

TEST (Trivent Ethics in Science and Technology Imprint)
Heading Towards Humans Again: Aspects of
Bioethics in the New Age of Science
Ed. Miroslav Radenković
Available online at <http://trivent-publishing.eu>



The Challenges of the Double Role of the Ethical Commission at the Faculty of Medicine from the University of Belgrade

Jelena Šantrić

Department of Faculty Services, Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Abstract

The Faculty of Medicine at the University of Belgrade (Serbia) consists of two major activities: education and research on the one side and participating in the health care system on the other side. The roles of the ethics committee of the Faculty of Medicine is regulated by different sources of positive laws of Serbia. The ethics committee has two different and important roles that protect on the one hand ethical principles in higher education and research, especially research involving humans, but also in the health care system, on the other side. This paper will present and discuss the activities and challenges faced by the ethics committee of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Belgrade.

DOI: 10.22618/TP.AEBIO.20214.231013

This is an Open Access article distributed in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial (CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) license, which permits others to copy or share the article, provided original work is properly cited and that this is not done for commercial purposes. Users may not remix, transform, or build upon the material and may not distribute the modified material (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

THE CHALLENGES OF THE DOUBLE ROLE OF THE ETHICS COMMITTEE AT THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

Jelena Šantrić¹

INTRODUCTION

The Faculty of Medicine of the University of Belgrade is the oldest and largest faculty of medicine in Serbia, and among the largest medical educational institutions in the region.

In 2020, the Faculty will celebrate 100 years from the first lecture delivered by the professor of anatomy Niko Miljanic, which led to the first generation of medical students in Serbia.

The most important resources of the Faculty are its people: about 3000 undergraduate students, over 5530 postgraduate students, over 700+ academic teaching staff and 300+ clinical junior teaching staff, 270+ non-teaching staff, using more than 60.000 m² of the space at the faculty's buildings and clinics and hospitals as teaching bases.² The size of the Faculty reflects the ramified and all-encompassing activities in the field of higher education, research and health services carried by the Faculty and its employees.

The current local Law on Higher Education proposes the role of ethics committees at universities and faculties in protecting academic integrity by conducting the procedure in cases of violation of the Code

¹ Department of Faculty Services, Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Serbia.

² Data from Faculty Services, Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, available at http://med.bg.ac.rs/?page_id=14465&lang=en (accessed January 20, 2021).

of Professional Ethics adopted by the National Council for Higher Education. These violations concern non-academic behaviour in teaching and research work at universities, as well as in publishing from teaching staff, researchers and students, with particular emphasis on plagiarism, false authorship, falsification of results and auto-plagiarism.

In a similar way, the Law on Health Care proposes the role of an ethical board in health care institutions in protecting the regulations of professional ethics in the health care practice clinical research, research in public health, as well as in taking and using human organs, cells and tissues from living and deceased donors.

The ethics committee also has an important role in improving the overall culture in biomedical research and communication between researchers, institutions and society, and consequently in improving the quality of the health care system. Therefore, the challenges of the dual role of the Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Medicine from the University of Belgrade will be discussed.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Law on Higher Education,³ one of the main principles in higher education, implies academic integrity and unity of teaching, research and professional work. Academic integrity is based on preserving the dignity of the profession, improving moral values, protecting the value of knowledge, raising awareness of the responsibility of all members of the academic community and promoting human rights and freedoms.

Academic freedoms, according to the Law,⁴ include the freedom of scientific and artistic research, freedom to publish and publicly present scientific results and artistic achievements, alongside respecting intellectual property rights.

The professional body⁵ of the independent higher education institution adopts a code of professional ethics and rules of conduct in the institution, which establishes the ethical principles for publishing scientific and artistic results, intellectual property, relations between

³ Law on Higher Education (Official Gazette RS 88/17, 27/18 - an. law, 73/18), Article 7, Available at: <https://www.nat.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Zakon-o-visokom-obrazovanju-2017-ENGL.pdf> (accessed January 20, 2021).

⁴ Ibidem, Article 5.

