

Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture

Bioethics Links

For this issue of *Bioethics Links* we invited our international teaching faculty (Dr. Ramanathan, India) and students (Dr. Bukusi, Kenya; Dr. Kolambage, Sri Lanka) to write about their impressions of CBEC programs and being in Karachi. Also included are commentaries by Dr. Khan (AKU, Karachi) and Dr. Ismatullah (International Islamic University, Islamabad) who audited our Research Ethics module, an essay by PGD student Dr. Faheem, and reports about bioethics activities in Peshawar. The Editor

Engaging days and *ghazal* nights: Ethics education in CBEC-SIUT

*Mala Ramanathan**

What can I say about visiting CBEC every other year to teach research ethics? Each time a constant has been the challenge of overcoming tedious bureaucratic requirements for visas, travelling all the way from Trivandrum to Dubai and back-tracking to Karachi and so on, all this to experience the exhilaration of a truly rewarding teaching experience. When Indians write about their experiences in Pakistan the tone is either political or rooted in shared socio-cultural ethos, one not possible for me to do. Having strived for precision in expression all my life, I cannot label my experiences as being that of Pakistan; mine are unique - to Karachi in general and to CBEC's environs specifically.

When I first came to CBEC in 2008 as a team with colleagues Dr. Amar Jesani and Dr. Richard Cash to teach in the Public Health and Research Ethics module, little did I know what I was getting myself into. I knew Dr. Aamir Jafarey for years, a fellow like me from the Harvard School of Public Health, a friend with whom a shared camaraderie has transcended to a familial relationship. I met Dr. Moazam, revered and respected in the subcontinent, and had the opportunity to watch her and learn that greatness is a product of continuous engagement with all matters, great and small,

not overlooking any detail however trivial it may seem. Her guidance for CBEC training programs, the planning, selection of readings, sequencing of sessions is reminiscent of how she must be in the surgical theater.

The ease with which past students engage with the faculty on an ongoing basis is a hallmark of CBEC. CBEC takes into its fold trainees and alumni, welcomes other disciplinary orientations into bioethics discussions, and this helps to build a strong team of foot soldiers for the discipline. The confidence with which Dr. Bushra Shirazi and Ms. Anika Khan, MBE alumni, assume academic responsibilities in CBEC is both a mark of the quality of their *Continued on page 7*



Dr. Mala Ramanathan with PGD (2012) and MBE (2013) students in a session during the April 2012 Research Ethics Module

*Additional Professor, Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies, SCTIMST, Thiruvanthapuram, India

Memoirs of the first international MBE student at CBEC

*Elizabeth A. Bukusi**

I have the privilege of being the first foreign student to be accepted in the Master in Bioethics (MBE) program in CBEC. My welcome to Karachi for the first module in January was a bit of a shocker in two ways. One, I was the only African on the flight. Two, on arrival, the man at the health desk took one look at me (I assume what he saw was a relatively rare “visitor”) and decided I was his dinner ticket. He first said that my yellow fever vaccination was out of date, and when I pointed out the vaccination entry which was valid, he grimaced and promptly pointed out that my cholera and typhoid pages were blank. I smiled and informed him politely that the Pakistan High Commission in Nairobi had not advised me to get these when applying for the visa. He then said that he would help me if I would help him, or I could spend the next six days in quarantine. It was clear to me that the “help” he was referring to was money. I responded that I did not have any Pakistani money, to which he promptly replied that I could give him any money. I told him I had a card but did not admit to having American dollars and Swiss francs (talk about starting an ethics course with ethical questions - should I have told the truth? Should I have simply said I would not give him money and that I knew very well that what he was asking for was not a requirement?).

He asked me to stand aside and I watched as the queues for immigration grew longer and longer. Eventually, when everyone else had passed through I said that I was being met by someone from SIUT and perhaps he should speak to them and explain the problem. Finally, seeing hopes for his dinner dwindling by the moment, he got tired and let me go. The rest went

smoothly. My luggage was waiting for me, as was the doctor sent to “meet and greet” me who took me to the set of flats for students from out of Karachi.

