Message from the Director

Fall is always a busy and productive time for the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy. Each October, we travel to the annual meeting of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH). This year, the ASBH meeting was in San Diego, California, and we had record representation from the Center with 13 faculty, students, and staff attending. For the first time, the Center sponsored an exhibition booth that featured information about who we are and what we do. We attracted a lot of visitors who were interested in learning more about the Center, and it wasn’t just because of our amazing Center swag! We also had high visibility at the ASBH meeting with 12 presentations and posters by members of the Center, on topics such as clinical ethics consultation, developing decision aids, genome science, life-sustaining technologies, nudges and participatory influences, and HIV/AIDS research (see Selected Presentations, below). We even organized a late-breaking, standing-room only session on Ebola.

The recent outbreak of Ebola has stimulated national and local debate about hospital preparedness and professional responsibility. Administrators at all of the Texas Medical Center (TMC) hospitals, and nationwide, have been faced with the challenge of developing policies for how to manage patients with Ebola. For example, there is significant debate about whether CPR should be administered to patients with Ebola, given the significant risk of infection to healthcare providers. Several of our faculty (Laurence B. McCullough, Ph.D., Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D., Nathan Allen, M.D.) responded quickly to this crisis by developing an ethical framework to guide policies for the responsible management of patients with Ebola. This framework was also shared with TMC leadership and members of the ethics committee for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and has been submitted for publication so that healthcare facilities nationwide can benefit from this work.

It is through your support that we are able to send our Ethics Track students to ASBH, promote the Center, and respond quickly to events like the Ebola outbreak. So thank you, for your continued support of the Center and for being a member of our growing community. Please know how much we value our relationship with you and look forward to collaborating and building meaningful connections in the coming year. Warmest wishes for health and happiness throughout 2015!

Events

Journal Club and Clinical Case Conference
Journal Club meets monthly at noon -1 p.m. in a brown-bag lunch, open-forum style. Anyone is welcome to attend and join in the conversation. Upcoming dates for the monthly gathering are: Dec. 11, 2014, and Jan. 8, 2015.

Clinical Ethics Case Conferences will take the place of Journal Club on a quarterly basis to create an environment for learning and analysis of interesting ethics cases. The next Clinical Ethics Case Conference will be in February 2015. Please contact us for more information in you are interested in attending.

Grand Rounds
The next Bioethics Grand Rounds will take place on Dec. 17, 2014, and will address PEG placement in patients with stroke and dementia. Check out a complete list of topics and dates for our upcoming Bioethics Grand Rounds. Grand Rounds are held at Houston Methodist Hospital from 5-6pm in the Rio Grande conference room. Programs are intended for HMH healthcare professionals, but are open to anyone interested in attending.

Become a Center Supporter

The Center’s mission is to conduct innovative multidisciplinary research on ethical issues arising in clinical practice and biomedical research. Your support will enable us to further this mission as we address ethical and policy challenges in healthcare and biomedical research, inform the education of trainees at all levels, and contribute to the development of health policy at the local, national, and international levels. In particular, your gift will support faculty research, Ethics Track student education, and community outreach activities. If you would like to talk to someone about making a gift or directing your gift to a specific project, please contact us or donate online now.
**EDUCATION**

**Ethics Track Students Attend Annual ASBH Meeting**

Thanks to the generous donations from our Ethics Track alumni and Center supporters, two Ethics Track students had the opportunity to attend the ASBH annual meeting. This professional meeting enables students to be exposed to innovative medical ethics work and to network with other students, academicians, and practicing clinicians who are interested in medical ethics.

> It was a transformative experience, and I came away from it with a much better idea of my career goals and how to achieve them. Additionally, I went to a variety of talks on topics that were new to me that I found fascinating. I sincerely hope the Center continues to offer this opportunity to med students, as it was an outstanding experience. -- Holland M. Kaplan, MS2

Please consider making a [donation](#) so future students can benefit from this wonderful opportunity!

**Introducing Our New Intensive Bioethics Course**

We are excited to announce that the Center and Houston Methodist Hospital are offering a **week-long intensive bioethics training course**, which will provide formal training in clinical ethics consultation **May 11-15, 2015**. This unique, practically oriented and clinically focused course will cover core medical ethics content and how to apply this knowledge in the clinical setting (through conducting independent consultations, providing recommendations, developing and conducting meetings of ethics committees, developing and reviewing hospital or system-wide bioethics policies, and conducting mediation and other skills-based consultative activities) by way of lectures, workshops, small group discussions, mock committee meetings, and case simulations. Course directors are Courtenay Bruce, J.D., M.A. and Robert Cheney, J.D.

[Register Online Today and Receive the Early Bird Special!](#)

**CONSULTATION SERVICES**

**Now Hiring in Clinical Ethics**

The Center is rapidly expanding its clinical ethics program, with consultation services at adult, pediatric, private, and public hospital systems in the Texas Medical Center.

As a result of the program’s growth, the Center is hiring four new clinical ethics positions:

- **Assistant or Associate Professor, Clinical Ethics**: A faculty member who will conduct clinical ethics consultations, contribute to the Center’s multidisciplinary education program, and conduct high quality research and scholarship.

- **Clinical Ethicist**: This position is reserved for someone with a terminal degree or master’s degree in a field related to bioethics to conduct ethics consultations independently for high-volume clinical ethics consultations services.

- **Clinical Ethics Fellowship**: This two-year fellowship program provides comprehensive training in clinical ethics consultation by the Center’s renowned faculty with additional participation in the Center’s educational and research activities.