⁵ Ibidem, Article 65.

teachers and associates, other employees and students, procedures in the performance of the higher education institution and teachers, legal transactions, as well as in relation to the public and the media.

The National Council for Higher Education, established to ensure the development and improvement of the quality of higher education, provides the basis for a code of academic integrity and conflict of interest in the election of a professor or associate.

The Code of Academic Integrity in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Serbia implies that the members of the academic community are obliged to preserve the integrity of the higher education system and of the higher education institution itself. They are also obliged to meet their responsibilities towards students, colleagues and employees of the higher education institution and within the academic community responsibly, conscientiously and professionally.

The members of the academic community guarantee the originality of the work they publish, as well as the accuracy in presenting and providing information on the origin of ideas and statements used in the work. Plagiarism, false authorship, fabrication and falsification of results and auto plagiarism are not permitted in scientific and professional work. These prohibitions apply to all written works of teaching and scientific staff and students (seminar paper, master's thesis, specialist thesis, doctoral dissertation, journal work, textbook chapter, chapters in proceedings etc.).⁶

The members of the academic community are also responsible for violating these prohibitions in case of unconscious and irresponsible presentation or neglecting the facts, in their teaching or scientific research work (in the papers for the evaluation of a doctoral dissertation, election to the title of a teacher or an associate).

A special responsibility lies in the hands of the supervisor in the preparation of the doctoral dissertation, as well as the instructor who guides the student in the preparation of other written papers.

The process of detecting non-academic behaviour is clearly regulated. Different bodies are involved in the procedure, such as the ethics committee of the faculty, the scientific council of the faculty, the expert

⁶ Law on Copyright and Related Rights (Official Gazette RS 104/2009, 99/2011, 119/2012 and 29/2016) Available at: http://www.zis.gov.rs/upload/THE%20LAW%20ON%20COPYRIGHT%20AND%20RELATED%20RIGHTS-version%20in%20force%204.1.2013_.pdf (accessed January 20, 2021).

committee (which is formed by the scientific council) and the second-instance body for professional ethics at the university level.

As a violation of the Code, the following could be pronounced:

- measures for established non-academic behaviour in the form of plagiarism, false authorship, fabricating and falsifying results and self-promotion such as advertising diploma on completion of the scientific name PhDs null and void or revocation of teaching or associate titles;
- measures for minor injuries identified or negligent treatment of the obligation to correct academic behaviour such as warning, public warning and public condemnation.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN HEALTHCARE

The Law on Healthcare⁷ predicts that healthcare professionals perform healthcare activities in accordance with professional standards, approved good practice guides, treatment protocols and a code of professional ethics. Healthcare professionals assume professional, ethical, criminal, material and disciplinary responsibility for their work, in accordance with the Law.

Upon graduating, health professionals sign a declaration - an oath, that in carrying out their vocation they will adhere to the principles set out in the Hippocratic Oath, as well as the principles of professional ethics.

In the Republic of Serbia, the Government appoints and dismisses the President and members of the Ethics Committee of Serbia,⁸ at the proposal of the Minister. The Ethics Committee of Serbia is a professional body that takes care of the provision and implementation of health care in accordance with the principles of professional ethics, the principles of respect for human values and the rights of the child.

The Ethics Committee of Serbia consists out of ten members who are selected among experts with significant results in their work, as well as contributions in the field of healthcare, professional ethics of health workers and humanities - five of whom are chairmen of the ethics

⁷ Law on Healthcare (Official Gazette RS 25/19) Article 155, Available at: http://www.skriningsrbija.rs/files/File/English/Republic_of_Serbia_Healthcare_Law.pdf (accessed January 20, 2021).

⁸ Ibidem, Articles 141-142.

committees of the competent chambers of health workers, and one with a law degree and clinical trial experience.

Among the numerous responsibilities of the Ethics Committee of Serbia, the following ones are listed as crucial:

- to predict the basic principles of professional ethics of health workers and health associates and monitor their application in performing health care activities on the territory of Serbia;
- to propose a code of conduct for employees in the health care system and monitor its implementation on the territory of Serbia;
- to coordinate the work of ethics committees in healthcare institutions;
- to monitor the implementation of scientific, medical and research activities in the field of public health in health institutions on the territory of Serbia; and
- to give opinions on controversial ethical issues that are of importance for conducting scientific, medical and public health research in health institutions in Serbia etc.

