

Bioethics Links

Special Issue Dedicated to Students of CBEC's Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics

“The Class of 2006”

An Interim Report

By Dr. Aamir Jafarey

In January '06 the Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture inaugurated its first formal postgraduate degree program in bioethics by launching a Postgraduate Diploma (PGD) Course in Biomedical Ethics. This is Pakistan's first such program in this discipline and the degree will be conferred through Karachi University (KU). Course credits obtained by successful PGD students will accrue towards a subsequent MA in Bioethics which the CBEC hopes to offer in the coming years. The PGD was felt to be a dire need for Pakistan as in a country of over 150 million people, there are only a handful of individuals with formal training in bioethics, and all in Karachi. Of the 17 students inducted into the Class of '06, 12 were selected from over 50 applicants from all over Pakistan; five were enrolled from CBEC's parent institution SIUT. Three of the four provinces of the country are represented in the selection. Three students are from the private sector whereas the rest are from the public sector. The Class of 2006 consists of a mixture of senior and mid-career healthcare related professionals including clinicians, researchers, basic scientists, medical educators, and hospital administrators, with many playing a combination of these roles in their institutions.

The selection process for the class took several weeks to complete. It took into account level of personal interest in bioethics, the potential and capacity to promote ethics related activities following completion of the PGD, and most importantly, evidence of strong institutional support for the candidate to initiate and foster such activities in the parent institution upon return.

Structure

The PGD program is structured keeping in mind the busy schedule of full time professionals who are its primary targets. The curriculum includes four intensive, on-campus modules taught in CBEC and spread over one year. These sessions are organized to include talks from national and international faculty, interactive seminars, case discussions, hands on workshops and student presentations. Innovative modes of learning are employed using role playing, documentaries and feature films portraying ethical themes, passages from Urdu and English literature highlighting social themes, and discussions and analyses of news items from the public press. The emphasis is on adult learning techniques keeping “lecturing” to a minimum.

Assessment

Assessment of students is based on several well defined criteria and include punctuality and mandatory attendance in all sessions. Students are assessed on their class participation in discussions, and on the quality of their contributions made to seminars and workshops through independent presentations and team work. An important component of evaluations is assigned written work such as essays and critique of relevant articles. At the end of the course

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BEC Faculty and Staff

Dr. Farhat Moazam (Professor & Chairperson)

Dr. Anwar Naqvi (Professor & Coordinator)

Dr. Aamir Jafarey (Assistant Professor)

Mr. Syed Nabeel Anwer (IT Engineer/Webmaster)

An Interim Report

students will also be assessed on presentations to faculty of bioethics related programs they will initiate in their sponsoring institutions.

Modules

Four intensive modules provide the core of student instruction.

Module One, the foundational module which was held in January, covered basic concepts in bioethics and traced the chain of moral thought from the times of Greek philosophers to Muslims physicians and theologians, and on to the development of contemporary ethical theories. Major topics covered in this module included the philosophical traditions of Greek philosophers, the “*Adab Al Tabib*” of *Al-Ruhawi*, and basics of Public Health Ethics, Human Rights, Organizational Ethics, and Health Equity. Students were also provided an overview of how to conduct research with a special emphasis on sociological and qualitative research methodologies.

Module One also included a student seminar on the historical nature of ethics and morality in Islam. Students, in groups of four, researched and made presentations on assigned topics such as *Seeratun-Nabi: The Prophet (PBUH)* as a human being, Islamic law and its sources, the history of Muslim medicine and science and its notable figures, and literature and poetry by renowned Muslims writers. In addition, students were also responsible for class presentations on assigned topics frequently used ethical theories and the position of monotheistic religions on major issues involving birth and death. They were encouraged to make use of the CBEC library and its internet laboratory to help prepare for presentations and seminars.

Module Two was held in April, and focused on Clinical Ethics. Apart from hands-on training in a workshop on how to establish hospital ethics committees and provide ethics consultations, students participated in a workshop on communication skills, which is an essential part of consultative work. Another workshop was offered

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on the basics of developing curricula to help students formulate relevant undergraduate and postgraduate bioethics educational program for their institutions.

As in Module One, students made class presentations on subjects dealing with the most pressing ethical issues in contemporary bioethics revolving around beginning and end of life decision making. Examples of assigned topics included “secular and religious perspectives on abortion”, “ethical issues in genetic screening and counseling”, “definition of death”, “euthanasia,” “withdrawing versus withholding treatment,” “persistent vegetative state,” “ethical dilemmas in using patients as teaching resource,” “informed consent,” “arguments for and against buying and selling solid organs for transplantation,” “Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) policies,” and “confidentiality and disclosure in medical practice.”

