>