



Center For Practical  
**BIOETHICS**

## The Bioethics Bulletin

**June 23, 2026**

Make sure you receive this newsletter by adding [info@practicalbioethics.org](mailto:info@practicalbioethics.org) to your Safe Sender, White List or Address Book.

### Update for Our Supporters

Dear CPB Friend:

We have great content to share this month, including the continuation of our *Screening Bioethics* webinar series – save the date!

Inmaculada de Melo-Martin situates trustworthiness at the core of her research. I continue to think deeply about how the Center maintains trustworthiness in a time when AI products challenge whether we can even trust what we see and hear. Trudi Galblum offers insightful comments about barriers to trust in healthcare.

As always, Ryan and Cassie are ready to tackle thorny issues, emphasizing that the challenge of elevating empathy, careful understanding, and remaining engaged through the hard parts of care is central.

This month's topics remind us that we need more humanities in many aspects of modern life, but especially in the most complex healthcare issues.

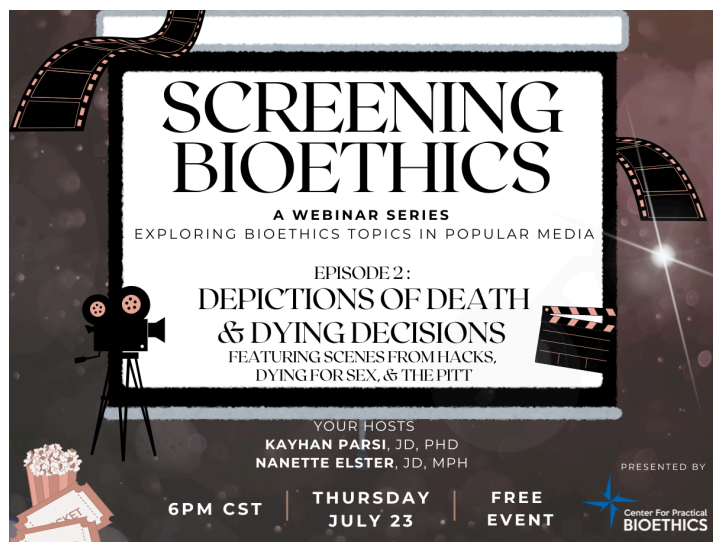
With gratitude,

[James Stowe, PhD](#)  
CPB President and CEO

**Screening Bioethics – EPISODE 2**  
[Depictions of Death & Dying Decisions](#)

Autonomous decision making at the end of life is recognized as an important goal in bioethics. How do characters in popular culture reflect this when confronted with their own death?

Join the Center on **July 23, 6:00-7:00 PM CT**, for this second episode of *Screening Bioethics*, a webinar exploring bioethics topics in popular media hosted by [Kayhan Parsi, JD, PhD](#), and [Nanette Elster, JD, MPH](#).



In this episode Kayhan and Nanette will examine and discuss ethical issues at the end of life in three recent shows on television.

**Register for free** at [www.practicalbioethics.org/ScreeningBioethicsE2](http://www.practicalbioethics.org/ScreeningBioethicsE2). You will receive the Zoom webinar link on **July 1**. No Zoom account is required to attend, and all registrants will receive a recording of the webinar after the event.

REGISTER NOW

## Ethics Consultation

### A Strategy for Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Healthcare

Trust – or lack thereof – is a big problem in healthcare.

But asking how do we get people to trust is the wrong question, according to [Inmaculada de Melo-Martin, PhD, MS](#), a Professor of Medical Ethics at Weill Cornell Medicine who serves on the Center's Board of Directors. The right question, she says, is **how do our institutions become worthy of trust**. To become worthy of trust, De Melo makes the case for taking values seriously in the context of public health.

For our blog, [Trudi Galblum](#), Marketing and Communications Director at the Center, makes the case for taking values seriously in the context of clinical interactions and proposes a way to do that through ethics consultation.



*Ryan Pferdehirt, D.Bioethics, HEC-C, leading a hospital ethics committee meeting.*

READ BLOG

Clinical Ethics Resources

## The Ethics Dispatch

The *Ethics Dispatch* newsletter is a benefit we provide partner organizations and make available to all in the Bulletin. For information about how your organization can receive all benefits of partnership, including Ethics Committee Consortium membership, please contact Cassandra Shaffer Johnson at [cshafferjohnson@PracticalBioethics.org](mailto:cshafferjohnson@PracticalBioethics.org).

## The Most Important Ethical Challenge of Our Time Remaining in Conversation

Our culture increasingly expects immediate certainty, which presents problems when it comes to healthcare, says [Cassandra Shaffer Johnson](#), Director of Ethics Services at the Center. Complex issues – like transgender healthcare – that are best approached with humility, patience, and thoughtful analysis are often reduced to competing slogans. Conversations that might otherwise foster understanding become exercises in persuasion, bullying and vitriol. As modeled by effective ethics committees, the remedy for this, starts by remaining in conversation.

