



ASSOCIATION CATHOLIQUES  
CANADIENNE DE LA SANTÉ

CATHOLIC HEALTH  
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## MAKING TOUGH CHOICES ABOUT RESOURCE ALLOCATION IN HEALTH CARE

Ottawa — Are the limits currently being imposed to the supply of health services **reasonable, affordable, ethical**, and able to **meet the needs** of Canadians?

A decision-making tool based on eight ethical criteria is now available to help administrators, members of boards and ethics committees, public policy makers, providers and users of health care services, to address and understand ethical issues related to resource allocation.

*Resource Allocation in the Healthcare Sector — An Aid for Ethical Decision-Making*, a practical, 31-page workbook, describes the factors influencing the movement to limit resources directed to health care. In doing so, it explains that the traditional way of relieving these tensions — increased funding — is no longer an option. “New ways of addressing the pressures on our health care system have to be found.”

But, in trying to resolve these tensions by limiting services, we run the risk of harming people. “This suggests a need for a set of ethical criteria by which the proposed rationing can be evaluated.”

The criteria presented — which are inspired from Catholic social values such as the common good, human dignity, preferential option for the poor, responsible use of natural and social resources — serve as the basis for the decision-making tool included in the booklet.

“When faced with an ethical dilemma, identifying the structure of values involved in the problem is the first step that will help decision-makers to articulate clearly which values to prioritize in finding a solution.”

The criteria and decision-making model are excellent tools to appraise specific government proposals to ration health care services. They are also applicable at the regional and municipal levels, and can be applied to allocation decisions involving individual patients/clients and health care providers.