



OTAGO BIOETHICS REPORT

Incorporating Bioethics Research Centre Newsletter



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Guest Editorial



Report on the 1996 Ethics Summer Seminar

One of the distinctive features of health care ethics in New Zealand, frequently commented upon by overseas visitors, is the extensive participation by non-health professionals, and the varieties of backgrounds, skills and perceptions that are part of our debates. This variety was again celebrated at the Bioethics Summer Seminar held in Dunedin February 9-14, 1996.

More than 100 people gathered at Knox College to participate in one of the three streams offered. Organised in association with the Health Research

Council, the weekend focussed on Research Ethics. Presentations looked at the work of ethics committees (who is on them and why, do they work, research methodology and ethical appraisal), and on specific areas of concern (foetus and embryo research, the boundary between research and treatment, and commercial development of biomedical research). The design of the sessions sought to emphasise the different perspectives brought by consumers, health care providers, researchers and others, and to provide opportunity for participants to explore the issues in workshops. Overseas contributors included Tom Murray (from Case Western Reserve University in the United States), and Paul McNeill (from Australia).

The second half of the programme had two streams running in parallel. Teaching and Learning in Bioethics was one focus. With the assistance of Bernadette Tobin from the John Plunket Centre in Sydney, this stream looked at topics such as the role of teachers, curricula design and assessment, and methods of teaching. It was a highly interactive programme with plenty of opportunity for teachers of ethics to be stimulated by and learn from others teaching bioethics around the country. The other stream looked at Moral Management in Health Care - issues of allocation and rationing, health managerial ethics, economics and ethics, and public policy. Herman Meijburg provided stimulation from outside New Zealand, offering his perspective from the Netherlands.

Two public events were also part of the Summer Seminar. Tom Murray presented a public lecture on Moral Obligations to the Not Yet Born, and

the Hypothetical format was used for another public event that looked at Health Care in the year 2001. Both occasions attracted wide interest from the community.

The Centre's commitment to encouraging community participation in ethical issues is also reflected in one of our summer projects. Sarah Gordon was awarded a Health Research Council summer studentship to work with the Centre in preparing resources for community discussion of euthanasia. The material should be in its final form in the next month or so and readers might like to return an order for the material (see the special pre-publication offer in this issue). The material provides both information, and a process for groups to use that can be led by people who need not feel they are experts in the field. It has been an interesting challenge to design workshops that can provide helpful information, encourage discussion, and allow for a diversity of opinion. However, feedback from the recently completed pilot has been very encouraging, enthusiasm has been expressed for the chance to explore what can be a deeply charged topic, and initially reluctant participants have returned for subsequent sessions!

So it has been a busy start to the year in the Bioethics Centre, and promises to continue to be so. We hope our readership will feel free to contribute to bioethical debate in New Zealand by responding to issues raised in the Otago Bioethics Report, suggesting topics that they would like to see discussed, or offering articles or news reports on areas in which they are involved.

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