

South Africa is defined in the first chapter of our constitution as being a democratic, independent republic based upon the principles of protecting dignity, human rights and the rule of law. Chapter two is a bill of rights which further defines these human rights including the rights to health care, food, water and social security. These are all issues intimately linked to the health care profession.

As health care professionals working in South Africa it is appropriate that practitioners should be familiar with the acts, regulations and guidelines that govern our practice. Furthermore professionals should have an understanding of the bioethical principles that determine how we perform research and interact with patients and society. Medicine is a constantly advancing field and with these advances conflicts often arise within the arenas of politics, law, religion, philosophy and economics. An understanding of bioethics helps us to recognize, admit and sometimes resolve these conflicts.

*The allocation of specific CEU's to ethics, human rights and medical law is an acknowledgement of how important these issues are to our practice. Practitioners are further encouraged to obtain these units with the allocation of double units as compared to CPD in other fields.*

***It is important however that CPD activities on these topics focus on issues of patient care. Ethics talks for instance can cover a wide range of topics but accreditation is generally awarded to talks concerning the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and human dignity. Medical law activities should focus on the responsibilities of professionals and the rights of patients.*** For further guidance the HPCSA offers a range of guidelines on these topics and they are available on the website -[www.hpcsa.co.za](http://www.hpcsa.co.za).