- **Clinical Director, Clinical Ethics Consultation Service at Texas Children’s Hospital**: The Center has recently partnered with Texas Children’s Hospital, one of the nation’s top children’s hospitals, to create a more enhanced clinical ethics consultation service and is looking for a Clinical Director to lead this new service.

Please [view the job descriptions](#) on our wesite for more information on the positions and application instructions.

**In the News**

Center faculty have provided commentary on a variety of controversial medical ethics cases garnering significant media attention.
Dr. McGuire has been working with a team of experts to address policy issues related to the next generation sequencing (NGS) industry with support from a $1.6 million National Human Genome Research Institute grant. In the first phase of the project, the team studied the NGS industry and how it is developing in response to an uncertain regulatory climate. McGuire and colleagues, Margaret Curnutte, Ph.D. and Karen Frumovitz, J.D. of the Center and Juli Bollinger, M.S. and David Kaufman, Ph.D. of the Genetics & Public Policy Center at Johns Hopkins University, just published a letter in Nature Biotechnology. The letter highlights the key features of the NGS industry and discusses the policy implications of emerging business models.

We are crowdsourcing these data and updating them regularly. We encourage everyone to visit our webpage for this project and participate in our efforts to create an even more comprehensive and accurate list of NGS companies and their services!

The team also recently edited and authored a special policy issue of the Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics (JLME) to address four key policy domains related to the NGS industry: U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulation, reimbursement, intellectual property, and proprietary databases. In addition, Patricia Deverka, M.D. of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Pharmacy, Dr. Kaufman, and Dr. McGuire have a paper that has been published in JAMA this month, “Overcoming the Reimbursement Challenges for Clinical Sequencing.”

The Center is expanding its program in health policy to create a more cohesive health policy forum for the Baylor College of Medicine community. As a result of this program’s growth, the Center is hiring two new positions:

- **Associate Director of Health Policy**: This distinguished scholar will lead the Center’s program in health policy and participate in the Center’s educational and research activities.
- **Health Policy Program Manager**: Manage day-to-day activities for the health policy program and work closely with the Associate Director to ensure the program’s success.

Please [view our job descriptions](#) for more information on the positions and application instructions.

As referenced, the 2014 ASBH annual meeting was held on Oct. 16-19 in San Diego. We are proud to report that Center personnel provided 12 presentations and posters.

In particular, Nathan Allen, M.D., Courtenay Bruce, J.D., M.A., Mary Majumder, J.D., Ph.D. and Adam Pena, M.A. led a panel presentation titled “Systematizing Ethics Consultation Services in an Era of Hospital Consolidations” and Dr. Blumenthal-Barby and Professor Bruce led a workshop titled “Developing and Testing Patient-Centered Decision Aids.” Other topics covered include the use of life-sustaining technologies, genome science, nudges and participatory influence, HIV/AIDS research, and the future of the clinical ethics practice and profession.

Center personnel also presented at the 2014 American Society of Human Genetics annual meeting Oct. 18-22 in San Diego. Dr. McGuire and Leila Jamal, Sc.M., C.G.C. presented findings from the MedSeq: Integration of Whole Genome Sequencing into Clinical Medicine project and Dr. Curnutte presented findings from the Clinical Integration of Next Generation Sequencing: A Policy Analysis project.
Dr. McGuire presented at the TEDMED 2014 “Unlocking Imagination” conference in San Francisco on Sept. 10. Dr. McGuire presented in a session entitled “We Just Don’t Know” where she explored what can happen when we recognize the limits of our knowledge. A video of her talk will be forthcoming. Read more about her talk on Communities Digital News. Read more about TEDMED 2014.

Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D. presented “Autonomous’ Decisions and the Ethics of Nudging” this fall at Cedars-Sinai Noon Ethics Conference, Los Angeles; Meriter Hospital Fall Ethics Conference, Madison; and Rice University Medical Humanities Symposium, Houston.

Trevor Bibler, Ph.D. presented a paper on Sept. 18, 2014 on “Medical Humanities in the Age of Technology” at the Western Michigan University Medical Humanities Working Group.

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

Dr. McCullough has collaborated in scholarship on ethics in obstetrics and gynecology with Frank Chervenak, M.D. (Given Foundation Professor and Chairman of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Weill Medical College of Cornell University) for more than 30 years. This is the longest physician-philosopher collaboration in the field of bioethics. Their latest book, The Professional Responsibility Model of Perinatal Ethics, was published in Sept. 2014. Drs. McCullough and Chervenak have published more than 200 papers in the peer-reviewed literature.


Professor Bruce collaborated with Estevan Delgado, Kristin Kostick, Ph.D., Dr. Blumenthal-Barby and other Decision-Making for Ventricular Assist Device Placement project colleagues on “A Systematic Review of Psychosocial Risk Factors and Their Impact on VAD-related Outcomes” published in Journal of Cardiac Failure.

Dr. Majumder contributed a chapter on “Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis and the Prevention of Suffering” in Suffering and Bioethics.

RECOGNITION

Trevor Bibler, Ph.D. successfully defended his dissertation “On Miracles and Medicine: Negotiating Religious Values at the End of Life.” He received his Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies from Vanderbilt University.

Courtenay Bruce, J.D., M.A. was appointed to the Vice-Chair position of the Clinical Ethics Affairs standing committee, which will rotate into the Chair position in October 2015. This committee advises the ASBH Board on issues related to health care ethics, including the topic of certifying health care ethics (HCE) consultants and/or accrediting programs that educate and train HCE consultants.

Congratulations to all!

Contact Us
Looking for ways to get involved with the Center? Would you like to be added to our distribution list? Other questions or concerns? Please contact us!

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