

new developments

Journal of Bioethical Inquiry

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From November 2004, the *New Zealand Bioethics Journal* will be replaced by a new journal, the *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* (JBI). This short piece aims to give you some background to this development, and tell you something about the new journal.

Background

The NZBJ is managed by the Bioethics Centre at the University of Otago. It grew out of the *Otago Bioethics Report*. It was a natural development to move from the OBR, which was not peer reviewed, to a peer reviewed journal. The development was driven and overseen by Lynley Anderson. The *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry* represents another fairly natural move. It is a joint venture of the Bioethics Centre and the Australasian Bioethics Association. An ABA journal has long been mooted, and is seen as highly important to the development of the ABA, and in particular to the further development of its membership as a vital community. A link with an already established and successful journal being produced within the ABA's geographical ambit seemed the most obvious way to achieving the ABA's aim. Discussions between the ABA and the Bioethics Centre started in 2003, appropriately enough, during the ABA's 9th Conference, which was the first held in New Zealand. A group was set up to work out the details and oversee the development of the JBI, and this group has also established contacts with the Australian Institute for Health Law and Ethics (AIHLE).

Aims of the JBI

Perhaps, at first sight, the need for a new international bioethics journal is not obvious. But a shared vision of what the JBI might aim to achieve emerged, which marked it out as having

something distinctive and important to offer the wider community of those studying and otherwise interested and/or involved in bioethics.

Both the ABA and the Bioethics Centre perceived the need for a forum for debate and discussion within bioethics which, rather than assuming that the methods and subject matter of bioethics are already fixed, would be open to new insights from both inside and outside the usual 'bioethical' disciplines of philosophy, ethics and law. From the point of view of the Bioethics Centre this reflects an existing breadth of authorship published in NZBJ, which has encompassed articles from historians of medicine, sociologists and anthropologists. The ABA had developed a clear aim to open up bioethics to insights from disciplines reflecting less traditional viewpoints, feminism and cultural studies, continental philosophy and other non-analytical philosophical approaches, for example. The confluence of insights from many disciplines, in the belief of the group overseeing the development of the new journal, is to be welcomed, as are the tensions which may arise between them. The JBI will then act as a forum in which bioethics is conceived as being in ferment.

The new journal will also take the notion of bioethics in its widest sense – to include not only the more traditional subjects of health ethics, but also wider themes to be found in the life sciences (for example related to the human body) and in environmental ethics.

This openness to points of view and discussion it is hoped will also meet the aim of widening the audience for bioethics. In practical terms, this will be achieved in part by the journal

being received by all members of the ABA (as a part of their subscription) as well as – or so we hope – existing subscribers to the NZBJ. The aim of widening the audience also poses a challenge for potential authors of articles for the JBI. For debate and discussion reflecting a wide range of both established and newer disciplines to take place, and to introduce a wider audience to this, will require that authors express themselves in ways accessible to the non-specialist intelligent reader. To open genuine debate is to commit oneself to effective communication. This does not mean simplification, of course: but it does mean minimisation of the use of unexplained jargon and technical terms. And this in its turn implies reflection on one's own approach and on the extent to which it is accessible.

Editorship of the JBI and other Practical Issues

Lynley Anderson, who has edited the NZBJ throughout its life time, will continue as joint editor for the new journal. She will work with co-editor Chris Jordens (who will be based in Sydney). They will seek the assistance of AIHLE in editing the Law section of the JBI. The Editors will report to an Academic Editorial Board, which will consist of representatives from both the BC and the ABA. A wider International Academic Board will be established, representing the range of disciplines and of approaches which the JBI hopes to encourage in its pages, and forming a further resource for the journal's development.

As regards numbering, the first issue of the JBI will be Volume 5 Number 3 (continuing the numbering of the NZBJ). In the first instance, it will remain at three issues per volume/year, though this is open to review, with a move to four issues being a possibility. It will have a new cover, though it will retain its current size, except that it will move to having a spine, allowing the journal to expand to 60 pages or more.

The main content of the JBI will be, as was the case with the NZBJ, peer reviewed articles. The JBI will also have a section of review articles, which might include critical notices of books and articles on such things as developments in genetics and other traditional bioethical issues, but might also include reviews of significant writings on theoretical questions about the nature of bioethics discourse, for example. The JBI will have traditional sections such as editorials and correspondence. It will also retain the 'In that case' section from the NZBJ. A completely new section will focus on law issues. As with the review section, this will not be confined to issues for law, for example the law in particular health or environmental areas, but may extend to more theoretical issues, for example relating to the importance of legal discourse to bioethical discussion.

The JBI will also have a number of occasional sections, for example, a student essay section, a research ethics section, and a book reviews section.