

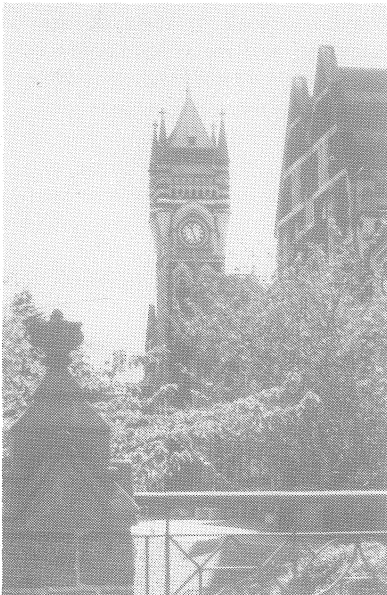
NEWSLETTER

Bioethics Research Centre

University of Otago
Te Whare Wananga o Otago

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Editorial



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In this issue of the *Newsletter* we continue our focus on the major changes occurring to the New Zealand health care system. One aspect of the changes which has not been widely debated is their effect on confidentiality and the privacy of health information. We are publishing a thorough discussion of this topic in our *Law Notes* column. Readers will be alerted to the importance of this topic by Grant Liddell's conclusion regarding the effect of the new legislation: "Patients have fewer legally reinforced assurances that their confidential information will be held confidentially". Such an outcome may not have been the intent of the framers of the legislation.

The debate about the market approach to health is continued in our *Readers' Views*. We also report on the very significant amendment to the Health and Disability Support Services Bill which means that New Zealand will have a national committee on health care ethics established by statute.

Other features of this issue take us to both the beginning and the end of human life. In Gareth Jones' *Commentary* one aspect of prenatal existence is explored - the alleged distinction between the embryo and preembryo. The clinical conclusions from such a distinction have been of major importance, for example, in the legislation in the UK regarding experimentation on the human embryo.

So far as the end of life is concerned, the Centre's report on *Persistent Vegetative State and the Withdrawal of Food and Fluids* has now been approved by the NZ Medical Council and released for wide public discussion. (Readers may obtain copies of the Report from the Medical Council, P.O. Box 11-649, Wellington.) In his *Commentary* Grant Gillett summarises the Report's findings and explains the moral basis

for its conclusions. We fully acknowledge that this is a contentious area in which there is room for a divergence of view. Debate of the issue has already begun with a letter from Ian Andrews in our *Readers' Views*. We would welcome further comment. Equally the Medical Council is concerned to hear reactions to the Report from both the professions and the general public.

The major event on the horizon for the Bioethics Research Centre is the International Seminar to be held in Dunedin in the week 22-26 November. Response to our initiative in suggesting a meeting of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Bioethics has been outstanding. Eighteen of the 22 member Board will be attending. Interest in and support for the Seminar has come from the Core Services Committee, the new Regional Health Authorities, the Medical Council and the Department of Health, as well as from numerous professional colleges. Further detail on the Seminar is given in this *Newsletter*.

All of us involved in the planning have become aware that this will be the event of the decade so far as Bioethics in New Zealand is concerned. We are expecting a large enrolment for this event, but we shall be maintaining the atmosphere and educational philosophy of our memorable first summer school held in 1992. Costs to participants will be kept as low as possible and the collegial atmosphere of Knox College will be available once again to create a conference to remember. We also expect a significant local participation at the seminar itself and at the evening public lectures. See you in Dunedin!

Alastair Campbell,
Director.