

WORKBOOK

Introduction to ethics and ethical practice in speech and language therapy



This workbook accompanies the online introductory seminar for speech and language therapists and other professionals working with people with communication and swallowing difficulties in Cambodia, Ghana and Vietnam.

2019

The online seminar is available via:
<https://trinhfoundation.org/our-resources/ethics-speech-therapy/>

The seminar, workbook and accompanying resources were developed in partnership by:



The Speech and Hearing Project



Trinh Foundation Australia



**Department of Audiology, Speech and Language Therapy,
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Introduction to the workbook

This workbook is designed to accompany the online seminar.

The workbook contains activities that you will complete while watching the online seminar.

There are sections for you to record your response. You may either fill this workbook in online and save it. You may prefer to print the workbook and fill in the paper copy.

Thinking about some of the difficult situations you face in health and disability services is not always easy. This workbook is designed to help you:

- reflect on what ethical practice means to you.
- to consider some of the types of ethical challenges that you may be exposed to when working with people with speech, language or swallowing disabilities.

Instructions

Choose which version of the workbook you will use.

- Print: Print the workbook and fill in your responses to each activity.
- Online: Download the file and save it to your computer. Fill in your responses to each activity.

Please keep this workbook for your own future reference. Please also encourage your colleagues to complete the online seminar.

What are ethics?

Ethics are a system of principles and ideas that help us understand what is good, fair or right for both individuals and society. The ways in which we think about ethics are influenced by our values and principles. These may differ according to our own society, culture and upbringing. Using ethical thinking can help us understand more about difficult situations, to guide decisions about what we believe to be the 'right' or 'best' approach. There are many approaches to thinking about ethics. In this online seminar we concentrate on the basic and well recognised principles of biomedical ethics

Background

Ethical principles should guide decision making and shape everyday practices in healthcare and disability services, including speech and language therapy. In countries where the speech therapy profession is in the early stages of development, there may be few formal

resources to support ethics education. Professional associations, or guiding documents such as a Code of Ethics, may not yet be developed.

The online seminar and accompanying workbook are the result of an international project that aimed to develop basic ethics education resources relevant to speech and language therapists and other professionals working with people with communication and swallowing difficulties in Cambodia, Ghana and Vietnam.

The project was a collaboration between three organisations: The Speech and Hearing Project, The University of Ghana, and Trinh Foundation Australia (TFA). The project received funding from Speech Pathology Australia through a Majority World Countries and Developing Communities Grant. Volunteers from Australia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Ghana donated their time and expertise in developing this, and other project resources.

We hope you find this presentation and workbook useful. There will be some follow-up ethics education resources to support you to continue learning about ethics in speech and language therapy. Information about these will be available on the website.

Learning objectives

After completing the workshop and activities in this workbook, you should be able to:

- Appreciate that our differing values, attitudes and culture shape our ethical belief.
- Understand how ethics shapes our behaviour and decision-making in clinical practice.
- Understand the key ethical principles that support high quality practice when working with people with communication and swallowing difficulties.
- Consider which activities in clinical practice are influenced by ethical decision-making.

The activities in this workbook

The activities in this workbook are designed to encourage you to reflect about ethical practice, and how ethical practice may look in your context. The scenarios in particular are designed to encourage deep thinking about complex situations, where there is often no clear single 'right' response. You may find that you have different viewpoints to the presenter or to your peers. The most important learning is for you to be able to think carefully about the principles of biomedical ethics, and apply them to complex situations

and justify your decisions or priorities. It is particularly important that you are able to consider the perspectives of multiple people in each situation.

There is no single 'right answer' to many of these questions or issues, as they are part of your own journey to understand ethical practice. We therefore have not provided an 'answer' key to the activities. Understanding ethical practice is an individual process and journey, not an endpoint.

We would encourage anyone watching the seminar in groups to discuss the activities together. If you are watching the seminar alone, take time to reflect on your responses carefully. Perhaps you could discuss ethical issues with others in your workplace.

