

## The Ethics of Improving Health Care Quality and Safety AHRQ Proposal Description

This three-year project is a systematic and comprehensive study of the ethical issues generated by quality improvement (QI) (in which we include efforts to increase patient safety) in health care. The project will provide a multidisciplinary forum in which ethicists, QI practitioners, managers and policymakers can learn from one another and come to agreement on the ethical issues and dilemmas in quality improvement.

The project has three main objectives: first, to identify and examine the underlying goals, assumptions, and methods of QI and the context in which it is carried out; second, to provide QI practitioners with a better understanding of the ethical values served by QI and the dilemmas that arise in the design and implementation of QI projects; third, to develop ethics standards by which public and private policy makers can assess the validity and effects of recommendations based on QI studies.

The project will assemble an interdisciplinary Task Force of nationally respected leaders in quality improvement, healthcare management, health systems research, health policy, and bioethics. Through deliberations at four working conferences, participation in interactive web-based discussions, and close collaboration with project staff and consultants, the Task Force on Ethics and Quality Improvement will issue a consensus report identifying ethical issues and suggesting ethical standards and principles for the field.

This report will be disseminated widely in the quality improvement community and elsewhere. Other project publications include a special supplement to the *Hastings Center Report* designed primarily for the ethics community, and a commercially published volume of papers written by Task Force members and other experts especially commissioned for the project. Although the project will develop specific recommendations and guidelines, an equally important and larger objective is to set a coherent and ethically informed agenda for the future development of the field of healthcare quality improvement.