According to the Law,⁹ the faculties within universities where medical, dental and pharmaceutical sciences (faculties of health profession) are carried out, may conduct their activities through their organizational units if determined by the Ministry with a decision that they fulfil the necessary requirements for a certain type of healthcare institution, prescribed by the Law and regulations. The provisions of this Law and the regulations adopted for its implementation relating to a particular type of healthcare institution are applied accordingly, in accordance with the decision of the Ministry on the fulfilment of the prescribed conditions for performing healthcare activities.

The ethics committee in a healthcare institution

The Ethics Committee¹⁰ is a professional body that monitors the provision and implementation of health care on the principles of professional ethics, the principles of respect for human values and the

⁹ Law on Healthcare, Article 36.

¹⁰ Law on Healthcare, Articles 130-132.

rights of the child, as well as codes of conduct for employees of the healthcare institutions.

The tasks of the ethics committee of the healthcare institution are the following:

- 1) to monitor and analyse the application of the principles of professional ethics in performing health care activities, as well as to propose measures for their improvement;
- 2) to monitor and analyse the implementation of codes of conduct for employees of the health care institution and propose measures for their improvement;
- 3) to approve the conduct of scientific research in the field of health, medical research, public health research, and monitor their implementation;
- 4) to approve the taking of human organs, cells and tissues from a living donor or a deceased person, in accordance with the law, and give an opinion on ethical and other issues in the process of transplantation, i.e. the application of cells and tissues;
- 5) to consider ethical issues and make decisions regarding the taking of parts of the human body for scientific-teaching purposes, in accordance with the law;
- 6) to consider ethical issues related to the implementation of measures for the treatment of infertility by biomedically assisted fertilization procedures, in accordance with the law;
- 7) to monitor, analyse and give opinions on the ethics of the relationship between health professionals, health care assistants and patients;
- 8) to monitor, analyse and give opinions on the application of the principles of professional ethics in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, health care, rehabilitation, research, as well as on the introduction of new health technologies;
- 9) to contribute to the advancement of the application of the principles of professional ethics in the pursuit of the health care industry and the development of partnerships between health care professionals, healthcare associates and patients;
- 10) to perform an advisory function and consider other ethical issues in performing the activities of a health care institution; and
- 11) to cooperate with the ethical committee of the competent chamber.

The members of the ethics committee are appointed from among the health workers or associates employed in the health institution.

A person may be appointed as a member of the ethics committee who, in the pursuit of the profession, is distinguished in respecting the moral and ethical principles of the medical profession.

Using corpses for practical training at faculties

Another important aspect of respecting ethical principles in healthcare and higher education are the articles¹¹ regarding corpses and their use in practical teaching.

Faculties may take over the bodies, organs and tissues of deceased and identified persons for the purpose of practical training in the following cases:

- 1) if the deceased person has explicitly, in writing, bequeathed their body for the purpose of practicing;
- 2) if it is a deceased person without a family, and using the body has not been explicitly opposed in writing;
- 3) with the consent of the family, if the deceased person did not explicitly, in writing, oppose it.

The decision to take over the body is made by the ethics committee of the faculty. The faculty cannot use the body of a deceased person who is without a family for practical training for more than six months from the date of taking over.

The faculty is obliged to bury the body of the deceased at its own expense after completing the process of practical teaching in anatomy.

Conflict of interest

Conflict of interest is a situation in which a healthcare professional or a health associate has a private interest that influences, may influence, or may affect the impartiality and objectivity of the said professional in their performance of healthcare activities.

A Healthcare worker and health associate who perform healthcare activities in a publicly owned health institution, a member of bodies or

¹¹ Law on Healthcare, Articles 210-216.

professional bodies in a publicly owned health institution, as well as members of their immediate families, must neither seek nor receive money, gifts, services or any other benefits to themselves, to the members of their family or to persons who may reasonably be regarded as having an interest. This interest may affect the impartiality or professional performance of their duties, or may be considered a reward in the exercise of their duties, and performing healthcare activities.