My room was self-contained, and I shared a kitchen and a sitting room equipped with a TV (loads of Bollywood movies, news in Urdu, and of course CNN) with three other ladies. Three male students were housed in another flat. A van with a chaperon came to pick us up in the morning for CBEC and dropped us back in the evening. (I have not yet figured out the need for a chaperon.) I noted that women and men do not sit together in public transport, and we too adopted a similar code with the women sitting in front of the van and the men in the back.

The classes are interactive and very busy. Students are evaluated on participation in addition to written assignments. I have struggled to keep up with the reading and keeping the subjects from getting jumbled up, while my classmates seem to easily quote sentences from the readings and authors. That part of my brain seems to have fossilized; I have been living on deduction *Continued on page 6*



MBE Class of 2013 and faculty engrossed in a seminar on public health ethics

*Researcher / Deputy Director, KEMRI, Nairobi, MBE student Class of 2013

Different ways of thinking

*S. H. Kolambage**

When I thought of doing a study on ethical issues in relation to organ transplantation in Sri Lanka, my professor Dr. Chula Goonasekera told me about the Center of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, SIUT and handed me a copy of their newsletter. I never thought that I would be writing for this newsletter a few months later.

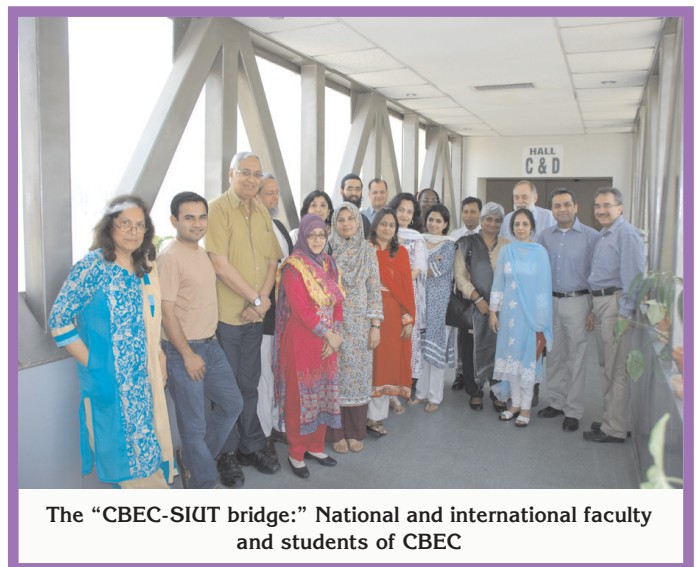
Just three months later, I could not believe my eyes when I received an invitation to participate in a CBEC module on research ethics in April. When I landed at the M. A. Jinnah International Airport in Karachi it was the first time that I had stepped on foreign soil, but CBEC had made arrangements for me to be picked up and taken to my accommodation. What a relief for an anxious first-time traveller!

The module began with a meeting of the Karachi Bioethics Group. It was an interesting occasion in which healthcare professional colleagues critically analysed ethical issues they had come across in the media or their places of work, and took bold decisions independently to act on them. I was so glad I was amongst a like-minded group of people thinking parallel to me.

The module itself was a novel experience for me due to the different way of teaching. Each day classes began with a discussion on a newspaper article or advertisement violating the limits of ethics. The group was presented with different ways of analysing ethical dilemmas. During teaching sessions, lectures became more and more interactive, and questions were dealt with on the spot. Besides CBEC staff, lecturers from different institutions of Pakistan, India, and USA were there to share their experiences with us. A variety of

people including MBE and PGD students, invited auditors, and the faculty participated in round table discussions. This was a different approach which actively helped students understand the concerns that may arise during the ethical review of a research project. Cases were used to understand how vulnerable groups of people around the world may be affected by research. For some who were members of ethical review committees, these sessions were an eye opener.

During this period of continuous (but interesting) hard work we were lucky enough to also enjoy a lovely, traditional Pakistani musical show in the SIUT auditorium organised for workshop participants and others. I was also able to participate in the "Organ Donation Day" organized by SIUT to educate the public on brain death and deceased organ donation. My time in CBEC made me realise that there are many people around the world, many more than I expected, geared to serve humanity and safeguard moral values irrespective of their colour, cast or creed.