Module Three is scheduled to take place in August-September and will focus on Research Ethics. Students will learn about contemporary ethical dilemmas related to sponsored, multinational research and the basics of establishing ethical review committees. They will be instructed in the commonly used, existing international ethical guidelines for human subject research. Case based workshops will be conducted to provide practical instruction on application of guidelines within the context of socioeconomic realities and cultural norms of developing countries.

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Dr. Manzoor Ahmed leading a PGD discussion with the students in Module 2. Also seen are Dr. Farhat Moazam and Dr. Anwar Naqvi

PGD Student Assignments

Vani (or *Sawara*) is a long standing custom still practiced in certain rural and tribal parts of Pakistan. In this tradition one or more female members of a tribe, including very young girls, are offered in marriage as compensation for offences committed by its male members in order to appease the tribe against which the crime was committed. The underlying offence is frequently that of murder but can also include instances of romantic or sexual involvement of a male from one tribe with a female belonging to a “superior” tribe. Women, along with sums of money, are given in retribution to save the life of the male who has committed the crime, and to prevent long term feuds. The “settlement” decisions in cases of *Vani* are taken by a *jirga*, a group constituted of male leaders and “elders” of the involved tribes. In 2004, the Government of Pakistan declared *Vani* to be illegal and punishable by law, but pockets of support for *Vani* can still be found in some parts of the country.

In February 2006 an article, “*Vani* in True Perspective,” appeared in a leading, daily English newspaper of Pakistan, the Dawn. (<http://www.dawn.com/2006/02/21/nat32.htm>) In the article, the writer Khurshid Anwar Khan presents arguments in support of what he considers to be benefits of this practice especially as a means to prevent tribal feuds that can extend over generations. As part of their monthly assignments, students of the Class of 2006 enrolled in CBEC's Postgraduate Diploma Course in Biomedical Ethics were asked to critique this article, and offer their own analysis of the practice of *Vani*. Reproduced below, with some editing, is the essay submitted by Dr. Inayat Ullah Memon, a pathologist from Hyderabad.

Editor's Note

“*VANI* In True Perspective”
A Critique

By Dr. Inayat Ullah Memon

This essay analyzes the article published in the Daily Dawn, Karachi written by Mr. Khurshid Anwar Khan. Mr. Khan is a frequent writer for this

newspaper and often highlights issues and problems of the district of Mianwali. (See for example, his articles, “Two teens sacrificed to traditional customs” on 25th July 2002, and “Afghan refugees afraid of returning home” on 1st Aug 05.) His writings indicate that he is fairly familiar with problematic issues of that region and that he wishes to improve the existing social conditions. In this particular article he discusses the issue of *Vani*, particularly emphasizing the consequences of the promulgation of Section 310-A of PPC (Pakistan Penal Code) that was introduced some years ago in the legal system making the practice of *Vani* an unlawful act. Although the writer seems to accept the evils of this tradition (“it is still not desirable and legislature rightly enacted”) but he argues against the application of this law on *Vani* commitments that have already been made by tribes in the past.

The author justifies the concept of *Vani* in his article for several reasons. He writes, “The custom descended ... to punish the party [that] committed murder ... and to create blood relationships ... for doing away with continuing feuds as well as mitigate or demolishing altogether the chances of re-emergence of previous enmity.” Mr. Khan urges strongly that *Vani* “transactions” made before the said amendment should not be covered by this law; otherwise peace prevailing in the tribal areas would be adversely affected.

I totally disagree with the writer's arguments that support this custom because the very concept of this practice is grounded in inhumane and unjust notions. These include the commodification of females, conceptualizing the crime of murder not as an offence directed against the social and legal order of the state but against only individuals and tribes, and the protection of this practice with the instrument of the feudal mind-set of a *jirga* system. Considering women as commodities to be bartered is the root cause of this evil practice, even though the writer prefers to use the word “transactions” to describe the settlements Undertaken through *Vani*.