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Online Seminar

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Activity 1

This activity asks you to consider if we need to think about ethics as we perform our everyday activities.

CONSIDER THIS QUESTION.

IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES OR EVENTS MIGHT WE NEED TO CONSIDER ETHICS? PLACE A TICK NEXT TO ALL THAT YOU THINK APPLY.

We will look back at your responses to this activity at the end of the seminar.

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Accepting money and gifts from clients
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Writing progress notes or in the medical notes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Deciding who gets treatment first
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Having conversations with your colleagues while eating lunch
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Being on time for work
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Covering up a mistake you have made
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Making decisions about the type of care you will provide to clients
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Using evidence-based practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Reporting a colleague who behaves inappropriately
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Continuing to update your skills and knowledge

Activity 2

Values are our fundamental beliefs about what is important to each of us. They may include things such as honesty, fairness, money, success, faith, and family...

Our values shape our attitudes and responses to situations.

Many things, including our culture, our beliefs, the people around us, and the environment, shape our personal values. This activity encourages you to think explicitly about what has shaped your own ethical values. Be prepared! It is not always easy to do this.

Answer the following questions about your attitudes and values. Again, remember that your answer is personal to you. There is no right or wrong answer. You will never need to show this workbook to anyone.

THINK ABOUT YOURSELF AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What (or who) has influenced your personal ethical attitudes and values?

2. What (or who) has influenced your professional ethical attitudes and values?

3. What are the values that are important to you personally? (in other words, what is it that you think is important in life)

Activity 3:

Another important part of understanding ethical behaviour is thinking about respect: Who we respect, why we respect particular people, and how we show respect. Again this will vary between people. This activity will help you clearly identify your own ideas about respect.

WRITE A BRIEF RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What does respect mean to you?

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2. Who is it important to respect?

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3. How do you show respect ...

At home	
In the community	
In the workplace	

Scenarios and ethical principles

In the following activities we focus on the ethical principles one by one. In each area, there are two hypothetical examples to consider. While these examples might be different to your own clinical experience, it is useful to consider the complex issues in these situations. Think about how the ethical principal applies to this situation. If you are working in a group, please also discuss situations in your own work where the ethical principles may help you think about difficult situations.

Beneficence and non-maleficence

Beneficence and non-maleficence: Example 1

Imagine you are working with a family whose child has cerebral palsy. The child has clear clinical indicators of aspiration, including repeated hospital admissions for aspiration pneumonia. The healthcare team has considered both oral and non-oral feeding options. The family have poor health care literacy, live far from specialised healthcare services, are have very limited financial resources.

1. Which approach to intervention will give the most benefit? Which approach to intervention is likely to do the least harm?

Think about the possible sources of benefit and harm within this situation. Making decisions, like this one, is complex. Sometimes there is no clear answer. People may have different perspectives and priorities.

Beneficence and non-maleficence: Example 2

A speech and language therapist starts a new job with a disability organisation in a rural community. The organisation supports children with a broad range of disabilities. You notice that many of the children do not have a 'label' or clear diagnoses. You refer a number of clients back the paediatrician in the city, telling the families that their child may have cerebral palsy. Obtaining a diagnosis is costly and time consuming for families (medical appointments, diagnostic testing etc.).

1. What might be some potential benefits and harms in diagnostic labelling in this situation?

2. When might it be important? When might it be harmful?

Justice

Justice: Example 1

Imagine you are working with a child who has a severe speech disorder. While the speech intelligibility of the child is extremely limited, the child has strong skills in understanding of spoken language. The child starts school, but is asked to leave the school until they learn to talk.

1. As a speech and language therapist who values the ethical principle of justice, what is your role in supporting this child and their family?

2. Is there a role for the developing profession of speech therapy to advocate for justice and equity for people with communication difficulties? What might this advocacy involve?

JUSTICE: EXAMPLE 2

A man with chronic aphasia is referred by his doctor. He is from an affluent and politically well-connected family. The family have requested that you see him for therapy every day.

