

Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture

Bioethics Links

Dr. Riffat M. Zaman's lead article looks back to the time when the Bioethics Group (BG) of the Aga Khan University was conceived and traces its subsequent, unanticipated role as a fountainhead for bioethics in Pakistan. CBEC alumni from Patel Hospital and Ziauddin University describe the development of bioethics in their institutions, and a physician from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas writes about "discovering" bioethics. Also included is a photo collage celebrating CBEC's move to a new home in January 2018. Editor

AKU Bioethics Group: Fountainhead for Bioethics in Pakistan

*Riffat Moazam Zaman**

On April 11, 2018, the Aga Khan University (AKU) Bioethics Group (BG) organized a symposium to commemorate its 20th anniversary. For the occasion, BG members and AKU faculty were joined by many from the city who had been associated with the BG in the past but have moved on to other healthcare institutions where they continue to pursue bioethics related activities. The audience in the symposium reflected the unique role played by the BG in the growth and dissemination of bioethics in AKU and beyond, something that was perhaps not envisioned by its founders two decades ago.

The BG was formed in 1997, spearheaded by Dr. Farhat Moazam who was then Associate Dean, Postgraduate Medical Education, in AKU. Bioethics had been taught to medical students since 1986 through the efforts of Dr. Jack Bryant, Chair, Department of Community Health Sciences. According to Dr. Moazam, the BG was formed to bring the education and practice of bioethics into the clinical settings by involving clinicians and residents. She gives credit to Dr. James Bartlett, a psychiatrist and Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences, for generating her interest in bioethics. She recalls him handing her a Hastings Center Report and later sponsoring her for a 5 day workshop at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics in Washington DC.

After her working paper on the proposed BG was discussed and approved in the Dean's Forum, department chairs were invited to nominate one member from their respective departments in order to form the group. The first BG meeting was held on June 13, 1997, attended by 8 members: 4 physicians (a nephrologist, a neonatologist, an anesthesiologist, and a pediatric surgeon), 2 nursing professionals, a clinical psychologist and a social scientist. Besides discussing Terms of Reference and the working paper, members were enthusiastic *Continued on page 6*



On April 25, 2018, SIUT organised an event to commemorate CBEC's designation as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Bioethics
Pictured above from left to right: Dr. Adib Rizvi, Dr. Farhat Moazam and Dr. Aamir Jafarey receiving the WHO flag from WHO delegates, Dr. Andreas Reis and Dr. Mohammad Assai Ardakani

*Riffat Moazam Zaman, Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Aga Khan University, Karachi

Together We Evolve

*Nida Wahid Bashir**

Do healthcare institutions act as moral agents? Can they acquire moral characteristics through capacity building? Do individual clinicians get influenced by value-based organizational activities? These are difficult to answer philosophical questions. But this phenomenon has been put to test in one of the healthcare institutions in Karachi.

Patel Hospital is a 250 bedded, not for profit, community-based hospital which initially focused on the provision of general surgical and gynecology and obstetrics services. But gradually, it evolved into a tertiary care hospital providing multi-disciplinary care at affordable cost along with postgraduate teaching and training.

Along with its growth on clinical and academic fronts, Patel hospital has shown significant growth on the ethical front as well. It all started in 2004, when the clinical head of the institution, Dr. Tufail Bawa, asked me, the new inductee of the institution, to develop a hospital ethics committee (HEC). Having been introduced to the ethical discourse in patient care through ethics consultation and ethics grand rounds during my surgical training at the Aga Khan University Hospital (AKUH), I had some clue as to the solution but was completely ignorant of the process.

One of the lead faculty at the Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, Dr. Aamir Jafarey, came to my rescue and helped the institution in developing procedures and protocols for a HEC. That was the beginning of a never-ending relationship between CBEC and Patel hospital, initiating the latter's development as a moral agent.