A study of the history of the Asian subcontinent reveals that the tradition of holding an assembly of
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tribal elders, a *jirga*, has existed for centuries among Pashtun ethnic groups and in regions now constituting Pakistan and Afghanistan. (*Wikipedia.org*) However it also becomes evident that it were the British rulers who introduced this system in its “legal” form for political reasons. The first time this occurred was in Balochistan in 1876 on the orders of Chief Commissioner Sir Robert Sandeman. (*Mustafa*) This was done to control vast areas of the land through local tribal leaders, and without involving the British government in local feuds. In order to strengthen royal footing in the region, Sandeman introduced the “Sandeman System” based on a principle that accepted “the tribes as custodians of highways and guardians of the peace” in their districts. (*Balochistan Crisis*) The *jirga* was the physical reality of this system.

Attempts by the writer to convince readers by projecting the custom of *Vani* as virtue instead of vice is unsuccessful, at least in my opinion. His plea regarding *Vani/Jirga* system that this “custom always acclaimed general acceptance since it served the purpose well,” i.e. to prevent feuds, is neither true nor convincing. It is to be noted that disputes between the Jatoy and Maher tribes have engulfed more than 200 human lives despite the holding of as many as 8 *jirgas*, and that these feuds have continued for the last 15 years. (*Beena Sawar 2004*)

The author also camouflages the obligatory nature of decisions by the *jirga* on the parties involved by stating that, “their decisions are not binding to any of them.” In fact the very concept of *jirga* requires that its conclusions and rulings must be accepted by all and that the non-abiding party will be held liable. (*Wikipedia;Yousafzay*) Here it appears that the author either misstates the facts or is ignorant of the code of the *jirga* “court.”

Another justification provided by the writer in support of *Vani* is his contention that “family feuds do bring more misery to the females of warring tribes.” This is only partly correct. Yes, female members do suffer miseries when tribes are at war with each other, but in the tradition of

Vani they are worse off; suffering becomes the life long destiny of females of the offending tribe handed over as appeasement under *Vani*. They face horrifying treatment at the hands of the tribe to which they have been given in marriage, and sometime even commit suicide. (*Yousafzay*) No consent is taken from these young girls and women who must follow elders' commands against their own wishes and desires.



PGD Students during a session with Dr. Aamir

Dr. Faisal Ghani Siddiqui

gives the first lecture on Biomedical Ethics at LUMHS, Hyderabad

This lecture was delivered to final year students of the Liaquat University of Medical & Health Sciences, Jamshoro on Monday, May 22, 2006. The topic was “What happens to Ethics when medical Students practice their Skills on Unconsenting Patients?”

Guidelines were provided to students to behave ethically with patients, not to conceal their true identity, to be empathetic and seek proper consent before history taking and examination

The lecture was attended by 86 students; 94% considered the lecture to be relevant, 95% felt that it would help them to deal better with the patients, and 76% would like more lectures on

What must also be remembered is that the writer attempts to hide an unfortunate reality of the legal system in Pakistan, namely the interplay of Islamic law, Indo-British judicial traditions, and tribal codes.

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Module Four is planned for December and will serve primarily as a student assessment module. Although continuing assessment takes place throughout the year, in this module students will be formally evaluated on two major presentations describing programs they will introduce in their parent institutions.

Based on the needs of their institutions, students will be given various options such as developing a bioethics curriculum for medical students or postgraduate trainees, organizing the framework and logistics of establishing a hospital clinical ethics committee or a research ethics committee, formulating a bioethics group for faculty colleagues and staff, designing relevant codes of conduct for healthcare professionals and staff, pharmaceutical-physician interactions etc. Evaluation will be undertaken by a panel of internal and external, University appointed examiners.

Where The Mind is Without Fear

Rabindranath Tagore

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake

Posted by Dr. Rubina Naqvi

These are often simultaneously at work, and allow those in power to choose whichever system is to their benefit.

And finally, a lack of a sense of “humanness” is conspicuous in the article. Nowhere does the writer accommodate or focus on the emotional and moral/ethical values that, in my opinion, deserve the highest status in any civilized society. Therefore the arguments given by Mr. Khan in his article fail to change my anti-Vani views.

The renowned Pakistani poet Ahmed Faraz has rightly said:

کیا مالِ غنیمت تھا مرو شہر
اب دل میں فریاد کون آتے
کیوں ننگریوں میں بٹ گیا ہے
دنیا سے یہ شہر کٹ گیا ہے

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<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jirga>>



A view of PGD Students during a session

PGD Web Discussions

Assignments via Internet

One of the criteria for acceptance into the PGD program was computer competency as turning in assignments via internet forms an important part of the course work. Students are expected to critique assigned articles every month and email them back to faculty. An email group was also set up to encourage students who are "computer shy." Students are required to post at least two interesting articles each month which they consider to have ethical relevance, and others are expected to comment on these. The objective is to initiate a web based discussion forum that will continue among PGD students beyond graduation.

