

## ENHA Case Study Series: Responding to Needs Beyond One's Experience or Training

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**Setting:** A small rural hospital in East Africa

**Scenario:** An expatriate laboratory technologist has recently begun a two-year mission in a small rural hospital in East Africa. Her responsibilities include managing the hospital's medical laboratory and training local staff about technical laboratory skills and protocol. However, it quickly becomes apparent that the national physicians working at the hospital expect the laboratory technologist to provide services beyond her training or prior experience. In one situation, she was asked to prepare a complicated blood transfusion for an infant with severe malaria and a rare blood type, despite having never done the procedure before.

One day, the hospital's chief physician asks the laboratory technologist to examine a peripheral blood smear from a patient with suspected leukemia. The physician insists that she make a diagnosis and recommend the appropriate course of chemotherapy. Although the laboratory technologist has some training in hematological oncology, she does not feel comfortable making the diagnosis alone. In her home country, she typically performs this type of lab work in consultation with an oncologist who has the necessary clinical expertise. However, there are no other qualified personnel at the remote hospital who could assist in the interpretation of the blood smear. The laboratory technologist is unsure how she ought to respond.

### Humanitarian Health Ethics Analysis Tool

- 1. Identify/clarify ethical issue:**  
What is at stake and for whom?
- 2. Gather information:**  
What do we need to know to assess the issue?
- 3. Review ethical issue:**  
Does information gathered lead us to reformulate the issue?
- 4. Explore ethics resources:**  
What can help us make a decision?
- 5. Evaluate and select the best option:**  
What options are possible and which is the "best" under the circumstances?
- 6. Follow up:**  
What can we learn from this situation and what supports are needed?

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**Analysis:** **The Humanitarian Healthcare Ethics Analysis Tool (HHEAT)** is intended to facilitate discussion and deliberation for those involved in ethically challenging situations and will assist humanitarian healthcare workers in implementing well-considered decisions. Read the six steps listed above then proceed through the questions found on Page 2. They are designed to help you or your team structure reflection and deliberation on the ethical dilemma presented in the case study. You may skip questions that appear less relevant to the issue or explore dimensions pertinent to the context but not listed in the tool.

## ENHA Case Study Series: Responding to Needs Beyond One's Experience or Training (continued)

Humanitarian Health Ethics Analysis Tool	
1.	Is it really an ethical issue? What is at stake and for whom? How is the issue perceived from different perspectives? When must a decision be made? Who is responsible for making it? What has been done so far?
2.	What information is needed to deliberate well about this issue and enable us to make a well-considered decision? What constraints to information gathering exist? Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Resource Allocation and Clinical Features,</li> <li>b) Participation, Perspectives and Power</li> <li>c) Community, Projects and Policies</li> </ul>
3.	Does the process so far reveal new aspects of the ethical issue or suggest the need to reformulate or redefine the issue? Have our biases/interests affected how we see the issue?
4.	What values and norms ought to inform our decision-making? Consider: professional moral norms and guidelines for healthcare practice; human rights and international law; ethical theory; local norms, values and customs.
5.	What options are possible in this situation and what ethical values support each option? What consequences might result from each option? Can consequences, values and obligations be reconciled?
6.	What can we learn from this situation? What support do those involved need?
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**Disclaimer:** Case studies in the ENHA (Ethics Narratives in Humanitarian Aid) series are based on the reflections of humanitarian healthcare workers on ethical challenges experienced in the field. While the stories presented in the cases draw on real events and the accounts of real persons, many stories are composites in which similar experiences are woven together. In all of the stories, details such as names, dates, locations, career and life stage, gender, and profession have been changed, obscured, or omitted. Any resemblance the stories may bear to actual persons, places, and events is co-incidental.

While the stories often aim to show what the protagonist is thinking or feeling, the Humanitarian Healthcare Ethics Research Group's intent as the stories' author is not to suggest that the values and assumptions held by a story's protagonist are those of all or many humanitarian healthcare workers. Similarly, the values, opinions and actions of a protagonist or other actors in a story should not be understood to reflect those of, or be endorsed by, the Humanitarian Healthcare Ethics Research Group.