

# Doctoral student develops ethical guidelines for GPs

November 4 2011

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Malcolm Oswald, a doctoral student in Bioethics and Medical Jurisprudence in the School of Law, is a co-author of the new guide, entitled, *Making Difficult Choices - Ethical Commissioning Guidance to General Practitioners*. The document is aimed at all GPs but particularly those who will have a role as commissioners in clinical commissioning groups in England.

Malcolm, whose PhD research in the Centre for Social Ethics and Policy focuses on ethical [resource allocation](#), said: “The aim of the guidance is to help GPs allocate resources to health care fairly, and show how they might make difficult choices when there is not enough money to purchase all the health care they would want.”

The guidance focuses on:

- Allocating resources fairly
- GPs as commissioners, and
- Potential conflicts of interest

Dr. Dennis Cox, who co-authored the report with Malcolm on behalf of the RCGP Ethics Committee, said: “When GPs become commissioners, some additional ethical dilemmas arise, such as: how ought we to carry out our role as doctors when we, or our colleagues, are accountable for commissioning decisions? How ought we to ensure that our decisions are

not affected by – or seen to be affected by – self-interest?

“Some of these difficult questions have no ‘right’ answers; the purpose of this guidance is to provide advice to help GPs make these difficult decisions.”

The guidance is part of the College’s ongoing commitment to assist GPs in navigating potential conflicts of interest while engaged in Commissioning.

RCGP Chair Dr. Clare Gerada added: “Good commissioning is about being a good GP, but that does not mean the GPs will not be confronted with ethical dilemmas, potential conflicts of interest of difficult choices in their day to day practice.

“While the College has made clear its concerns regarding these issues, we fully welcome this guidance, which will help [GPs](#) navigate the often choppy waters.”

**More information:** [www.rcgp.org.uk/news/press\\_rel...ethics\\_guidance.aspx](http://www.rcgp.org.uk/news/press_rel...ethics_guidance.aspx)

Provided by University of Manchester

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