



Figure 2 number of newly established ethics committees since 1965 among participating hospitals according to bed size.

percentage of existing HECs and the requested advice on clinical ethics by hospital bed size are shown in Figure 3 Overall, 42% (n = 334) of HECs had received requests for advice on clinical ethics, but the percentage ranged from 17.6% to 61.8% according to bed size.

To the question regarding end-of-life care, 34% reported they were too busy in current practice to enable prudent decision making. Of hospital directors, 74% had a positive impression to hold a guideline for end-of-life decision making in the clinical setting, but 3% disagreed and 23% were not determined. In unsolicited comments, directors suggested that end-of-life decision making varies by the individual patient and family, and it is therefore inappropriate to set certain rules.

	b	fl i t
Fewer than one per year	469	40.7
1 to 5 per year	551	47.8
5 to 10 per year	76	6.6
More than 10 per year	36	3.1
Other	20	1.7
Note: n = 1,152		

Table 3 Predicted frequency of requests for advice on ethical issues relating to clinical practice to hospital ethics committees (HECs).

Twenty-six percent answered that it is not to discuss only between health professionals whether decision making at end of life can be made only by health professionals. Of all respondents, 52% expected advice from ethicists, 35% from jurists/legal professionals, 33% from lawyers and others, including 11.2% from chaplains and Buddhist monks. As for characteristics of participating hospitals, almost half held 100-200 beds (48.2%). composition of participating hospitals by bed size was almost same as that sampled in mandatory survey by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, National Survey of Medical Care Institutions. Of hospitals with more than 300 beds, 70% had an average length of stay from 10 to 20 days, which means their practice is mainly acute care with some care-mixed beds for longer hospitalization. percentage of patients with end-of-life care among all inpatients ranged from approximately 10% to 20% in most participating hospitals. Only 18 hospitals with more than 30% of their patients being at end of life are thought to have beds for hospice or l t

