

ETHICAL ISSUES IN ONCOLOGY.

MORAL CONFLICTS, HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS' DISTRESS, VULNERABILITY, AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Description and learning objectives

Along the cancer care trajectory, different treatment options may be offered to the patients. In most cases, patients are not alone in taking decisions, but are accompanied by at least one caregiver who provides practical, emotional, and psychosocial support. Patient-caregiver relationship is important in all care domains. However, since cancer has been defined as a “family disease” (cancer diagnosis and its effects affects not only the patient but also her family), such a relationship appears of utmost importance in this context. In some cases, patients and caregivers formulate shared decisions. In other cases, involving multiple actors in the decision-making process – patients, caregivers, and clinicians – may generate some degree of conflict (e.g., patient and the caregiver are not aligned on the decision to be made), which may have some negative implications on the care process, if not adequately addressed. Although several studies explore this phenomenon from a psychological perspective, less attention has been devoted to conflict explored as an *ethical concept*, e.g., conflicts related to ethically relevant issues, occurring between patients and their caregivers in cancer care path.

Drawing upon these premises, this workshop presents the following interrelated learning objectives:

- Since cancer has a peculiar profile, different from other chronic non-communicable diseases, identify and define what are the ethical issues originating from decision-making processes in cancer care;
- Shedding light on the concept of moral conflict in cancer care, in particular exploring (i) moral conflicts occurring among patients and their caregivers, and (ii) between the dyad patient-caregiver and caring clinicians;
- Discuss some implications of moral conflicts on cancer care (e.g., moral distress) and potential solutions as indicated by current literature on the topic (e.g., clinical ethics support services).

Chair and facilitators biographies

Chairs:

*Clizia Cincidda is a PhD candidate in Medical Humanities, a PhD programme at the European School of Molecular Medicine (SEMM) and the University of Milan. Her PhD project is focused on the caregivers' involvement in breast and prostate cancer patients' care process, with a special attention to the dyadic agreement or conflict about treatment decisions. She is also a clinical psychologist and a psychotherapist in training.

*Virginia Sanchini, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor in Bioethics at the Department of Oncology and Hemato-Oncology at the University of Milan. She is also Member of the Faculty in the Medical Humanities PhD programme at the European School of Molecular Medicine (SEMM) and Visiting Professor at the Centre for Biomedical Ethics and Law at KU Leuven, Belgium. From the 1st of September 2021, she is also Principal Investigator of the project “Emerging technologies and vulnerabilities in aged care” (ElderTech).

Facilitators:

* Chiara Crico, PhD in Medical Humanities, is a researcher in clinical ethics. She works with Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Tumori of Milan since 2021 to set up a clinical ethics support service for healthcare professionals and works since 2022 with the Bioethics Unit at Ausl – IRCCS of Reggio Emilia, where she is involved in research and training activities, teaching and ethical supervision with healthcare teams.

* Silvia Tanzi, Palliative Care Physician, PhD in Clinical and experimental medicine. Her field of expertise are serious illness conversations, training program in Palliative care, new models of integration between palliative care and other services, Spirituality and Ethics. She funded one for the first Palliative Care Unit in a Hospital, she works in a research institute and comprehensive cancer center assisting people with life treating illness, implementing and evaluating training programs in palliative care. She is a member of Italian Society of Palliative Care, and leader of a Work package for an Horizon Program 2020.