The Ethics Committee of the health institution, in addition to the competencies referred to in Article 131 of this Law, is also responsible for:

- 1) providing advice and guidance on the prevention of conflicts of interest and corruption;
- 2) identifying and reducing the risk of conflict of interest and corruption;
- 3) training and raising awareness of employees on the prevention of conflicts of interest and corruption;
- 4) giving opinions in cases of suspected conflict of interest and corruption;
- 5) taking measures necessary for the protection of persons who provided information on cases of conflict of interest and corruption.

THE ETHICS COMMITTEE AT THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE

The procedures of the Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Medicine are regulated by the Rulebook on the work of the ethics committee adopted by the Academic Council of the Faculty in 2017 and the Rulebook on the taking over and use of corpses for the purpose of carrying out practical classes at the Faculty of Medicine. These rulebooks are based on the Law on Higher Education, Basics for the Code of Academic Integrity in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Serbia,¹² the

¹² Basics for the Code of Academic Integrity in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Serbia (2016) National Council for Higher Education, available at <http://nsvo.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Osnove-za-kodeks-o-akademskom-integritetu.pdf> (accessed January 20, 2021).

Code of conduct in scientific research,¹³ rules and rulebooks of the University of Belgrade and the Law on Healthcare.

The Role of the Ethics Committee in higher education and science

The Rulebook on the work of the ethics committee regulates more closely the composition, jurisdiction, manner of operation and other issues of importance for the work of the Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Medicine from the University of Belgrade (hereinafter referred to as “the Ethics Committee”) within the competence established by this Rulebook, the Code of Professional Ethics of the University of Belgrade¹⁴, Rules of Procedure of Ethics Committee and the Professional Ethics Committees University of Belgrade¹⁵ and the Rulebook on the Procedure for Determining Non-academic Behaviour in the Publication at the University of Belgrade.¹⁶

The Committee President, the members and their deputies are appointed by the Academic Council and proposed by the Dean, in consultation with the Departments.

The Ethics Committee consists of 7 members, 5 of whom are teachers and associates at the Faculty of Medicine; one member is a medical student, and one is a non-teaching staff employed by the Faculty of Medicine. Each member has their deputy.

The competencies of the Ethics Committee include the following:

- 1) Leading the procedure for determining violations of the Code of Professional Ethics University of Belgrade in accordance with the

¹³ Code of conduct in scientific research (2018) National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, available at <http://www.arh.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/dokumenti/Pravilnici/Kodeks-naucnoistrazivacki-rad-2018.pdf> (accessed Jan. 20, 2021).

¹⁴ Code of Professional Ethics of the University of Belgrade (University of Belgrade Publication 193/16), available at www.arh.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/dokumenti/Pravilnici/Kodeks-profesionalne-etike_2016.pdf (accessed January 20, 2021).

¹⁵ Rules of Procedure of Ethics Committee and Professional Ethics Committees University of Belgrade, www.bg.ac.rs/files/sr/univerzitet/univ-propisi/Pravilnik-eticke-komisije-odbor.pdf (accessed January 20, 2021).

¹⁶ Rulebook on the Procedure for Determining Non-academic Behaviour in the Publication at University of Belgrade (University of Belgrade Publication 193/16, 196/16,197/17, 199/17, 203/18, 206/18), www.bg.ac.rs/files/sr/univerzitet/univ-propisi/Pravilnik-neakademsko-pisanih-radova.pdf (accessed January 20, 2021).