The "CBEC-SIUT bridge:" National and international faculty and students of CBEC

*Physician, Intensive Care Unit, General Hospital, Kaluthara, Sri Lanka

Connecting Shari'a with emerging ethical issues

*Ismatullah**

The advancement of medical sciences has produced new challenges to the thinking, training and actions of those involved in healthcare delivery. In this background, I find those involved in the training of medical professionals facing these challenges and playing key roles. At CBEC-SIUT, Dr. Farhat Moazam and her team are involved in imparting medical ethics education in the overall training of health professionals. This area has, by and large, been neglected by medical institutions in Pakistan.

While auditing the April module I realized that, in addition to including medical professionals in this educational venture, CBEC also opens the doors of its programs to non-medical people, including students of Shari'a like myself. In reality, workshops such as these in which Shari'a experts can interact with medical experts in deliberations about emerging ethical challenges can help provide direction to the thinking of Muslim communities.

*Head, Fiqh and Law Unit, International Islamic University, Islamabad

Unique learning environment in CBEC's teaching module

*Shaista Khan**

Some life experiences prove to be unique and have an unexpected impact on our inner selves. As a busy surgeon with three decades of patient care, I believed I had lived up to the Hippocratic Oath to relieve living beings of suffering and pain. However, I had not considered that well-intended exercises to reduce human suffering may have unseen elements of harm.

As chair of the Ethics Review Committee of my institution, I was privileged to audit CBEC's Public Health and Research Ethics Module in April. As I glanced through the program, I prepared myself for daylong sessions of talks, didactic lectures, and discussions. The reality was quite the contrary! Almost all the sessions involved active learning by module participants themselves. Most importantly, the medium was not exclusively text, but visual too. The environment was unique with openness of discussions facilitating the process of self-discovery. It led to recognition of knowledge that had always been there within oneself but never verbalized, and an understanding that many actions we may have considered to be altruistic were actually more self-directed.

I figure that there is a need for all of us - not just those in the medical profession - to rediscover our inner selves, and learn how to fulfil our responsibilities to the rest of society. Perhaps we can make a beginning by being empathetic and learning to look at issues from different perspectives, not just our own.

*Professor of Surgery, Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi



Window-cleaning Pakistani style: Raju, CBEC cleaner and all purpose man, in action

Student and Alumni Voices: This new section will periodically feature brief writings by CBEC students and alumni for *Bioethics Links*. The inaugural essay is written by Faheem Khan, from the Department of Psychiatry in AKUH enrolled as PGD student in the Class of 2012.

Makkah Clock Tower: “*Meray liye mitti ka haram aur bana do*”
*Faheem Khan**

The Makkah Clock Tower, the world's tallest hotel with a clock face bigger than that of Big Ben in London is in the immediate vicinity of the Kaaba in *Haram Shareef*. This skyscraper is built in the city of Makkah, once the gracious but humble abode of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The simplicity and humility that characterize the ritual of Hajj were part of the city's character. Now this city will be known for exactly the opposite.

Some will see this construction as a symbol of Muslim progress, an alternative to the Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), or another building adding to the beauty of this holy city. My feelings are opposite to this: On seeing this photograph I see hard concrete walls, marble and glass, an ostentatious display of wealth finding flamboyant expression in architecture. I see this as human striving to elevate oneself from the ground but in a mechanical rather than a spiritual way, a shift from sanctity to mere sanctimony.

The construction of this building raises a question. Who is more eligible to live in such close proximity to *Haram Shareef* - the person who is rich and a believer, or the one who is a believer but not rich? Prohibitive expenses will make the hotel inaccessible to poor Muslims who will only be able to yearn and say *Subhan-Allah* (praise to God). Furthermore, unique and historical buildings are being demolished to make space for these skyscrapers. In my opinion, spending money on sky-reaching hotels which benefit rich entrepreneurs is not a fulfilment of religious duties of Muslim states in current times. These billions would be better spent to alleviate the sorry state of poverty in Muslim countries.