Today we have:

- A Hospital Ethics Committee functioning since 2004 as a clinical ethics committee as

well as an institutional review board for research

- A medical error reporting and analysis committee as an offshoot of ethical discourse within the HEC on organizational ethics and medical error

- Ethical review of institutional policies as and when brought to the notice of the HEC by the stakeholders

- Research ethics workshops for capacity building in collaboration with CBEC

- Three CBEC alumni associated with the institution, namely, Ms. Shabana Tabassum, Dr. Abeer Saleem and myself, are contributing to the ethical discourse via coordination and chairing of various institutional bodies dealing with ethics and a postgraduate ethics teaching program. Dr. Saleem, in fact, continues to run the postgraduate ethics teaching program even after moving to another institution.

Ethics has become an important element in decision-making at all levels within Patel Hospital, making it a moral agent for change.



International students during CBEC's Public Health and Research Ethics Module, from April 23 to May 3, 2018, in Karachi. Seen from left to right: Mr. Gideon Cornel Msee (Kenya), Dr. John Weru (Kenya), Ms. Winfred Nazziwa (Uganda), Ms. Enas Khattab (Qatar), Ms. Yvonne Opanga (Kenya) and Mr. James Nguya Wanja (Kenya).

*Nida Wahid Bashir, PGD Alumnus (2010), Head of General Surgery, Patel Hospital, Karachi

Bioethics: Shifting Paradigms in Ziauddin University Hospital

*Aruna Dawani, Qudsia Hassan, Fasiha Sohail**

I remember the day that my friend and colleague asked me to meet the secretary of our hospital's ethical review committee (ERC) at KDLB Campus in Keamari, within six months of joining the institute. I was nominated by the (late) chairman to be the next secretary and started my journey towards bioethics and the 'baggage' that comes with it.

My transition from being a secretary of the hospital's ERC to doing a postgraduate diploma in bioethics and then becoming the chairperson of the committee has been quite an experience. We were three candidates from this institute who did their Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics (PGD) in 2016 from the Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture (CBEC) and we already had three other colleagues who were PGD graduates working at Ziauddin University Hospital before us.

The ERC was well established in our university since 2008 but bioethics activities had been taking place in its Keamari Campus as early as 2007. Still, very few people knew about this committee or the bioethics activities. What our seniors had started in promoting and teaching bioethics, the three of us took a step forward. Amongst us we taught and introduced bioethics to the postgraduates in our respective campuses while one colleague being a basic sciences teacher took up 3rd year undergraduate students. But that is not the only arena where we started nudging people in this direction. The university supported us and with the help of the department of education, bioethics has been inculcated in the undergraduate curriculum, something that bioethics pioneers in Pakistan have been advocating and working toward.

Suddenly, we had quite a few 'non-

believers' take notice of the importance of what we have been doing. It is a sad and a very common situation that the resistance has always come from people in the position of seniority, the 'old school' who did not miss a single chance of making digs about 'some people need to learn about ethics, others don't'. We saw a reluctant change in this group, particularly when they attended some of our sessions and realized that there was no 'preaching' in bioethics, we simply spoke about dilemmas that we all often face in our practice. This attitude has markedly changed, not just in the classrooms but also in the faculty lounge, in the surgeon's room, in the administration and in many of the associated committees of the hospital as well as the University.

As a clinician, having a positive impact on the stakeholders of healthcare has meant huge progress at a very important level. But, and I think my colleagues who have played a pivotal role in promoting bioethics will agree, what we find most satisfying is seeing the change in our undergraduates and postgraduates. They will be the torch bearers and will hopefully take bioethics much further than any of us have done so far.



An MBE seminar during CBEC's Research Ethics Module. Seen from left to right: Dr. Moazam, Dr. Natasha Anwar, Dr. Francis Muregi, Ms. Sualeha Shekhani and Ms. Sharmeen Khan

*Aruna Dawani, Qudsia Hassan, Fasiha Sohail, PGD alumni (2016), Ziauddin University Hospital, Karachi

CBEC gets a New Home, 7th Floor, SIUT Transplant Tower, January 2018



The foundation must be sound: Dr. Moazam in action



Dr. Bushra, Ms. Sualeha & Ms. Anika in transit from the old to the new



Shehzad, Loretta & Michelle organize the new staff area



The final touch: Dr. Aamir polishes it up



Faculty, staff, students & alumni with WHO representatives in the “new” CBEC

From the Old to the New



From a congested seating area to a spacious one



From improvised working spaces in corridors to roomy, bright offices



From an old poky room for teaching students to a modern bright one

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in educating themselves; consequently, all meetings included discussion of published papers on clinical/research ethics.

