

THE ASIA PACIFIC BIOETHICS PROGRAM OF THE UNESCO CHAIR IN BIOETHICS

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In 2005 at the 33rd session of General Conference the UNESCO, adapted the universal declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. Declaration article 1.1 outlines the principals that respond to ethical issue related to medicine, life sciences and associated technologies as applied to human beings. Thus the international standards for Bioethics are grounded in a language of rights—to-safe guard human dignity and human rights.

UNESCO made ethics of Science and technology one of its 5 priority areas. It is charged with promoting the education of ethical issues of Science and Technology. The UNESCO Program in this area aims to strengthen the ethical link between scientific advancement that is taking place and the cultural, legal, philosophical and religious context in which it occurs.

The UNESCO Chair in Bioethics was established to coordinate and stimulate an international network of institutes for medical ethics training. In this role there is a need to develop an up to date syllabus for medical ethics education which will satisfy the requirements of medical fraternity. These followed two international studies 2001 that the UNESCO undertook in researching, the importance and quality of education in ethics in medical colleges and faculties all over the world. The results were confirmed, that there is an

emerging need for introduction of teaching of medical ethics as a consequence of several social and scientific processes that have taken place. These included the relationship between health care providers and their patients, the choice of medical interventions for the individual patient, the choice of public health interventions, the evaluation of effects of health care interventions, the collaboration between teams engaged in health care activities and the choice of goals and methods of medical research.

Practicing medicine today with the implications of globalization and technology often involves decisions about ethical and other patient issues. Thus students, doctors and health care professionals need education about ethical issues and Law.

The Asia Pacific region host around 60% of the global population. The advent of globalization has an impact on many regions and societies in Asia and Pacific. This has resulted in transformation and transitions both happening simultaneously. These have resulted in changes in social scenarios, impacting on many areas including values traditions norms, which had been an important in upholding ethical traditions.

These changed situations have seen new ethical challenges unfold. An important area is in bioethics that doctors and health care professionals have now to confront.

Globalization of clinical research, sponsored clinical trials for new treatments, mobility of people and migration, first world health care at third world prices, global market of health services, organ and tissue procurement, reproductive medicine-in vitro fertilization, designer, surrogacy are issues that are contributing to the changed state which have ethical implications of these globalization consequences to the host societies.

There is evidence that knowledge on medical ethics and law can have a more direct impact on the type and quality of care that the average patient receives. Thus doctors need to be better educated about specific aspects of ethical medical practice. They need to be encouraged to learn to think critically about the increasingly complex world of medical science. This will mean that we can provide medical care in an ethical and humane way.

There is a need to solicit conceptual changes in medical faculties, form modern curriculum for education of ethics, and train the potential teachers for the instructions of ethics, create modern educational tools and materials. There is a need for collaborative research in the areas of cultural implication to bioethics in the Asian region, bioethics training and teaching in Asia, preparing and introducing a modern curriculum reflecting the need for integration of ethics in daily practice, increasing interest and respect to values involved in health care delivery and increasing the awareness of competing interests.

The UNESCO Asia Pacific program offers a special emphasis on international consensus, declarations

and resolutions, thus providing common grounds for accepted morals, values and legal norms

Some of the targeted objectives include creation of training programs for teachers and instructors in medical schools, periodic and non-periodic seminars, developing novel, modern and sophisticated educational tools and material that will facilitate attractive teaching. Availability of these will encourage the incorporation of ethics education in Medical schools curricula in the Asia Pacific region and will reflect in the practice of ethical health care. The program expects outcomes that will reflect increase in the number of ethics courses in medical colleges and universities, curriculum for Asia incorporating cultural issues and values, additional time devoted to ethics during medical school years, workshop and training for Bioethics educators in medical colleges, introduction of ethics courses in faculties lacking them and enhancing the methods of teaching of bioethics.

In conclusion the Asia Pacific Program of the UNESCO chair aims to have national Bioethics units in medical college and universities in all the Asia Pacific countries. These UNESCO units will stimulate the teaching, training and research of bioethics in the medical colleges and universities in their respective countries. The Bioethics units of the network will serve as the UNESCO's Asia Pacific Collaborating Centres. The national units of the network will collaborate to research areas in bioethics and in developing up to date curriculum and innovative models of teaching bioethics in medical colleges.

Current Asia Pacific units; India:

South India Fr. Muller Medical College; Kasturba Medical College Manipal; Cooperative Medical College and Indian Medical Association Kerala; **West India:** Rajiv Gandhi Medical College Mumbai; **North India:** Government Medical College Kashmir; **Central India:** Caring Foundation Nodal Bioethics centre for India SRM University Chennai India; **Malaysia:** National Defence University Kula Lumpur; **Indonesia:** Airlangga

University Surabaya; **Japan:** Tokyo Medical University; **Srilanka:** National Institute of Mental Health; **Pakistan:** Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences; **Nepal:** BP Koriella Institute of health sciences Dharan; **Vietnam:** Hanoi Medical University Hanoi; **Philippines:** Medical College Philippines University Manila; **Fiji:** National University of Fiji Suva; **Australia:** Centre For Asia Pacific Bioethics studies.