- Rules of Ethics Committees and of the Professional Ethics Committee of the University of Belgrade and the Rulebook on the process of determining non-academic behaviour in the publication at the University of Belgrade;
- 2) Considering all ethical issues related to scientific and research teaching work of teachers, associates and students of the Faculty of Medicine and giving the necessary approvals for the design of doctoral theses and other research papers;
 - 3) Conceptualizing the rules, scope and content of work-related ethics principles at the Faculty of Medicine;
 - 4) Analysing ethics in the practical work of teachers, associates and students at the Faculty of Medicine;
 - 5) Providing remarks on the qualification and competence of researchers and analysing the potential risks that may arise during work experimental phases;
 - 6) Taking care that respect for human beings is ensured in every scientific research, in particular the rights to human dignity;
 - 7) Especially monitoring research work regarding children, pregnant women, mentally ill persons, prisoners and other special communities;
 - 8) Promoting the principles of medical ethics both within teaching and educating health professionals, and in creating a habit for ethical behaviour in daily life and practice; and
 - 9) If necessary, hiring experts from specific fields, such as organ transplants, AIDS and other related ethical consideration.

The Code of Professional Ethics of the University of Belgrade is adopted for preserving the dignity of the profession, the promotion of moral values, the protection of the value of knowledge and the awareness of all the members of the University of Belgrade. The Code is applied in professional and public action by all members of the university community: teaching and scientific staff, students, non-teaching staff, as well as persons who are not members of the academic community but participate in their work.

The procedures prescribed by the Code are not a substitute for civil, criminal, administrative, disciplinary and other proceedings, which are governed by the laws and by-laws of the University and its members.

Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Medicine resolves numerous cases regarding the ethical aspect of the scientific work of students,

researchers and teaching staff. In these cases, it takes care about respecting basic principles in biomedical research such as: autonomy of the patient, its well-being, safety and justice.

The principle of autonomy is implemented in practice through a free and informed consent procedure that can be withdrawn at any time without negative consequences.¹⁷ Well-being and safety summarize the moral obligation of providing maximum potential well-being, and at the same time providing minimum potential harm. Justice is particularly relevant to selecting research participants, since the selection criteria for participants must relate to the purpose of the research.

Other cases resolved by the Ethics Committee include non-ethical behaviour of students, teachers and associates such as plagiarism, false authorship, fabrication and falsification of results and auto-plagiarism. Additionally, several cases were devoted to resolving conflicts between students and mentors, or co-authors of publications.

The Role of the Ethics Committee in health care topics

As previously stated, according to the Law on Healthcare, the Faculty of Medicine carries out healthcare activities through their organizational units as a healthcare institution. That is the reason why the Ethics Committee has another role, to resolve issues in healthcare activities of the Faculty, according to the Law on healthcare.

In this role, the Ethics Committee has to supervise and control compliance with physician duties in performing their professional activity conscientiously, in accordance with the rules of the medical profession and with due care, in accordance with the principles of medical ethics and the principles of humanity. The physician should always keep in mind the absolute obligation to protect human life and health, while respecting the basic principle of medical ethics “do no harm.”¹⁸

Additionally, it monitors and analyses the application of other principles of professional ethics in performing healthcare activities and

¹⁷ Guide for research ethics committee members (2014) Council of Europe, https://www.coe.int/t/dg3/healthbioethic/activities/02_biomedical_research_en/Guide/Guide_EN.pdf (accessed January 20, 2021).

¹⁸ Code of medical ethics of the Medical chamber of Serbia (2016) Official Gazette RS 104/16, Art. 4, www.lks.org.rs/Storage/Global/Documents/Akti/medicinska%20etika.pdf.

proposes measures for their improvement; approves the conduct of scientific research in the field of health, medical research, public health research, and monitors their implementation; approves the taking of human organs, cells and tissues from a living donor or a deceased person in accordance with the law; considers ethical issues and makes decisions regarding the use of parts of the human body for scientific-teaching purposes, in accordance with the law; monitors, analyses and gives opinions on the ethics of the relationship between health professionals, health care assistants and patients.

A particular role of the Ethics Committee, in this competence, is in using corpses for practical teaching. This role is regulated by the Rulebook on taking and using the bodies of the deceased for the purpose of carrying out practical classes at the Faculty of Medicine adopted at the Academic Council of the Faculty in 2018.