The postings and comment program has evolved into a lively discussion group. The success of this forum can be gauged from the fact that although each student is required to post two "hits" per month, by the end of the third month, each was averaging at least two per week. Some example of these "dialogues" are reproduced below.

Editor's Note

"School Girl Loses Legal Battle"

Dr. Inayat Ullah Memon

The daily Dawn carried a news item about a school girl in UK who lost a three year old battle for her right to wear the dress of her choice, according to what she considered to be her religious obligation.

Dr. Ghazala Usman

It is not necessary to relate everything to religion. But who will decide what is bad and good? Some acts are modest in West but totally immodest in our country.

Dr. Anjum Shahid

It is mandatory for all Muslim females to cover their body. Muslim girls studying at Denbigh High in Luton were not denied; rather they were allowed to wear *shalwar*, *kameez* and *hijab* (scarf) as a part of their school uniform which definitely serves the

purpose. There is no point in politicizing the issue.

Mr. Abdul Ghani

What is an "Islamic dress" for women? Who decides what this is, and on what basis? Why is everything being associated with religion without thinking?

Dr. Sultana Habibullah

There is no religious book where it is mentioned to wear *naqab* (veil) or *hijab*. It is mentioned to cover the body properly which applies equally to both sexes. Nuns and Sisters also wear veils so wearing of veils and *hijab* is not a practice of Muslims alone. Instead of asking for wearing I, *hijabs* and *chadar* (large *shawl*), why are men not instructed instead to lower their gaze?

"Plagiarism"

Dr. Faisal Ghani Siddqui

Plagiarism is the worst type of theft. With my limited experience I have seen at least two senior Professors have their career ruined due to plagiarism. It is my humble request to all to avoid this since the consequences, if caught, can be disastrous!

Dr. Yasmin Wajahat

Plagiarism has been and is very common around us. Previously it was not talked and checked much. By stealing and using somebody else's work, without contributing one's efforts is an easy way found to get fame. Accountability is the only solution.

"Conflicts between Conscience and Job Obligations"

Dr. Inayat Ullah Memon

I would like to discuss a news item regarding a Royal Air Force officer serving in the Medical Corps who refused to return to Basra, Iraq after serving twice in Iraq and in Afghanistan on the grounds that he believed "the Iraq war to be an illegal venture under international Law".

I believe this case is of interest because Dr. Malcolm, besides being a medical officer, also has a degree in Philosophy and wrote his thesis on the

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Web Discussions

work Immanuel Kant. I do not agree with Mr. Malcolm's arguments. My opinion is that although the Iraqi invasion and occupation are illegal, but why did he did not raise objections initially when he willingly went to Iraq and is only now refusing?

Dr. Naqi Zafar

In the military you do not disobey orders. That's the rule and whosoever has worked in the services knows that. He could have resigned his commission if he felt so strongly about it but he cannot disobey orders. He was rightly court-martialed and punished.

Dr. Seema Mumtaz

I agree with Dr. Naqi that in military, the rules are the rules and one cannot disobey them.

“Suicide Bombing”

Dr. Faisal Ghani Siddiqui

We shall be failing in our duty as Bioethicists if we do not discuss and come to a conclusion regarding the Islamic view on suicide bombing. I have been searching answer to these questions desperately. What does the group feel about it?

Dr. Rubina Naqvi

Suicide bombing has no justification in religion, and it is not *jihad*, which carries different connotations. It is neither *jihad bin-nafs* (an inner struggle of good against evil) nor *jihad bis-saif* (struggle with the sword against a defined enemy) nor is it *jihad bil-qalm* (struggle with the pen). It is a condemnable act made even worse because it is carried out in the name of religion.

“Therapeutic Effects of Intercessory Prayer”

An article which concludes that intercessory prayer has no effect on patients. Full article can be accessed at:

<http://www.stnews.org/News-2754.htm>

Dr. Faisal Ghani Siddiqui

I believe that distant praying has no effect on the health of patients. It is the *amaal* (deeds) of the deceased, and of course *rehmat* (mercy) of the almighty Allah! which are the cause of a person's *maghfarat* (salvation).

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Dr. Inayat Ullah Memon

The role played by intercessory prayer are different from that of personal prayer and spirituality. Personal prayer does have therapeutic effect on illness and has positive correlation with firmness of Religious belief and Faith.

