



IntegratedEthics In Action

Promising Practices — Emerging Champions

Issue 19

The IE Staff Survey:

How to Boost Participation Across Facilities, VISNs

This summer, from July 23 to August 20, the quarterly Voice of VA (VOVA) Survey will feature the third release of the IntegratedEthics Staff Survey (IESS). All VHA employees will have the opportunity to take the IESS, and the National Center for Ethics in Health Care (NCEHC) is hoping for high response rates to help facilities and VISNs identify areas of progress and opportunities for improvement with regards to ethics quality. As with the 2008 and 2010 surveys, IE Program Officers play a

Osatuke, K., McNamara, B., Pohl, M., Moore, S.C., Meterko, M., Charns, M.P., & Dyrenforth, S.R. (in press). *Response Rates and Incentives in a National Employee Survey: The Case of the Veterans Administration*. *Applied HRM Research*.

huge role in the success of the survey as they are responsible for marketing the survey at their facilities. VISN Points of Contact will need to work with facility Program Officers to ensure that information about the survey is distributed to all staff across the VISN, including Network Offices.

Even though motivating staff to take surveys can be tough, facilities across VHA have succeeded in achieving high survey participation rates. For example, the 2012 All Employee Survey (AES) attained a national response rate of 63.6 percent – over 195,000 responses. In a forthcoming piece in the peer-reviewed journal, *Applied HRM Research*, Katerine Osatuke, Ph.D., Research Director at the National Center for Organizational Devel-

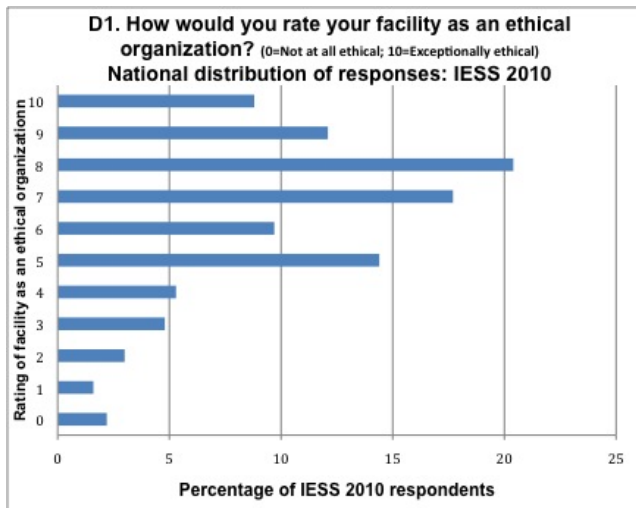
opment (NCOD), and colleagues describe how surveys can be successfully administered in Federal government settings that prohibit the use of monetary incentives. Their research shows that the following practices were associated with success:

1. Sending several notifications about the survey in advance of the launch date;
2. Providing weekly (or more frequent) updates on response rates, and publicly praising and encouraging those locations with the highest rates; and
3. Giving rewards to workgroups that had the highest response rates

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How Would You Rate Your Organization as an “Ethical Organization”?

Findings from the 2010 IESS



In the 2010 IE Staff Survey (IESS), respondents were asked, “How would you rate your facility as an ethical organization?” This question (D1) has been shown to be strongly correlated (.7 and above) with other IESS questions relating to the IE domains of Ethical Practices in the Everyday Workplace and Business and Management, and the All Employee Survey (AES) domains of Leadership, Safety, Customer, Civility, Engagement, and Psychological Safety.

The figure shows how respondents to the IESS 2010 rated their facilities as ethical organizations on a scale of 0 (“not at all ethical”) to 10 (“exceptionally ethical”). While approximately 40 percent of respondents rated their facility at least an 8 out of 10, the majority of respondents (60%) rated their facility at 7 or below. The average score for all 139 facilities was 6.5 and individual facility averages ranged from 4.9 to 7.5.

Because of the potential value of this question, it was also included in the 2012 AES, and it will again be included in the 2012 IESS. NCEHC staff will be conducting further validations of the question to assess ethical culture and environment at the facility level.

Boosting IESS Participation

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Because the IESS, like the AES, is both anonymous and confidential, the Human Resources Committee, in collaboration with union officials, has determined that individual incentives, including drawings that require survey takers to disclose participation, are not to be used to encourage survey participation.

