

# **Ethical Issues for Nurses and Midwives: Conclusion**

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This morning we had Dr Sandra Buttigieg, Prof J Rizzo Naudi, Prof Maurice Cauchi and Dr Ray Busuttill, the Director General Health address this large gathering of nurses and midwives!

They all noticed your keen interest to be here on a rainy Saturday in November to learn more about ethical and legal issues in health care.

This seminar provided a much-needed opportunity for reflection and dialogue about ethical dilemmas which you face in your daily practice. We also listened to some excellent presentations about a Maltese perspective, a legal perspective, the patient's perspective and about the challenges for the future. We participated in the workshops. But now you may ask, what next? We will have achieved the first step if we go away from here feeling that we need to do something to improve our practice in this regard. We will change things if we want to change things. As Donia Baldachinno mentioned, "we must bridge the identified gaps".

Maybe a formal committee as an offshoot of the Bioethics Committee should be set up to develop guidelines on mechanisms to help nurses and midwives to review their rights and responsibilities in their practice. Although the study of ethics is an integral component of the nursing curriculum on our courses at IHC, what about continuing education in the workplace? As Dr Busuttill said "the cultivation of these principles is not automatic and not always easy." The code of ethics may state that nurses are responsible for furthering their education and development, but what about the need for an institutional culture with supportive conditions, where nurse leaders together with other health caring professionals, (it is important to have interdisciplinary working)

could engage in regular meetings to discuss case studies to further knowledge and confidence in this area?

The busy work schedules must not be used as an excuse to put off doing something concrete. But if we really want to do something about it, then we will need to talk more, to lobby, to assess, to plan, implement and evaluate matters in our immediate field of work.

We must carry out research, set up networking and encourage discussion in order to be able to move forward. If we can build up an enabling practice environment, then we will be able to create the opportunities, the confidence, the authority and the accountability to identify and to try to solve these practice-related problems.