*Psychiatrist, AKU, PGD Student Class of 2012

Making an alternative to GMT is not the Muslim *umma's* most urgent need in today's world. What we require instead is just one university that rivals Harvard, Yale, or Oxford. Providing basic human rights to citizens on the ground is more important than raising oneself 601 meters above it. I believe that imprinting the name of Allah in the sky has no spiritual benefits; rather it is imprinting this in the inner core of a believer's heart which is needed.

I end with sadness, wondering whether these thoughts will ever strike Muslim royals and policy makers. My own feelings relate to Allama Iqbal's poetic yearning:

*“Main nakhush-o-bezar hun marmar ke silon se,
Mere liye mitti ka haram aur bana do”*

(Weary of columned marbles, sickened is my sight
Raise for me another temple, build it with mud,)



The Clock Tower looms over the Kaaba in *Haram Shareef* seen in the foreground

“Memoirs of the first international MBE student” from page 2

for the last fifteen odd years. In class we are provided with food throughout the day - breakfast, teas, lunch - and there are lots of spicy Pakistani snacks during the day. Given that we get to class at 8.00 am and on many days leave at 6.30 pm, it is no wonder we can pack so much into a day.

The streets in Karachi look like any developing country - a picture of the modern and the old, dusty and clean. The only difference is people, both men and women, in traditional “*shalwar kameez*” suits. Most women are veiled or cover part of their heads when they go out in public; it makes life easier and they are unnoticed. The veils I am told represent modesty. Surprisingly for me, wearing of the full *burka* is not common in the streets I pass on my way to CBEC.

I was nostalgic as I left following the

second module in April. Pakistan is growing to be a home away from home. I will miss the interaction with classmates, the rich learning environment, the history, examples of ethical dilemmas, and learning how to take a reasoned position. The best thing about this program is not that it gives you knowledge, but that it changes you from the inside. You start to question your knowledge, your reasoning and your opinions about various issues which are largely a construct of your upbringing. I feel so privileged to have had this opportunity to be part of this learning community. I am sure that it will continue to change me in more ways than I can imagine. I hope that the change in me will also result in change in others. Each drop of water adds to a mighty ocean. I hope I will add to the drops that will change the face of bioethics in the developing world.

Peshawar Bioethics Group (PBG)

*Dr. Mumtaz Muhammad**

The Peshawar Bioethics Group (PBG) was inaugurated in December 2011 with guidance from CBEC-SIUT and Aga Khan University. Its purpose is to provide a platform for discussion of bioethical issues relevant to Pakistan and to create general

awareness of bioethical issues among healthcare professionals. PBG has held three meetings so far to formulate its terms of reference, aims and objectives, and to discuss scientific and Islamic perspectives in the teaching of medical ethics.

*Research Registrar / Secretary IRB, Postgraduate Medical Institute, Peshawar

Honour for CBEC-SIUT

On 28 April, 2012, in an elegant ceremony, the University of Zurich, Switzerland, recognised eight individuals in different fields by awarding them Honorary Doctorates. Dr. Moazam, Chairperson, Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, SIUT, Karachi, the only woman among the eight, was awarded the Honorary Doctorate in Medicine in recognition of her contributions to ethics and organ transplantation in Pakistan. She is seen here with the University Rector and other awardees.



“Engaging days and ghazal nights” from page 1

learning experience, and remarkable within hierarchied societies that characterize the sub-continent.

Meanwhile, Mr. Aamir Shehzad and Ms. Michelle Fernandes ensure that bowls of crunchy snacks are kept filled and hot water for tea/coffee is always available to guarantee that hunger pangs do not interrupt teaching sessions. It may seem banal to mention food and beverages when writing about bioethics, but believe me there is a rationale for this. While discussing contentious issues deeply troubling to the conscience it is essential that issues of physical discomfort do not trouble participants!

Long and tiring sessions sometimes extend into evenings, and discussions can continue over dinner in restaurants, and during shopping trips for things I am expected to fetch for family and friends back home. Evening social events - a *ghazal* recital, an Urdu play, or an amazing music session with a doyen of Sufi music - involve participants who express enthusiasm and unrestraint, a characteristic among many others shared by Indians and Pakistanis.

