Summer is a time to pause and reflect. It is the end of one academic year and the beginning of the next. It is therefore appropriate that we kicked off the summer with a graduation ceremony celebrating the eight outstanding medical students who completed the Ethics Track this year. Each of the graduating students did an excellent job presenting their capstone ethics project to our faculty, as well as their classmates and their families. The projects covered a wide range of medical ethics issues and each one made an impressive scholarly impact. I am proud of each of our graduating students and feel confident that they are all well equipped for their future careers in medicine.

The beginning of summer is also an ideal time for our annual faculty-wide retreat. This provides us the opportunity to collectively reflect on our accomplishments over the past year and to strategically plan for the future. This year, our annual faculty-wide retreat took place at Trevisio Restaurant and Conference Center in the Texas Medical Center and included broad participation from our Secondary Faculty and Affiliated Members. Posters from our eight graduating ethics track students were proudly displayed at the retreat.

As part of our faculty-wide retreat this year we hosted a grant writing seminar led by Grant Writers’ Seminars and Workshops, LLC. This day-long workshop focused on writing award-winning grants and was available to all Center faculty and staff, Secondary Faculty, and Affiliated Members. We had a great turnout and the workshop proved to be a very helpful resource for future grant writing endeavors.

Finally, this summer we hosted our first community outreach event. Our Center is committed to creating a shared intellectual environment that facilitates discussion of the biomedical ethical issues facing our community. We thought there was no better format to do that than an evening of ethics and art as we hosted “Bioethics on Stage,” an interactive play that brought to life the process of informed consent and disclosure of genomic findings. We are extremely grateful to members of the community who volunteered their time to help us organize and publicize the event, and especially those who courageously took the stage as actors. Nearly 100 supporters of the Center came out to participate in this event and helped to make it a success. I continue to be humbled by the support that we have received and am energized to keep growing, connecting, and engaging with the community that we are grateful to serve.
EDUCATION
Ethics Track Graduates Honored at Poster Showcase
On May 27th, eight graduates from Baylor College of Medicine Medical School were also honored for their completion of the Ethics Track. Friends, family, and Center faculty joined in celebration at a Poster Showcase during which the graduates presented their capstone projects. Ethics Track Director Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, PhD, and Secondary Faculty members Stacey Berg, MD, and John Coverdale, MD judged the posters, and prizes were given to the winners of the Baruch A. Brody Award, named in honor of the Center’s founding director.

1st place: “By Any Other Name”? Towards an Ethical Nomenclature for Disorders of Consciousness by Jennifer Wax, MD (faculty mentors: Drs. McGuire and Kass)
2nd place: Cancer Care in Cognitively Impaired by Vania Phuoc, MD (faculty mentor: Dr. McCullough)
3rd place: Postmortem Sperm Retrieval: Insufficient Guidance for Clinical Decision-Making by Ella Doerge, MD (faculty mentor: Dr. McGuire)

Please see a complete list of graduates, their projects, and where they will be completing their residency.

With this graduating class, we now have more than 130 students who have graduated from the Ethics Track since its founding in 1993!

CONSULTATION SERVICES
The clinical ethics mission of the Center continues to flourish with the impressive work ongoing at Houston Methodist Hospital System, Baylor St. Luke’s Hospital, Texas Children’s Hospital, Ben Taub General Hospital, and the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center. We are pleased to report positive progress on the following new initiatives related to our clinical services:

New Fellowship Program to Train the Next Generation of Clinical Ethicists
In partnership with Houston Methodist Hospital, the Center is implementing a new two-year Clinical Ethics Fellowship. As discussion increases at the national level about consultant certification and accreditation of training programs, quality fellowship programs such as this are critical for maintaining high standards. Selected from a competitive applicant pool, we’re pleased to welcome the program’s first fellow, Trevor Bibler, who will soon complete his PhD in Ethics & Society; Bioethics from Vanderbilt University. Mr. Bibler joins Center clinical ethics consultants, Courtenay Bruce, JD, MA, Nathan Allen, MD, and Adam Pena, MA, to work on the HMH Biomedical Ethics Program. In addition to the new fellowship program, the Center is actively looking to hire an experienced, full-time clinical ethicist to help meet the increased consult demand at HMH as an unprecedented 442 annual consults were conducted in 2013.
Research Ethics Consultation Service Continues to Grow

The Center offers a Research Ethics Consultation Service to all members of the BCM community through the Institute for Clinical and Translational Research. Please read a recent interview with Dr. McGuire to learn more about what we do and the types of research ethics issues this service addresses. To request a consult, click on a service request form on the ICTR website and check the box for research ethics consultation. For more information or questions regarding the research ethics consultation service, please contact, Quianta Moore, MD, JD.

