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## **Abstract**

### **Major Paper / incl. Video Presentation**

**Topic:**

**Consulting "Dr. House"**

**How to enlist "Dr. House" for an ethics consultation  
(If you manage that, you can manage just about anything!)**

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**Topic:**

**Consulting "Dr. House"**

**How to enlist "Dr. House" for an ethics consultation  
(If you manage that, you can manage just about anything!)**

Imagine you had just started a new job as an ethics consultant at *Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital* in New Jersey. Part of your job description is to chair the ethics committee and manage ethics consultations in the various departments, including the department of medical diagnostics. There you meet Dr. House, who is anything but amenable to ethical issues....

The above scenario is of course fictitious. Dr. House is a character from a TV series of the same name, a very famous character. The series has been running in the USA for 5 years and has won many prestigious television awards, such as Emmys and Golden Globes. In some European countries, the churlish, cynical physician Dr. House achieves top viewing figures. The series is also very popular with medical students and hospital staff. From an ethical standpoint, however, the series is a catastrophe: time and again, Dr. House violates ethical principles and professional regulations. He treats his medical colleagues extremely badly and his patients less than sensitively. If truth be told, he hates them all. Once he has to do an extra "disciplinary shift" in the outpatients department and takes a bundle of dollar bills out of his pocket, offering \$50 in cash to any patient prepared to leave the waiting room without being treated. Professional ethics do not seem to apply to him. He is only interested in the most difficult of cases, keen on diagnostics as criminal detective work, for which he stops at nothing: he has been known to examine and treat his patients without their consent, sometimes even against their expressly declared wishes! Is this the end of medical ethics as we know it? And how can a medical ethicist approach him constructively?

It is not the first time that a physician has been disinterested in ethics, but Dr. House describes himself as the very last person who should be consulted in ethical issues. Using excerpts from the TV series, this talk focuses on moral concepts and values which can nevertheless be found in "Dr. House" and reveals in a slightly unusual way how Dr. House may be enlisted for ethics consultations and ethical work in hospitals may be intensified.