This Rulebook governs the manner and procedure of taking over and using the bodies of deceased and identified persons for the purpose of performing the practical classes in anatomy at the integrated academic studies of medicine, specialization studies, as well as in continuing education courses (hereinafter referred to as “practical training”) at the Faculty of Medicine in Belgrade.

The Faculty may take cadavers for practical training in the following cases:

- 1) if the deceased person expressly, in writing, bequeathed their body for the purpose of practical training;
- 2) if it is a deceased person without a family, who not explicitly and in writing opposed to having their body used;
- 3) with the consent of the family, if the deceased person has not explicitly, in writing form, opposed it.

The Faculty can directly take over the cadavers for practical training, only if there is a death certificate signed by the doctor of medicine competent to determine death and provided there are no legally prescribed reasons for the mandatory autopsy.

The Faculty will not take over the body of a person who has died of an infectious disease, as well as the body of a person who underwent pronounced post-mortem changes that prevented fixation (embalming).

The decision to take over the cadaver is taken by the Ethics Committee.

The body of a deceased person who is without a family cannot be used by the Faculty in a practical training for more than six months from the date of takeover.

If a family member of a deceased person who was not aware of the fact at the time of death, within six months from the date of taking over the body by the Faculty, submits a written request for the recovery of the body of a deceased person, the Faculty is obliged to return the body of the deceased to the members of families, in accordance with the law.

The Faculty is obliged to keep all relevant information as a professional secret for the persons whose organs or parts of the body have been taken over for practical training and other necessary documentation of the deceased person whose body was taken.

The information includes the name and surname of the deceased, date of birth, place and date of death, cause of death, the number from medical records, the number of the plaque with the body of the deceased person, with place and date of the burial.

The documentation additionally includes: death certificate, excerpt from death certificates, identity card, health ID and testamentary statement bodies.

The data and documentation are permanently stored and placed by the Faculty for inspection by the relevant departments of the Faculty, the Ministry responsible for affairs of education, the Ministry responsible for internal affairs, and other competent authority, in accordance with the law.

The Faculty is obliged to treat the body of the deceased with dignity and to use it solely for the purpose of practicing.

The use of mobile phones and any kind of photography and recording is prohibited in the classroom where practical instruction is provided.

Clothes and footwear of teachers and associates, employees, students in the cadaver room have to be appropriate. The dress code and the code of conduct of the participants in practical teaching must be prominently displayed and accessible to all participants.

The Faculty is required to bury the body of the deceased after the completion of the classes, at its own expense.

The act of burial is announced in the form of a press release and a paid advertisement in the fund's public information; the funeral ceremony involves keeping an honour guard by the Faculty and students.

The Faculty is obliged, within the limits of its possibilities, to respect special wishes regarding the burial, cremation, religious ceremony and other expressed wishes of the testator regarding the treatment of their body for the performance of practical classes.

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty oversees the entire procedure of taking and using a cadaver and realizing practical teaching.

Continuing education courses using cadavers are conducted after obtaining the approval of the Ethics Committee. Courses using cadavers can be undertaken and organized at the Faculty, if they are accredited through the competent chamber and the Health Council of the Republic of Serbia, under specific conditions where the Faculty is the principal course organizer.

CONCLUSION

The Ethics Committee at the Faculty of Medicine from the University of Belgrade has very different and complex roles because of the large number of teaching staff, associates and students on numerous study programs, the necessity for the approval of ethics committee in different topics and phases of studies and finally, the different roles of the Faculty in higher education and the healthcare system.

According to favorable laws, the aims of the Ethics Committee include the following:

- 1) Preserving the integrity of higher education at the Faculty
- 2) The process of detecting non-academic behaviour
- 3) Imposition of the measures for established non-academic behaviour
- 4) Monitoring research work
- 5) Resolving conflicts between teachers and students
- 6) Supervising compliance with physician duties to perform their professional activity conscientiously
- 7) Approving the conduct of scientific research in the field of health, medical research, public health research and
- 8) Monitoring the use of cadavers in practical classes.