Research

The Center continues to partner with Rice University in support of the Rice-BCM Health, Humanism, and Society Scholars Program, which provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to earn course credit and receive valuable experience in research. Dr. Blumenthal-Barby is co-director of the program. This year many Rice students were mentored by Center faculty, and the success of this program is evident by the promising work of these students. With their mentor Dr. Blumenthal-Barby, Julika Kaplan and Zainab Shipchandler co-authored a paper, "An Ethical Framework for Public Health Nudges: A Case Study of Incentives as Nudges for Vaccination in Rural India" that they presented in May at the Harvard Law School Petrie-Flom Conference on Behavioral Economics, Law, and Health Policy. The paper will be published in a forthcoming book with essays from Cass Sunstein, JD, and other scholars. Additionally, the students presented this work at the Rice Undergraduate Research Symposium in April, with Ms. Kaplan and Mr. Shipchandler winning 2nd place in Humanities research and the Center for Languages and Intercultural Communication Prize. Thomas Carroll, mentored by Dr. McGuire, also presented his work, a poster titled “ELSI Issues of Participants and Decliners in the MedSeq Project: A Randomized Trial of Whole Genome Sequencing,” at the Rice Undergraduate Research Symposium, winning 3rd place in the Humanities department. His poster was also accepted for presentation at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research and the annual meeting for the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics.

Select Publications

Professor Bruce and Dr. Mary Majumder, JD, PhD, co-authored “The ‘Permanent Patient’ Problem,” appearing in the spring 2014 issue of Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics. Professor Bruce also co-authored “Like Fireman Going into a Fire: Moral Distress in the Intensive Care Unit” in ICU Management. Dr. Blumenthal-Barby joined bioethics.net as a recurring monthly blogger.

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 sound public policies in health care. 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 at (713)-798-4711. Or donate online now.
Dr. McGuire delivered a lecture “Before Birth and Throughout Life: Ethical Considerations in Genomic Sequencing” for the “Conversations about Ethics” series at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. Professor Bruce and Sherry Grogan, Houston Methodist Hospital Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner, co-presented a regional webinar for Living Bank Donor Advocate titled “Transplant Psychiatry and Ethics.” Professor Bruce also spoke on “Moral Distress in the Context of End-of-Life Decision Making” for Houston Hospice. She and Center Clinical Ethicist Mr. Pena spoke on “Ethical Considerations Associated with Alzheimer’s Disease” at Texas A&M University School of Medicine. Mr. Pena also presented with Center Health Policy Associate Dr. Moore on “Legal and Ethical Considerations: Adults who Lack Capacity & Informed Consent” at a Clinical Research Education Session for the BCM clinical research community. Dr. Blumenthal-Barby presented a paper, “Dilemmas for the Rarity Thesis in Virtue Ethics” at the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division Meeting in San Diego.

We are excited to announce that Dr. McGuire is an invited speaker for TedMed2014. This program will take place September 10-12 and will stream live from Washington, DC and San Francisco. The theme of this year’s meeting is “Unlocking Imagination in Service of Health and Medicine” and Dr. McGuire will present during Session 2 titled “We Just Don’t Know,” in which speakers will explore what can happen when we recognize the limits of our knowledge.

Professor Bruce was selected as a recipient of the Constance M. and Byron F. Dyer Fellowship at Houston Methodist Hospital. This fellowship recognized her proposal to improve the quality of patient care by elucidating patients’ perspectives on informational and decision support needs for innovative surgeries. Her mentors will be Dr. Barbara Bass and Dr. Carol Ashton.

Dr. Blumenthal-Barby received the Fulbright & Jaworski L. L. P. Faculty Excellence Award in Teaching and Evaluation and will be recognized May 12, 2015 at the BCM Educational Innovations Day.

Dr. Allen was appointed to the national ethics committee of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP).

Stacey Pereira, Ph.D, recently received her Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology from Rice University. An integral member of the Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications of Genomics Research Program for four years, Dr. Pereira has now transitioned to the position of postdoctoral associate.

The BCM 2014 graduating class honored Center Secondary Faculty member John Coverdale, MD, with a Graduating Class Outstanding Faculty Award. With this award, Dr. Coverdale moves into the Outstanding Faculty Hall of Fame. Also receiving faculty awards were Center Affiliated Members Lorraine Potocki, MD who received the highly coveted Robertson Presidential Award for Excellence in Education, and David Mann, MD, Mariella Self, PhD, and Wendi Stewart, MS, PA-C, who each received a Fulbright & Jaworski Faculty Excellence Award in Teaching and Evaluation.

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!