The monthly 90-minute meetings of the BG provided a safe space to discuss dilemmas faced in clinical care. By early 1998, the group began undertaking activities meant to include the larger AKU community. An Ethics Grand Round, the first such event to be conducted in Pakistan, was held in the School of Nursing on March 27, 1998. Titled “Death with Dignity,” the format included a presentation by a resident about a 58 year old, terminally ill, ventilator-dependent man admitted in the ICU, whose son wanted to take his father home against medical advice. The session generated an enthusiastic and lively discussion by the well-attended audience, and Ethics Grand Rounds is a popular BG event that continues to date.

Also in 1998, the BG published a one-page, black and white newsletter, prepared in Dr Moazam's office since few offices had computers. This was replaced by a colored and glossy 5 page version the following year with funds from the Dean whose help, encouragement, and accessibility were integral to the continuation of the BG. The first formal “ethics consult” in the history of AKU Hospital, and perhaps of the country, was sought from the BG by a surgeon about a ventilator dependent 18-year old male with Down's syndrome. This landmark case was subsequently published in *The Journal of Clinical Ethics* in 2003, in an article titled “At the Interface of Cultures.” In 2001, while pursuing recognition by the Joint Commission on International Accreditation the hospital Medical Director turned to the BG for help in setting up the required Hospital Ethics Committee (HEC). Several members of the HEC, including its first Chair, were BG members.

In addition to ethics consults, the HEC also organized biennial symposiums that helped take bioethics beyond AKU to others

interested in this field. A noteworthy event of the second HEC Clinical Ethics Symposium in 2003 was the decision to create a city wide bioethics group to include healthcare professionals from both private and public sector institutions in Karachi. This idea was pursued by Dr. Nida Wahid Bashir, an AKU alumnus and a general surgeon at Patel Hospital, and the Karachi Bioethics Group (KBG) was born in 2004 with members from 11 hospitals in Karachi. Fourteen years later, KBG continues to meet every two months with a different hospital playing host to the group each year.

The BG (with now twice the number of members than at its inception) continues in AKU and focuses on revisions, expansions and methodologies best suited to teaching bioethics in their undergraduate and post graduate curriculum. However BG's historical position as the fountainhead of bioethics in Pakistan cannot be denied. Its founding chair, Dr. Moazam, left AKU in 2000 to pursue a PhD from the Department of Religious Studies in the University of Virginia. She returned to Pakistan to set up the Center of Biomedical Ethics and Culture (CBEC) in SIUT which was inaugurated in October 2004. She was joined in CBEC by Dr. Aamir Jafarey who had returned after completing a fellowship in research ethics from Harvard University and also happened to be among the earliest BG members. Several former and current BG members continue to interact closely with CBEC including as teaching faculty in its programs.

CBEC is the only institute in Pakistan which provides formal postgraduate education in bioethics and awards graduate level degrees in the discipline. Through the Center's alumni, bioethics is being introduced to students, trainees, clinicians and researchers in institutions across the country such as Ziauddin University Hospital, Karachi, Shaikh Zayed Hospital, Lahore and Shifa College of Medicine, Islamabad, to

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Bioethics: Where Do We Stand?

*Himayat Ullah **

O my God!

I got it 9 years later. Can you believe that?

You plant a tree and you forget it. You forget it for 9 years and suddenly you realize that it is important to water it. How can you justify this act of ignorance? Maybe you cannot.

When I received a letter from the health directorate of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) to participate in a two day workshop for health professionals arranged by the National Bioethics Committee (NBC) of Pakistan, my mind was not clear about how helpful it would be. But after attending the workshop, I told Dr. Moazam that I intend to write for the first time, and that is on bioethics.