The new challenge for the Ethics Committee should include the possibility for consultation and guidance on bioethical issues that inevitably arise in the course of patient care and research, such as the

possibility for ethics consultation at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital, New York.¹⁹ The ethic consultation in patient care topics could be requested by a healthcare professional including faculty staff, attending or consulting physicians, nurses, genetics counsellors, patient representatives from teaching hospitals, etc. When a difficult decision needs to be made about a case or a policy, the Ethics Committee could be available in order to help to:

- Clarify the ethical question at hand;
- Promote discussion of responsibilities and standards related to patient care;
- Encourage shared decision making among patients, families, and their healthcare team;
- Make recommendations to the individuals involved; and
- Provide moral support for a team in a difficult decision.

Research ethics consult service could help investigators to identify ethical issues in research proposals and to design their studies with the aim to meet the highest ethical standards, such as informed consent, research risks, inducements, vulnerable populations, conflict of interest, confidentiality, recruitment, assessment of decisional capacity and questions about surrogate consent.

In this role, the Ethics Committee could act in an educational form, while also preventing possible ethical offenses and responsibilities of health care professionals and investigators.

REFERENCES

- Basics for the Code of Academic Integrity in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Serbia* (2016). National Council for Higher Education. Available at <http://nsvo.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Osnove-za-kodeks-o-akademskom-integritetu.pdf>. Accessed January 20, 2021.
- Code of conduct in scientific research* (2018). National Council for Scientific and Technological Development. Available at www.arh.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Code-of-conduct-in-scientific-research.pdf.

¹⁹ Ethics Services – The Bioethics Program at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (ISMMS), <https://icahn.mssm.edu/education/students/ethics> (accessed Sept. 16, 2019).

- content/uploads/dokumenti/Pravilnici/Kodeks-naucnoistravivacki-rad-2018.pdf. Accessed Jan. 20, 2021.
- Code of Professional Ethics of the University of Belgrade*. University of Belgrade Publication 193/16. Available at www.arh.bg.ac.rs/wp-content/uploads/dokumenti/Pravilnici/Kodeks-profesionalne-etike_2016.pdf. Accessed January 20, 2021.
- Code of medical ethics of the Medical chamber of Serbia* (2016). Official Gazette RS 104/16, Art. 4. Available at www.lks.org.rs/Storage/Global/Documents/Akti/medicinska%20etika.pdf.
- Guide for research ethics committee members* (2014). Council of Europe. Available at www.coe.int/t/dg3/healthbioethic/activities/02_biomedical_research_en/Guide/Guide_EN.pdf. Accessed Jan. 20, 2021.
- Ethics Services – The Bioethics Program at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (ISMMS)*. Available at <https://icahn.mssm.edu/education/students/ethics>. Accessed Sept. 16, 2019.
- Law on Higher Education. Official Gazette RS 88/17, 27/18 - an. law, 73/18), Article 7. Available at: www.nat.rs/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Zakon-o-visokom-obrazovanju-2017-ENGL.pdf. Accessed January 20, 2021.
- Law on Copyright and Related Rights. Official Gazette RS 104/2009, 99/2011, 119/2012 and 29/2016. Available at www.zis.gov.rs/upload/THE%20LAW%20ON%20COPYRIGHT%20AND%20RELATED%20RIGHTS-version%20in%20force%204.1.2013_.pdf. Accessed January 20, 2021.
- Law on Healthcare. Official Gazette RS 25/19. Article 155. Available at http://www.skriningsrbija.rs/files/File/English/Republic_of_Serbia_Healthcare_Law.pdf. Accessed January 20, 2021.
- Rules of Procedure of Ethics Committee and Professional Ethics Committees University of Belgrade. Available at www.bg.ac.rs/files/sr/univerzitet/univ-propisi/Pravilnik-eticke-komisije-odbor.pdf. Accessed January 20, 2021.
- Rulebook on the Procedure for Determining Non-academic Behaviour in the Publication at University of Belgrade. University of Belgrade Publication 193/16, 196/16, 197/17, 199/17, 203/18, 206/18. Available at www.bg.ac.rs/files/sr/univerzitet/univ-propisi/Pravilnik-neakademsko-pisanih-radova.pdf. Accessed January 20, 2021.