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Ethics education for psychiatry residents: Development of a discussion-based pilot curriculum

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Background: Ethical challenges regularly arise within the field of psychiatry. While there is broad agreement regarding the importance of ethics education for psychiatry trainees, there is limited literature regarding how to structure this education. **Methods:** The authors developed and implemented a novel discussion-based ethics curriculum for adult psychiatry residents at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Residents participated in four peer-led ethics sessions with short knowledge-based presentations followed by small group discussion and return for large-group debriefing. Topics included pharmacological cognitive enhancement (session 1), decision-making capacity (session 2), and involuntary commitment (sessions 3 and 4). Attitude and confidence surveys were completed before and after each session. **Results:** Residents reported that ethics sessions were highly valuable and worth their time across all study time points. Confidence articulating and sharing personal beliefs on the ethically dense topics discussed increased following each session, with effect sizes of 1.12 for pharmacological cognitive enhancement, 0.46 for decision-making capacity, and 0.58 for involuntary commitment. Sessions were highly attended with strong trainee participation. **Conclusions:** A peer-led discussion-based ethics curriculum shows promise for improving resident confidence in selected ethical topics in psychiatry. Further research is required to determine the impact of this curriculum on resident knowledge and attitudes over time.