As outlined in the IESS Marketing Toolkit (see link in the box below), group incentives that are awarded based on meeting a pre-

determined goal can be offered. For example, once a workgroup reaches a specified response rate, all employees belonging to that

group could be entered into a drawing to win a prize, regardless of whether or not they completed the survey. In addition to those discussed in the toolkit, examples of appropriate prizes might include a day off from a person's customary role to work with Veterans in a different capacity (i.e., a mini-detail), or recognition at a town hall meeting. Alternatively, an entire workgroup might be awarded a traveling plaque or other

prize for reaching target participation levels.

While the survey is open, NCEHC will provide VISNs and facilities with updates on location-specific response rates (quick counts) to make it easy to reward those groups who support the survey.

For more information on survey incentives, IE Program Officers are encouraged to review content within the toolkit

located on the IESS webpage (see link in the box below). In addition, they should check with the facility HR Department and top leadership to

discuss the use of incentives or awards for survey completion.

The initial survey announcement and link will be sent to facility Public Affairs Officers in July. If you have any questions, please contact Basil Rowland, IE Manager, Field Operations, by email basil.rowland@va.gov or phone (757) 809-1129.

Once a workgroup reaches a specified response rate, all employees belonging to that group could be entered into a drawing to win a prize, regardless of whether or not they completed the survey.

IESS support materials, including the Toolkit, are now available on the IE web site:

<http://vaww.ethics.va.gov/integratedethics/IESS.asp>

IEPO Publishes Ethics Consultation Article in Peer-Reviewed Journal

Cynthia M. A. Geppert, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., M.S.B.E., IE Program Officer and Ethics Consultation Coordinator, New Mexico VA Health Care System, Cynthia.Geppert@va.gov

Cynthia M. A. Geppert, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., M.S.B.E., and Wayne N. Shelton, Ph.D., published the article, "A Comparison of General Medical and Clinical Ethics Consultations: What Can We Learn From Each Other?" in the April 2012 *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, a peer-reviewed general and internal medicine journal sponsored by Mayo Clinic.

Having served as both a medical and ethics consultant, Dr. Geppert became interested in comparing the general medical and clinical ethics consultation practices to better understand what makes clinical ethics consults unique. "The IntegratedEthics CASES approach emphasized for me the nature of ethics consults as essentially clinical activities," Dr. Geppert explained. "Our hope in writing the paper was to offer practicing physicians a thoughtful but clinically relevant reflection on consultation in medicine and ethics."

Her advice to other IE team members who may be thinking about developing an article for publication? "I have found my involvement in IE to be a wellspring of ideas," Dr. Geppert said. "I would encourage other IE staff to keep their creative eyes out for possibilities. A key strategy for getting published is to carefully select the appropriate journal by reviewing the types of articles that the journal publishes and then writing for the intended audience. Finally, the most important trait for ensuring success is perseverance."

The full text of the article is available at:<http://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196%2812%2900206-6/fulltext>

What We're Reading... Ethics in the Literature

Here are a few articles that were of recent interest to our NCEHC IE Staff. They can be used to spark engagement in your local IE program or to discuss in local journal clubs. To receive copies, consult your facility's librarian.

Bailey, F. A., Allen, R. S., Williams, B. R., Goode, P. S., Granstaff, S., Redden, D. T. et al. (2012). Do-Not-Resuscitate Orders in the Last Days of Life. *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 15(7), 1-9.

Bruhn, J. G. (2009). The Functionality of Gray Area Ethics in Organizations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 89, 205-214.

Powell, A. A., White, K. M., Partin, M. R., Halek, K., Christianson, J. B., Neil, B., et al. (2011). Unintended Consequences of Implementing a National Performance Measurement System into Local Practice. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 27(4), 405-412.

VHA Celebrates . . .

COMPLIANCE & ETHICS WEEK 2012

A luau and games at the Sioux Falls (SD) VA Health Care System



C&E Week Highlights from the Field

The activities and photos featured on this page are just a few of those reported by enthusiastic IE teams across VHA. The NCEHC thanks everyone who shared C&E Week activities; your efforts to promote and spread IE are most appreciated!

★ **Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital (Columbia, MO)** prepared and sent "Ethics Baskets" to each of the facility's seven community-based outpatient clinics. They included fliers about compliance and ethics, CD/DVDs about ethics, and information about the SharePoint sites for IE and the Office of Compliance and Business Integrity, and a key ingredient: candy.

