

Bioethics on the Internet

There are a large number of websites devoted to Bioethics. For anybody researching a topic within bioethics, the internet has become a very useful resource. We've listed some of the more interesting websites that we are aware of. Some of the most rapidly developing issues are raised by new genetic technologies; unsurprisingly, there are a large number of sites that provide information and opportunities for discussion on these themes. The following website has a 'chatroom' in which you can converse via your computer with people around the world.

The Center for Bioethics Ethics and Genetics a Global Conversation

location <http://www.med.upenn.edu/%7Ebioethic/genetics.html>

ARE WE PLAYING GOD?

What do you think about genetic testing, genetic enhancement, gene therapy, genetic engineering? This 'electric conversation' lets you post your comments INSTANTLY and engage in LIVE CONVERSATION with any of the hundreds who visit our site every week. FEEL FREE to talk about your concerns as a parent, researcher, clergy member or student.

The National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature has a home page which outlines some of the functions the Center fulfils. They are the people who produce New Titles in Bioethics, which is one of the most important places to look for new material in Bioethics. They also produce 'Bioethicsline' which is the bibliographic database available on CD-Rom, another essential research tool for Bioethics. You can search the Georgetown Library's online catalogue through this site.

The National Reference Center
for Bioethics Literature World Wide Web Home Page

location <http://guweb.georgetown.edu/nrcbl/>

The National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature (NRCBL), operating on a contract with the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, is a specialised collection of books, journals, newspaper articles, legal materials, regulations, codes, government publications, and other relevant documents concerned with contemporary biomedical issues in the fields of ethics, philosophy, medicine, science, law, religion, and the social sciences.

The library holdings represent the world's largest collection related to ethical issues in medicine and biomedical research. This collection functions both as a reference library for the public and as an in-depth research resource for scholars from the US and abroad.

The National Reference Center works with the Bioethics Information Retrieval Project of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, which produces BIOETHICSLINE (the online database that is part of the National Library of Medicine's MEDLARS network) and publishes the annual Bibliography of Bioethics.

The National Information Resource on Ethics & Human Genetics was established on September 1, 1994 with the support of the National Center for Human Genome Research and is affiliated with the National Reference Center for Bioethics Literature (NRCBL). Approximately 15 percent of the NRCBL's large collection deals with molecular biology and human genetics.

As well as a large number of sites for those wishing to research topics, there are sites which can offer support as well as information. There are a number of web sites with good health related information. The 'Hygeia' site is the work of Dr Michael Berman.

Hygeia...An Online Journal for Pregnancy and Neonatal Loss –
A New Resource for Women's Health and Healing.
location <http://www.connix.com/~hygeia>
hygeia@connix.com

Hygeia is an interactive online journal
with an approach to healing via three avenues:

The Mind through education and information.
The Spirit through the emotions of poetry.
Communication through the sharing of feelings and experiences.

The sites described here are obviously a very small selection of what is out there. If you have World Wide Web access try these sites out and if you have been thinking about taking the plunge, it is a particularly good source of information relating to bioethics.

If you don't have World Wide Web access but are on email there are several Bioethics list servers that you can join. A list server that Centre staff listen in on is Biomed-L. The discussion ranges freely over many areas in Bioethics. A feature of this list is that well-known bioethicists often post messages here. To join Biomed-L you simply send the following text in a message 'SUB listserv@ndsuvml.bitnet yourfirstname yourlastname'. When you get acknowledgement from the list, make sure you keep this message as it should tell you how to get off the list when you want to.

There are list servers on just about every topic you can think of. 'Philosophy in Cyberspace' is a great guide to ethics-related lists. To get a copy, you can download it by going to [ftp.ccmonasm.edu.au](ftp://ccmonasm.edu.au) in the directory /pub/philosophy.

If you can't get to the FTP site you can contact the author via email at dey@monu1.cc.monash.edu.au who will, if you ask nicely, send you a copy. ■

At the Centre

The process of appointing a new Director for the Centre is still under way, in the mean time the Centre is being led by Acting Director Professor Gareth Jones. It is hoped that a new Director will be here late 1997 or early 1998.

Centre staff are filled with the freshness brought about from exposure to new ideas at the San Francisco IAB conference. There was a strong New Zealand presence at the conference, with about ten bioethicists from New Zealand present. (For a full report on the Conference, see this issue's editorial).

This year we will have a large number of students embarking on thesis preparation. Research Topics range from 'Towards a more ethical science' to 'The long-term effects on mothers of the survival of their very premature infants'. Students continue to reflect a wide range of professional and academic backgrounds: scientists; midwives, doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and lawyers. Hamish Broadbent is close to submitting his thesis 'Privacy implications of genetics information: a New Zealand perspective'.

In addition to masters and doctoral students third-year medical student Neil Price has been granted an HRC

scholarship to spend a year studying towards a Bachelor of Medical Science in Bioethics. The title of Neil's project is 'Setting criteria for comparing public and private health care providers'.

Over the summer, two medical students have been working on studentships. Hamish Gray was awarded an Otago Medical Council Scholarship to compile resources on the use of fetal material. Hamish has put together an extensive annotated bibliography on this topic. Ruth Cunningham has been working on an HRC-funded scholarship. She has been doing the preparatory work for a major project on teaching the ethics of human genetics to high school students. This work will be picked up by visiting fellow Murray Davidson, who has been awarded a Royal Society fellowship. Murray is a secondary teacher who will be working with the Centre and the Dunedin College of Education to develop ethics resources for use in high schools.

Katherine Hall has been hard at work organising the 'Ethics for the Practising Surgeon' seminar which will be held during March. As highlighted in the last issue of the OBR, Professor Miles Little will be visiting the Centre at that time. ■