### New Ethics Dispatch Ethics Committee Meeting in a Box

Monthly hot topic  
New clinical ethics case study  
Today's bioethics news stories  
Ethical musing essay



[READ THE DISPATCH](#)

In his related Ethical Musings, [Ryan Pferdehirt](#), VP for Ethics Services and Rosemary Flanigan Chair, analyzes the connection between the principle of autonomy, the value of empathy, and the relationship of both to human dignity.

The autonomy of a patient whose son seeks to overrule his father's prior wishes is the subject of this month's case study.

## Core Competencies for Healthcare Ethics Consultants

### A Resource for Ethics Committees

The Center often collaborates with the American Society of Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH), an educational organization for professionals in clinical and academic bioethics and the health-related humanities.

In an ASBH article, Ryan Pferdehirt describes how and why he uses the third edition (September 2025) of ASBH's book, *Core Competencies for Healthcare Ethics*



*Consultants*, as a primary tool to build confident, skill-driven ethics committees.

[READ ARTICLE](#)

“A lot of people who are doing ethics work don’t think of themselves as ethicists,” he said. “By outlining core knowledge, process skills, and interpersonal skills, the book helps demystify ethics work.”

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## Biosafety v. Animal Rights

### CPB Weighs In from Ethics Perspective

The Center was asked by the [Mountain Journal](#) to weigh in from an ethical perspective on a controversy involving Rocky Mountain Laboratories (RML) in Hamilton, MT. The controversy pits animal rights groups against RML, a Biosafety Level 4 facility that handles dangerous pathogens and is part of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Tensions were heightened earlier this month when the U.S. Department of Justice charged two RML researchers with smuggling monkeypox virus samples into the U.S. and lying to investigators.



[READ ARTICLE](#)

Asked to comment, Ryan Pferdehirt said that while the rights of animals are an ongoing and serious debate, their unresolved status makes it unlikely that they will outweigh more established principles.

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## COMING SOON

### Ask a Bioethicist

What happens when four bioethicists are presented with the exact same ethical dilemma?

You may be surprised by the answers.

This new series from the Center for Practical Bioethics, *Ask a Bioethicist*, explores the complexity of real-world ethical decision-making by presenting one open-ended case study to multiple bioethicists and inviting them to respond independently.



The result is not a search for a single “correct” answer, but a thoughtful look at how experienced ethicists navigate uncertainty, autonomy, religion, family dynamics, decisional capacity, and competing moral obligations in practice.

Our inaugural case asks:

*If a critically injured patient refuses a potentially life-saving blood transfusion on religious grounds — but her family insists she did not truly mean it — whose wishes should guide care?*

Stay tuned for the first installment of *Ask a Bioethicist* coming soon!

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## Who's Who at CPB

James Stowe, PhD

### What I'm...

**Listening to:** Audiobooks, nearly all the time. Thanks, Johnson County and Kansas City Missouri Public libraries!

**Want to visit:** I've had a long-standing desire to travel the Dalton Highway in Alaska and experience the Arctic Ocean from American soil.

**Reading:** The current book on my reading list spreadsheet (don't ask) is *The Master and Margarita* (Burgin and O'Connor translation) by Bulgakov.

**Watching:** I don't have much time for watching things at the moment, but if I do, it will be some automotive-centric YouTube channel.

**Getting exercise:** Right now, it's mainly work around the house, but I'm ready to set some of that aside and get into routine.

**Wishing for:** Continued personal and professional growth, restoration of relationships, and a far less bizarre world and geopolitical situation.

**Looking forward to:** Over the past few years, I've gone pretty far down the wrenching rabbit hole. I've learned to do engine swaps and moderate rebuilds in my garage. There is a Stinger on rollers taking garage space right now, so I'm looking forward to getting that one done and on the road. I find it cathartic and so different from my work!

**Listening to:** Depends on the day/mood – music is my medicine! There isn't much I won't listen to.



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**Save the Dates - [click on the event logo to read more](#)**

## Screening Bioethics, Episode 2

*Depictions of Death & Dying Decisions*

*Free webinar series exploring bioethics topics in the popular media*

July 23, 2026  
6:00-7:00 PM



## Breakfast of Champions

*Gathering to raise funds for ethics consultations that support patients, families, and care teams*

September 17, 2026  
7:30 - 9:00 AM  
Sporting KC, 1 Sporting Way, KC, KS



## Rosemary Flanigan Lecture

*32nd Annual Free Public Reception and Lecture*

*Healthcare in an Era of Mass Deportation: Values, Ethics, and Narratives*

October 2026 | Time & Location TBD

Guest Lecturer: Mark G. Kuczewski, PhD, HEC-C, Director, Neiswanger Institute for Bioethics and Health Policy, Loyola University Chicago



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