★ **Sheridan (WY) VA Medical Center's** activities included Compliance and Ethics Jeopardy, Psychological Safety True/False Jeopardy, and a special presentation from a Sheridan VA employee who is also a Veteran, "I'm Glad You're Here," in which he described his positive experiences as a patient at the facility.

★ **Sioux Falls (SD) VA Health Care System** held a Hawaiian luau and shirt day on Friday. Staff received a floral lei greeting and enjoyed Hawaiian décor and island music among colorful educational posters and handouts. For answering C&E questions at the Aloha Table, staff could enter a drawing to win a pineapple. Management showed support by wearing Hawaiian shirts for the day.

Display tables . . . Minneapolis VA Health Care System



★ **Wilmington (DE) VA Medical Center** sponsored a poster contest and invited members from all departments to submit a poster that displays "What Compliance and Ethics means to your area and our Veterans." The winning poster was displayed in the hospital lobby during C&E Week.



. . . Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital (Columbia, MO)



Compliance Jeopardy at Sheridan (WY) VA Medical Center

. . . VA San Diego Health Care System

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Ware Kuschner Wins 2011 William A. Nelson Award for Excellence in Health Care Ethics



Lisa Freeman, Director, VA Palo Alto Health Care System, and Robert Petzel, M.D., Under Secretary for Health (right), present the Nelson Award for Excellence in Health Care Ethics to Ware Kuschner, M.D. (center).

Ware Kuschner, M.D., Chair of the Clinical Bioethics Committee at VA Palo Alto Health Care System, has been awarded the 2011 William A. Nelson Award for Health Care Ethics. Robert Petzel, M.D., Under Secretary for Health, presented the award on June 21.

“VA chose Dr. Kuschner in recognition of his powerful advocacy of best ethical practices,” said Dr. Petzel. “His successful leadership of this facility’s consultation service, his contributions to ethics scholarship, his service to Veterans, and his abiding commitment to promoting ethical health care practice in VHA makes him a leader in VA.”

Dr. Petzel shared that, shortly after he was appointed Chair of the Palo Alto’s bioethics committee in 2001, Dr. Kuschner began developing a new ethics consultation service and transformed the committee into a model program. “Dr. Kuschner, through his dedication to excellence, is an exemplary advocate of best ethical practices,” said Dr. Petzel.

The William A. Nelson Award was established to recognize VHA employees whose careers exhibit the highest standards of excellence, dedication, and accomplishment in the field of health care ethics. The award honors Chaplain William A. Nelson, M.Div., Ph.D., who worked for 30 years to promote ethical health care practice throughout VHA. Since Dr. Nelson’s retirement in 2003, VHA has selected one employee to receive this important award each year.

For further information, visit <http://www.ethics.va.gov/activities/Nelson.asp> or contact Steven Spickler at 202-461-4102 or at steven.spickler@va.gov

NCEHC Seeks Volunteers to Showcase Ethical Leadership Activities

Head’s Up! We’re looking for volunteer sites who would like to showcase their FY 2012 Ethical Leadership (EL1) improvement opportunities and action plans on the September 10, 2012 Improvement Forum call. Maybe you would like to share a great intervention or outcome, or tell others about how you generated some real interest or partnered with another program or project in a great way? VISN Points of Contact can suggest facilities who are doing great activities. Or facility IE Program Officers can suggest themselves. If interested, please contact Basil Rowland at (757) 809-1129 or basil.rowland@va.gov.

Midyear CAP Review Reports “Overwhelming” Compliance with IE Program

The Office of Inspector General’s (OIG) midyear Quality Management review of facility IE programs shows that the 22 facilities visited were “overwhelmingly compliant” with essential aspects of the program. For example, the review found that most or all facilities were aligning IE policies with key elements of IE Handbook 1004.06; completing the IE Facility Workbook annually and instituting action plans in response to its findings; using ECWeb consistently; and completing the requisite 2 Preventive Ethics ISSUES cycles per year. The review was part of OIG’s Combined Assessment Program (CAP).

NCEHC has shared these results with top leadership and IE field staff in all VISNs. Future Improvement Forum calls will focus on helping facilities effectively respond to the CAP findings.

In the meantime, the NCEHC thanks IE teams across VHA for the hard work that resulted in such a favorable review.

For further information, contact Basil Rowland, IE Manager, Field Operations, at (757) 809-1129, Basil.Rowland@va.gov.