The hospital director agrees that you should see the client every day.

You are aware that intensive therapy is unlikely to have significant benefits to the client. As there are few speech therapy services, it also means that a number of other families will have to wait for services.

1. Is it ethical to provide intensive services to this gentleman? Why / why not?

2. How could you respond to this situation ethically?

Truth

Truth: Example 1

You are working with a woman who has dementia. She has been admitted for the fourth time with pneumonia. The daughter of the woman is angry that her mother is not receiving intensive treatment for swallowing problems. You meet with the daughter to discuss the role of the speech and language therapist. When you enter the room, you realise her mother is unlikely to survive.

1. What do you do? What do you say?

2. How might you provide information that is truthful and will support the daughter?

Truth: Example 2

You work in a clinic with one other speech therapist. One of the clients who is seen by your colleague sends you a letter claiming that your colleague does not seem to have the skills they need to treat his condition. You feel uncomfortable about raising this with your colleague or sending the letter on to the clinic management.

1. What is your ethical obligation in this scenario?

2. How can you approach telling the truth in a way that does not harm your colleague or the client?

Autonomy

Autonomy: Example 1

You are working with a child who has a severe hearing impairment. There is a school for hearing impaired children in the city, 200 kms away. The child has no family or extended family in the city. The child's school says they have organised a place at the school in the city for the child. The school ask you to tell the family they must send the child for the next term. The school say the child wants to go. The family wants the child to stay at the local school.

1. Who do you think has the right to make this decision?

2. How do you respond to the school and to the family?

Autonomy: Example 2

You work in a hospital. You know that the evidence says that early intervention for children with language disorders is essential.

There is a paediatrician in town who wants to refer children as outpatients. The hospital director says that you may only treat inpatients, or children who have previously been admitted to the hospital. You may not treat children referred from the community. You are the only speech therapy service in the town.

1. Who should make decisions about the kinds of cases you will see?

2. How do you try to address this situation, given what you know about the evidence?

ACTIVITY 4: One final activity

As a final activity, you will repeat the activity that you did at the beginning of this seminar. Repeat this activity, now considering if you may need to think about ethics and ethical principles (beneficence, autonomy, truth, justice and professionalism) in many of the situations we encounter in our everyday activities. Compare your answers to those you marked off at the beginning of this seminar.

NOW THAT YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT ETHICS, TAKE A MINUTE TO CONSIDER THIS QUESTION.

IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES OR EVENTS MIGHT WE NEED TO CONSIDER ETHICS? PLACE A TICK NEXT TO ALL THAT APPLY.

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Accepting money and gifts from clients
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Writing client notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Deciding who gets treatment first
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Having conversations with your colleagues while eating lunch
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Being on time for work
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Covering up a mistake you have made
<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Making decisions about the type of care you will provide to clients
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Using evidence-based practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Reporting a colleague who behaves inappropriately
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Continuing to update your skills and knowledge

Please see the next page for feedback on this activity.

ALL OF THESE EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES POTENTIALLY INVOLVE ETHICAL THINKING. WE HAVE INCLUDED NOTES BOUT THE ACTIVITIES TO SHOW HOW ETHICS IS INVOLVED IN THESE TASKS.

- ✓ Accepting money and gifts from clients

Justice: When you accept money or gifts, does this influence the amount or type of services you provide to clients? You need to be careful not to give preferential services, or be perceived to give preferential service. If some people receive more services, or 'better' services, based on your relationship with them, then that impacts equity and justice.

- ✓ Writing client notes

Professionalism: Client notes need to be objective and clearly represent the background, what happened in the session, and future treatment plans. Writing high quality client notes is an important part of professionalism. Quality in client notes ensures continuity of care, even if another therapist needed to work with the client.

- ✓ Deciding who gets treatment first

Justice: Having a clear policy about prioritisation for services is an important part of proving that services are fair. This is especially important when services are limited. Clients should be able to understand the policy.

- ✓ Having conversations with your colleagues while eating lunch.