There are many “political” reasons for citizens of India and Pakistan to exchange visits, participate in activities, and build camaraderie. I am not much of a political creature in this sense, and do not claim noble reasons for coming to Karachi when invited to teach in CBEC, although my time in Karachi with friends and colleagues may help to reduce hostilities within a very small circle of people in India. My reasons are largely personal. Every teacher needs renewal of skills and spirits; CBEC offers me such an opportunity and I leave a better teacher than I was before. Teaching in CBEC is a form of cleansing for me. Often when I run bioethics training modules a few participants are either not there voluntarily or if they are, are unsure what they are doing in a workshop on

bioethics. In contrast, almost all CBEC students are there because they have chosen to be there, and a careful selection process ensures that they are aware of program requirements. This results in a uniform sense of purpose amongst participants who are primed to challenge, debate, and discuss issues in a spirit of learning through a process of active engagement. Teaching in this setting helps hone a trainer's skills and improves them phenomenally as compared to programs in which participants are not primed to engage in this way.

My experience in CBEC is challenging and enriching. In teaching sessions you cannot expect the polite silence and vagueness that often greets pronouncements by a facilitator in other settings. You have to make sure that your thoughts are coherent, sentences you use to convey these are lucid, and that your argument is consistent. This is because most participants have thought about the issue, grappled with the dilemmas on a personal basis, and are trying to seek answers. Therefore discussions are not clichéd and represent a broad spectrum of possible arguments based on varying experiences. Dealing with different voices in these debates leaves you a better teacher than you were before.

One can also not discount the comforting experience of '*mehman navazi*' (hospitality) that is uniquely Pakistani! Starting from young residents who come to the airport to shepherd us through customs and immigration to waiters at our hotel, the sense is one of warmth and caring. It is something that I can never match or reciprocate equally when my Karachi friends visit me in India but one that I deeply appreciate every time I visit. I wish these visits could happen more frequently from both sides and without the multi-pronged efforts required for visas to make these possible.



Professor Hafeezullah, VC of KMU, with MHR students and Drs. Moazam and Jafarey



Professor Tasleem Akhtar (center) in one of the sessions of the Bioethics Seminar

Bioethics for first batch of Master in Health Research program Students, KMU, May 24-25, 2012

*Aamir Jafarey**

Drs. Farhat Moazam and Aamir Jafarey were invited to Peshawar to conduct a 2 day seminar on bioethics for 13 students enrolled in the newly inaugurated Master in Health Research (MHR) program of Khyber Medical University (KMU). Since 2009, CBEC faculty has been traveling to Peshawar twice a year to conduct workshops in Research Ethics for healthcare professionals admitted to KMU Research Methodology courses. This visit however involved an “Introduction to Bioethics” seminar tailored specially for the University's MHR students. The seminar had a broad focus on bioethics as a contemporary discipline, its strengths and weaknesses, as well as ethical issues arising during human participant research. The students, an interesting mix of dental practitioners and public health physicians, were engaged, articulate and very interactive during the sessions.

KMU stands out as a premier public sector university in Pakistan unique in laying a great deal of emphasis on bioethics in general and on research ethics in particular. It does this by seamlessly incorporating ethics education with training related to research. This has been made possible by the personal involvement of the KMU Vice Chancellor Professor Hafeezullah, and Professor Tasleem Akhtar whose efforts were recently recognized by the KMU Syndicate which conferred on her the title of Professor Emerita. Particularly remarkable is that both Professor Akhtar and Professor Hafeezullah have made it a point to be present during most bioethics sessions. They also ensure that CBEC faculty is accorded a personal and warm welcome during every visit to Peshawar.

*Associate Professor, CBEC, SIUT

Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, SIUT

Full Time Faculty:	Farhat Moazam Professor and Chairperson	Anwar Naqvi Professor and Coordinator	Aamir Jafarey Associate Professor
Associate Faculty:	Bushra Shirazi Ziauddin University	Rubina Naqvi SIUT	Anika Khan READyslexics
Staff:	Aamir Shehzad IT Administrative Assistant	Michelle Fernandes Executive Secretary	

5th Floor, Dewan Farooq Medical Complex, SIUT New Building, Karachi 74200, Pakistan

Phone:(92 21) 3272 6338

Fax:(92 21) 3520 6738

Email: cbec.siut@gmail.com

Website: www.siut.org/bioethics