MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Ethical, Legal, and Social Implications (ELSI) of Genomics research group in the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy was recently awarded a $2.2M grant from the National Institutes of Health, National Human Genome Research Institute to study ethical and policy issues related to the creation of a medical information commons – a networked environment in which diverse sources of health, medical, and genomic data on large populations become broadly available for research and clinical use. During his 2015 State of the Union Address, President Obama announced his Precision Medicine Initiative, which seeks to enable “a new era of medicine through research, technology, and policies that empower patients, researchers, and providers to work together toward development of individualized care (www.whitehouse.gov/precision-medicine).” During his 2016 State of the Union Address, he called on Vice President Biden to lead a new National Cancer Moonshot to eliminate cancer as we know it. The success of both of these initiatives is dependent on our ability to collect and share massive amounts of clinical and genomic data across diverse platforms within both the public and private sector. Our team is engaging expert stakeholders and using deliberative methods to obtain informed public input on an ethical and policy framework that supports data sharing, helps to build a medical information commons, and ultimately advances research and improves public health.

The first Building the Medical Information Commons Advisory Committee meeting was held March 2-3 in the Texas Medical Center. This meeting brought together academic and industry leaders from healthcare systems, clinical labs, technology companies, academia, government, and nongovernmental organizations. The discussion focused on the policy challenges and research opportunities related to: building noncommercial partners; obtaining industry perspectives; patient and community engagement; and legal, policy and ethical considerations. The meeting provided the Advisory Committee and invited guests with a platform to discuss current issues concerning data-sharing policies and practices while simultaneously providing the project team with guidance and feedback. We also got to introduce our Advisory Committee members to the Houston Rodeo, which was a hoot!

The timing of this grant, which is largely focused on national science policy is fortuitous as we launch the new Baylor Health Policy Program in the Center. Christopher Scott, PhD, will be joining the Center in May as the new Associate Director of Health Policy. Dr. Scott, a former cell biologist, comes with a variety of experience including researching the social, economic, political, and ethical dimensions of new biotechnologies, holding senior academic and industry leadership positions, and serving on the editorial boards of several high-impact journals. His work is widely published in esteemed journals such as Cell, Nature Biotechnology, American Journal of Bioethics and national news forums. We are very excited to welcome Dr. Scott to our group and invite all of you to personally welcome him to our community!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Journal Club: April 7
Intensive Bioethics Course April 11-15
Grand Rounds: Sept. 21
Clinical Case Conference: May 12
Additional Events on Page 6
Ethics Track Students’ Recognition

Ethics Track students continue to produce highly acclaimed work receiving international recognition. Highlights from Stephanie Allen, Arina Chesnokova, Holland Kaplan, Julika Kaplan, and Jean Yau include:

Presentations


• Arina Chesnokova served as the March 2016 editor of the AMA Journal of Ethics. This issue features work from many Center and affiliated faculty members.

• Holland Kaplan was accepted to the 2016 Fellowship at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics Medical Program.

• Jean Yau has been inducted into the Gold Humanism Honor Society and elected as President of the Student Section. She is also a recipient of the Harold T. Praessner Scholarship from the Harris County Academy of Family Physicians.

• Lastly, Ms. Yau recently presented “Knowing & Growing: Enlightening High School Students about Sexual Health in a Sex-Positive Way” at the James K. Alexander Research Symposium (3rd place in clinical sciences) and the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine Conference on Medical Student Education (selected as a Student Scholar).

Congratulations to our Ethics Track students!
New Health Policy Program Update

The Center is in the beginning phases of building the new Health Policy Program that was set into motion approximately two years ago with the original Health Policy Institute through the President’s Office. The Program, housed in the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy, will endeavor to make Baylor College of Medicine a leader in healthcare and science policy.

After working with AMC Strategies, LLC, last fall, we put together an ambitious Strategic Plan for the Program. With our new Associate Director of Health Policy, Christopher Scott, and Health Policy Program Manager, Leah Fowler, we are now working to implement the Strategic Plan. Formal kickoff of the Program is scheduled for May 2016.

Welcome Christopher Scott, Ph.D.

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Perspective: Have Tobacco 21 Laws Come of Age?


JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Subscribe to our email distribution list to receive the latest updates on Center activities and Health Policy Program Developments
Follow us on Twitter @BCMEthics
Join our LinkedIn group
Like us on Facebook
Visit our website www.bcm.edu/ethics

IN THE NEWS

Check out the latest hot topics in medical ethics and health policy capturing national public attention.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

John Antonio is the Center’s new volunteer Wellness Champion. One of his first initiatives is to promote Multiple Sclerosis awareness by representing the Center at the BP MS150 with Team Baylor. Read his story and join him in helping MS patients and furthering research.

John’s Healthy Tip:
Have too much on your mind at the end of the day? Try a workout that encourages you to focus on just one thing and forget everything else: like traditional boxing, breaking your PR on a timed run, or just meditation. Focus can help your mind let go of everything else for a little while and relax.

IN THE NEWS

Check out the latest hot topics in medical ethics and health policy capturing national public attention.
Clinical Ethics Scholarship

The Center’s Clinical Ethics Program has been active publishing and presenting their programmatic work. Here are a few highlights:

Publications
Bruce CR, Bibler TM, Pena AM, Kusin B. A Qualitative Exploration of a Clinical Ethicist’s Role & Contributions During Family Meetings. HEC Forum. 2016. [Epub ahead of print]


Presentations


Farewell to the Center’s first clinical ethics fellow, Trevor Bibler, PhD, who will be joining the American College of Physicians (ACP) in Philadelphia, PA as a Senior Associate in the Center for Ethics. In this role, Dr. Bibler will be conducting research and policy analysis in bioethics, developing medical ethics education programs, staffing the ACP’s Ethics, Professionalism, and Human Rights Committee, and much more.

CLINICAL ETHICS

It’s not too late to register for the 2016 Intensive Bioethics Course taking place in Houston April 11-15. This practical course promises to be a productive and engaging week that covers fundamental bioethics topics and advanced clinical ethics skills. 100% of last year’s participants said they intend to change their practice as a direct result of the course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

• Identify ethical challenges arising in patient care;
• Develop ethically reasoned and practical strategies for addressing these ethical challenges;
• Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these strategies in particular cases; and,
• Formulate interdisciplinary plans for appropriately managing these ethical challenges.
**Select Presentations**


**Select Publications**


Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby and Gidon Felsen have been awarded a fellowship in the Summer Seminars in Neuroscience and Philosophy (SSNAP), which will take place at Duke University from May 22 through June 4, 2016. SSNAP encourages collaboration among philosophers and neuroscientists to jointly study big questions about free will, morality, human nature, perception, knowledge, and consciousness.

**Fellow Spotlight**

**Name:** Stacey Pereira

**Professional interests:** Ethical, legal, and social issues (ELSI) in genomics, medical anthropology, clinical integration of genomic sequencing, biobanking, ethnographic methods, anthropology of science & technology

**Educational background:** PhD: Anthropology from Rice University in Houston, Texas; BA: Psychology from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts

**A day in the life:** My current projects are ultra-collaborative, which means I spend a lot of my time during the week meeting with colleagues as we work to develop and move these projects forward. It makes finding quiet writing time a bit more challenging, but the collaborative nature of the projects is so rewarding. Evenings are generally spent with my husband and our three dogs (with the occasional margarita, of course!).

**Biggest accomplishment during fellowship:** I think my biggest accomplishment has been learning how to manage a component of a large, collaborative project. This work has taught me not only how to develop and manage a research project, but also how to collaborate with colleagues from different disciplinary backgrounds to bring varied expertise to the table. I think these experiences have helped to position me to successfully manage my own research projects in the future.

**Favorite anthropologist:** Oh, tough question! I think I’d have to say Margaret Lock. It is her work that really helped me to understand the importance of exploring the larger socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts that shape medical and scientific practice and knowledge.

**Most memorable experience during fellowship:** During my fellowship, I have been given a lot of opportunities to give talks, both at small educational events and larger conferences. I think these experiences have really improved my public speaking and presentation skills over the last two years. A few months ago I was invited to give the scientific seminar at the Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation. I was extremely pleased to hear that it was one of the best attended seminars they have had, and that my talk was very well received by both faculty and staff. I credit the experiences my fellowship has given me for the success of that talk.

**EVENT DETAILS**

Journal Club & Clinical Case Conference: Monthly, brown-bag lunch, open-forums available to anyone interested in attending. Once per quarter, the Clinical Ethics Case Conference replaces the Journal Club. Subscribe to our email distribution list to learn more.

**Grand Rounds:** Monthly events held at Houston Methodist Hospital (5-6p Rio Grande Room) for their healthcare professionals, but are open to anyone interested in attending.