Professionalism: Having conversations with colleagues in the lunchroom is an important interaction. Conversations about clients, services and other colleagues require you to think carefully about how what you say, may impact perceptions about client and colleagues. Even though you are in the lunchroom, you need to maintain your professionalism and high standards of respect.

- ✓ Being on time for work

Professionalism: Being late for work can have a number of impacts. It may impact how others perceive you and the values you bring to your work. Other colleagues may need to step in to fill in for you when you are late. If you are going to be late, or have issues impacting your work, communicating this clearly with your colleagues, is an important process so they can be prepared and understand why.

Beneficence / Non-maleficence: It is also important to think about the impact on clients. Clients often take time away from their work and other responsibilities to attend appointments. If you run late, this may impact their ability to return to work, or undertake other needed tasks. This may have social and financial implications for clients. Keeping people waiting for long times in waiting areas can have impacts on their health and wellbeing. For example, young children or people with disabilities may become distressed, fatigued or agitated if they are required to wait for long periods.

✓ Covering up a mistake you have made

Truth: Covering up a mistake is an example of not telling the truth. Understanding what mistakes occur (and thinking about why they happened) helps to improve our services. For example, if you made a mistake that was due to your lack of knowledge, then an appropriate response would be to find ways to build knowledge in that area, or refer the client to someone with the specialised skills required. Using the mistake to help shape your learning is a useful approach.

If the mistake was made as the systems for organising your workplace are not well developed, then this can give ideas to help us improve the system. Telling the truth – both to others (where appropriate) and reflecting on the truth yourself is important to ethical practice and professionalism.

✓ Making decisions about the type of care you will provide to clients

Beneficence: Decisions about the how you offer services (such as when, how, and what type of approach you will use) influences the potential gains a client might make. Ethical care requires therapists to decide on the best plan of intervention, relevant to client needs.

Autonomy: It is also important to remember that while you will think about the best way to provide services, the client may choose not to comply with your treatment plan. Your role is to explain to the client why you want to intervene in particular ways. Clients have the right to make their own choices about treatment. It is our job to make sure these choices are well-informed.

✓ Using evidence-based practice

Beneficence: It is our professional and ethical responsibility to use the available evidence to help us make decisions treatment. Using the evidence appropriately helps us decide which

treatment can provide the most benefit. Providing interventions that are unlikely to benefit the client is unethical.

✓ Reporting a colleague who continually behaves inappropriately

Truth: As a professional, it is our responsibility to tell the truth. Ethical professionals are concerned about ensuring that:

- clients receive the best possible care,
- care is respectful,
- services are well organised and
- the resources of the organisation are used in the way they are intended to.

This may mean looking beyond the ways that we provide care, to ensure that our colleagues are also behaving in ways that are ethical.

✓ Continuing to update your skills and knowledge

Beneficence and professionalism: Providing the highest quality care that we are able to is an important part of being an ethical professional. Being up-to-date and knowledgeable helps us to provide the best possible care, in order to benefit clients.

Codes of ethics

Some examples of codes of ethics from speech and language therapy organisations in other countries can be found at:

Australia: Speech Pathology Australia

https://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/SPAweb/Members/Ethics/HTML/Code_of_Ethics.aspx

Canada: Speech-Language and Audiology Canada

<https://www.sac-oac.ca/professional-resources/resource-library/code-ethics>

Ireland: Irish Association of Speech & Language Therapists

<https://www.iaslt.ie/documents/public-information/IASLT/Code%20of%20Professional%20Conduct%20and%20Ethics%202015%20FINAL.pdf>

South Africa: South African Speech, Language, Hearing Association

<https://www.saslha.co.za/Guidelines/Ethics>

United States: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

<https://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/ET2016-00342.pdf>

WE HOPE THAT THIS SEMINAR HAS HELPED YOU TO SEE THAT WE USE ETHICAL THINKING TO ENGAGE IN A WAY
VARIETY OF EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES AT WORK.