I graduated in 2009 as a doctor. At that time I had no idea about this vital subject which is known as bioethics. Although we hear about the ethics which is fundamental in life, we know but little about professional ethics. Today, while thinking as a doctor, bioethics is so fundamental for a health professional, just as water for a tree. Healthcare profession in the absence of bioethics and moral obligations is just like a tree without water which loses all its charm. In the current era of scientific advancement, the field of healthcare is no exception. With much advancement in the field of medicine and research the role of bioethics has increased manifold. In developed nations, bioethics is keeping pace by formulating new laws and obligations, but where do we stand?

We are far behind in building a standard foundation which is ethically and morally acceptable for our community and health professionals to stand on. So what can be done? Who will do it? How can it be done? And from where should we start?

Not going into much detail, being a new

student to the subject and lacking the required expertise, I will highlight the core place where bioethics has been ignored. That core place is the medical curriculum at graduate level where bioethics is not taught as a basic subject (at least, as far as I know from the curriculum of my province). Currently we are producing doctors with very little knowledge regarding bioethics. Although the NBC is currently holding workshops for health professionals, this is a very small number getting trained. In my view, the best way is to develop a national consensus and approach the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council to include bioethics in the curriculum of the graduation course in the medical colleges/universities throughout the country. The emphasis on the subject of bioethics should not be less than on any other subject in the curriculum of medical graduates.

There remains a lot to be done. But I am thankful to the NBC for providing me the opportunity to learn about the basics of bioethics regarding medical practice and research. I will be much pleased to continue to develop my understanding of bioethics in the future.



Following a CBEC Forum on Astronomy, "Among the Stars," with Mr. Abubaker Shekhani on April 27, 2018, participants queue up to view the night sky through a telescope set up on the CBEC terrace.

*Dr. Himayat ullah, Fellow, The Field Epidemiology & Laboratory Training Program (FELTP), Pakistan

**Workshop on Role of Media
in Public Education
April 20 - 21, 2018**



Workshop participants discuss the role of media in enhancing public knowledge about organ donation

As part of the SIUT National Conference on Organ Donation and Transplantation, CBEC hosted a workshop on the importance of media in advancing public knowledge about organ donation. Moderated by Mr. Ghazi Salahuddin, an esteemed journalist, and Dr. Farhat Moazam, the workshop attracted a large number of participants from both electronic and print media.

On the first day, the diverse group deliberated upon the different avenues that can be utilized within media to enhance public awareness. Recommendations included conversations about the topic on morning shows, using celebrities to increase awareness and utilizing popular forms of media such as films and TV dramas. On the second day, rapporteurs Dr. Rubina Naqvi and Dr. Aamir Jafarey presented these recommendations to the larger audience of the conference.

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name a few. CBEC faculty and its alumni are members of the National Bioethics Committee of Pakistan, and the Center was recently awarded the status of WHO Collaborating Center for Bioethics. The ripples that began with the BG twenty years ago are now spreading beyond the borders of Pakistan. Funded by a NIH grant, the CBEC-KEMRI Training Initiative began last year to develop formal bioethics training in Kenya, replicating CBEC’s educational programs.

**WHO Initiative on Ethics and
Vector-Borne Diseases**

With the recent spate of dangerous epidemics, like SARS, H1N1, Ebola and Zika, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has been working on different fronts to address the various challenges that the world faces. In addition to making guidelines on the ethics of provision of healthcare and conducting research in epidemics, the world body has also recently focused on the ethical aspects of controlling vectors responsible for the transmission of many of these infections. Dr. Aamir Jafarey was involved in two of these consultations aimed at devising a set of guidelines for the ethical limits of controlling vectors, in February 2017 and recently, in May 2018 in Vienna.



Dr. Aamir Jafarey (second from right) along with WHO meeting participants in front of the Josephinum at the Medical University, Vienna where the May 2018 meeting was hosted