

International Seminar on Bioethics

Patients who have subsequently learned that their surgeon is HIV-positive have begun to bring claims in US courts. The Maryland Court of Appeals has ruled (*Faya v Almaraz*, 1993) that patients have a potentially valid claim, even if they have suffered no physical injury, for the "reasonable window of anxiety" between learning of their possible exposure and testing HIV-negative. At the same time, HIV-infected physicians are fighting back, arguing that the "inform or don't operate" policies now being adopted by US hospitals effectively deny them the right to work and amount to unlawful discrimination in the workplace, under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The New Zealand Medical Council has sensibly eschewed such an approach in its 1993 Policy Statement on Transmissible Major Viral Infections.

Center for Biomedical Ethics

Spending my working day in a medical school, albeit with daily trips across campus to the law school, was a new experience (and something of a challenge for the law students who tried to find me!). The beneficial aspect was the opportunity to participate in the life of the Center for Biomedical Ethics, to discuss bioethics issues with colleagues there, to read from the Center's journal collection, and generally to expand my bioethics knowledge by osmosis. I particularly enjoyed the monthly gatherings of bioethicists from the greater Cleveland area to discuss readings or works-in-progress. I also followed with interest Tom Murray's work as chairman of the national Task Force on Genetic Information and Health Insurance, which resulted in the release, in May 1993, of an important report on "Genetic Information and Health Insurance". In its wide-ranging proposals, the Task Force has recommended that genetic information not be used to deny or influence the costs of health care coverage, and that disclosure of such information not be a condition of access to basic health care services. Significantly, a number of health insurers have endorsed the recommendations.

Over two hundred and fifty people from diverse groups including ethics committee members, health professionals, health consumers, lawyers and health managers, attended the Centre's International Seminar on Bioethics in November 1993.

The five day event, held at Knox College, began on Monday, 22 November with a Powhiri and the emphasis throughout the week was on biculturalism and multiculturalism.

A distinguishing feature was the wealth of overseas bioethics scholars participating, with speakers attending from India, Hungary, the United States, China, Italy, the UK, Argentina, Nigeria, Japan, Australia, Egypt and Chile.

The first half of the week concentrated on clinical issues including Genetic Research, Assisted Reproductive Technology, and STDs and AIDS. The second focused on health systems with sessions such as Prioritising, Research and Development and Information Use. The bridge between the two was Wednesday's sessions on Feminist Approaches to Bioethics and Bioethics in a Multicultural Context.

Public lectures in the evenings on Animal Rights, Maori Health Issues and the American Health System Post-Clinton meant a wider group from Dunedin was able to participate.

The emphasis during the Seminar was on interactive methods of communication such as panel discussions and hypotheticals.

Participants were also appreciative of workshops which allowed people to discuss issues raised in greater depth in small groups. Evaluation forms showed those who attended rated the Seminar very highly, particularly the friendly atmosphere among those participating and the general ambience of Knox College.

The importance of the event, for both the University and the City, was recognised by a Town and Gown reception on the Monday night when the Mayor and Pro-Chancellor welcomed participants to Dunedin. The Seminar was made possible by the remarkable support given by the professional Colleges, Regional Health Authorities, Ministry of Health, Core Services Committee, Health Research Council and the Legal Research Foundation.

It is hoped to produce a publication of selected papers from the Seminar. Tapes of all major sessions are available from Joy Miller, 5 Alana Place, Ellerslie, Auckland at a cost of \$8 per tape.

In view of the Seminar's success the Centre is planning to hold another gathering in late 1995 or early 1996.

Seminar Proceedings from the 1993 International Seminar on Bioethics are being compiled by the Centre.

Those interested in purchasing a copy are welcome to register their interest with the Centre.

Friends of the Centre

The number of people becoming Friends of the Centre continues to increase. The Centre has received positive comments about its publication (now renamed *Otago Bioethics Report*), and about the specialised information service available to Friends.

New subscribers are always welcome. Costs are \$25 for individuals, \$30 for institutions, \$15 for full time students, and NZ\$35 for overseas subscriptions. Payment should be enclosed with order, and sent to:

Bioethics Research Centre, PO Box 913, Dunedin.