Dr. Yasmin Wajahat

Only intercessory prayer is not enough for the treatment of physical ailments. *Dua* (prayer) and *Dawa* (medicine/treatment) go hand in hand.

As we know from *Sahih Al Bukhari hadith-1962* that no disease in the world is sent without its treatment, my interpretation is *Dawa* is essential. *Dua* is a means of *Raza-e-Baritala* (will of God). We can pray for His favor and mercy.

Dr. Mahjabeen Khan

This study is designed to reduce the faith in God and is therefore a fruitless study. Prayers can move mountains.

Dr. Tashmem Razzaki

Prayer is a complex thing as it is both organic and metaphysical; while it won't reverse the effect of a bullet that has ripped through the heart it can bring solace to a terminally ill patient and her/his family and friends.

“Religious Education For Children”

Dr. Ghazala Usman

There was a letter to the editor of the daily Dawn about the double standard the West which I want to share with the group. The writer says that if we want our children to get educated in religion schools, we are branded as terrorists, or training them to become one.

Dr. Sajid Sultan

I am sure there is no confusion or disagreement in general that we should teach our children holy Quran and religion. I think that at the same time we should make sure they learn humanity and good values that our religion emphasizes and keep them from becoming only ritualistic fanatics or extremists.

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"FDA Dismisses Medical Benefit From Marijuana"

Dr. Rana Muzaffar

I found this news report both interesting and a little frightening. Many of us have looked up to "FDA approval" as the indisputable gold standard for drug/biotechnology approval. Now it seems that even FDA policies are driven by ideology and not science. It seems that extreme conservative right wingers who currently hold sway probably consider using marijuana under any conditions a sin, ignoring the good it can do.

To me this is another example of the misery that extreme right-wing religious ideologies bring. We should not be surprised at their indifference towards the suffering that they are causing to Iraqis and Afghans.

Dr. Ali Azmat Abidi

Dr. Muzaffar has picked up an important issue. FDA has proceeded beyond its jurisdiction of pharmacy, medical science, biotechnology and bioethics. She has also taken up the issue of right wing ideology adversely affecting FDA policies for our consideration and proceeded to show its impact on Afghanistan and Iraq.

"65 kms at 5; isn't this child abuse?"

Dawn Thursday, May 4, 2006.

Dr. Sultana Habibullah

New Dehli: The guardian of a five year old Indian boy who runs 50 kilometer a day denies media accusation he was flogging him for personal gain.

Biranchi Das said on Wednesday, he was more worried about the health of his pupil, Budhia Singh, and was seeking medical advice to study the phenomenon that has created a stir across India.

Dr. Tashmeem Razzaki

This is a case of child abuse. Budhia was sold off by his mother. Then instead of being sent to school he is only learning judo so he will grow up uneducated. The punishment for the unspecified mischief was also brutal, the command being "keep running till I come back". After making this pronouncement Das did not come back for 5 hrs.

The decision is not his, given his age and his status of bonded slavery as a result of being sold off. His purchaser and coach are attempting what the Romans used to do: raise gladiators and throw them before the lions for the entertainment of the Emperor!

Dr. Naqi Zafar

I think the child is a born athlete and loves to run. Mustaq Mohammed played first class cricket at 10 and test at 16. He played cricket at the expense of his studies from the age of 4 and what a cricketer he became!

Dr. Tashmeem Razzaki

He may be a child prodigy, but the issues remain: Unlike Mushtaq he is not being raised by a loving family. Instead he has been sold for a few hundred rupees!

Maybe he has been 'genetically enhanced' in nature's laboratory and is destined to be a Prince of Olympians but there is the possibility that the flicker dies before the transforming leap into a breathtaking flame!

What about autonomy? Who has the right to steer the course of his life?

And what about his mother? Has she forfeited all claims to her son by selling him off because of her desperate poverty?

Dr. Abdul Ghani

takes Bioethics to PTV in Bolan, Balochistan

Dr. Ghani was an invited speaker on a live TV program, "Doctor on Line," transmitted in Balochistan. He spoke on the topic of "Doctor-patient relationships." Following his talk which he took several questions that were called in by viewers from Muscat, Dubai, Karachi and Quetta.

Dr. Ghani has now been invited to appear on a PTV program devoted exclusively to contemporary issues in biomedical ethics relevant to existing social and cultural problems in Pakistan. This segment is scheduled for next month.

Truly a first for Balochistan!

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