October 23, 2011

Courtenay’s Summary of our Interviews:

Has Farah submitted her interview? If so, I cannot find it anywhere??

Between the four of us, so far, Karen, Lindsey, Sarah, and Courtenay, we interviewed an RCMP police officer, a firefighter, a teacher and an accountant, and a physician. The reasons for entering their professions included the desire to help others and to make a difference in people’s lives; the attractive benefits; and that they just enjoyed what the job had to offer, such as working with numbers, and the sciences – without having to do scientific research.

It was found that each of the respective professions has some type of Code of Ethics. However, the majority of our interviewees have never referred to it. The RCMP officer, though, needed to know the rules and regulations of his profession, because he also had to live by them when he was off-duty, in his personal time.

Some of the ethical situations our subjects had to deal with included reporting a fellow police officer for stealing; ignoring a wife’s pleas regarding DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) order on her unconscious husband, because it was ‘left at home’ and the first responders had no choice but to perform CPR; advocating for a child with disabilities who was being excluded from activities organized by educational staff; reporting a superior who submitted false calculations which would result in a larger paycheque for herself; and respecting the wishes of a parent who begs the doctors to continue treating her child’s terminal cancer although medical staff know there is nothing more that can be done to save the child’s life.

In all cases, it was only a small group of people who came to determining the final outcome of the dilemma. In the case of the RCMP officer, the situation he reported did go on to be charged in criminal court.

For the most part, all interviewees were content on some level, with the outcome of the ethical situation. The only person who was unhappy with the result was the teacher. Her superior decided that the child with a disability could be included in the particular activity, but ridiculous and unfair limitations were set on the child in order to participate.

Each of these situations was resolved within a time frame of a couple of days to a several weeks. In the case of the RCMP officer, the case went on to the criminal courts and was ultimately resolved within two years.

We asked our interviewees who would investigate a situation should they find themselves reported for behaving unethically. A couple of them stated that a superior within the office/department would be responsible for investigating any reports of unethical behaviour. The teacher would be investigated by a Disciplinary Committee which is formed by the Ontario College of Teachers; and the physician would be investigated by the BC College of Physicians and Surgeons, or if the situation occurred within a hospital, it could also be reviewed by a Disciplinary Committee within the particular hospital.

If our subjects were found to have behaved unethically, the consequences involve: suspension, fine, probation, writing a letter of apology, restrictions on professional license, re-training/situational counselling, loss of employment, and ultimately, having one’s licence/certificate revoked.

When asked what type of situation would provoke them to report unethical behaviour, the people interviewed stated that they would report an unethical situation if they believed that someone was in harm, that the job was being compromised, or that someone was clearly being treated unfairly.