

IAB News

The Newsletter of the International Association of Bioethics

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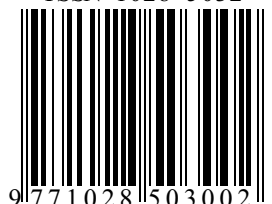
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The International Association of Bioethics Newsletter is produced by Mike Parker and Deborah Diniz. If you would like to contribute to the next issue or if you have events that you would like to have announced in the next issue, please contact Mike Parker on Michael.parker@ethox.ox.ac.uk

Deborah Diniz and Mike Parker

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DEEP LISTENING

*The World Congress of Bioethics, Sydney
Tuesday 9th - Friday 12th November
2004*

The IAB's 7th World Congress of Bioethics will be held at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia from Tuesday 9th to Friday 12th November, 2004. The Congress theme is Deep Listening: bridging divides in local and global ethics and the Sub-themes are Indigenous Health Ethics, Public Health Ethics from Local and Global Perspectives and Refiguring the Body.

There is a stimulating and varied program that will include plenaries on the major themes of the Congress, Special Symposia on major issues in Bioethics, and papers on topics within each of the Sub-themes along with interesting and fun cultural and social events. The Congress will deal with issues of critical importance in the world at this time and provide attendees with an opportunity to participate in discussion sessions with leading speakers on a variety of topics.

Congress attendees will hear from leading speakers in bioethics and meet people from all around the world.

The theme Deep Listening was suggested by dadirri-a word from the Australian Aboriginal language of the Ngangikurungkurr tribe of the Daly River, in far north Australia. Dadirri means inner deep listening and quiet still awareness. Deep listening: bridging divides in local and global ethics suggests a conversation of discovery at the margins between cultures and between those with power and the disempowered.

The Congress program will address a range of challenging ethical issues relating to Indigenous health, public health and issues in bioethics more generally. The Congress also includes more philosophical presentations on topics such as feminist approaches to refiguring the body and papers on the following themes:

Deep listening as an approach to Indigenous cultures.

Bridging divides through deep listening.
Ethical interactions within Indigenous peoples.
Public health as a function of the experience of individuals and local cultures.
Examining assumptions of public health.
Globalisation and health.
Humanitarian assistance.
Trust.
Democracy in public health.
Bioterrorism.
Borders and the control of movement.
Research in health policy and research.
Social justice as the driver of public health ethics.
Approaches to refiguring the body.

In addition to the Congress, the University of New South Wales will also host satellite Conferences including the International Network on Feminist Approaches to Bioethics (FAB) 2004 Congress (Sunday 7th - Tuesday 9th November) and the Australasian Bioethics Association's (ABA) 10th Conference (Saturday 13th - Sunday 14th November). Persons registering for the IAB's 7th World Congress of Bioethics (Tuesday 9th - Friday 12th November) are encouraged and welcome to attend these satellite events. Not only are there exciting and cutting edge programs planned for these events, those who register for the IAB Congress, as well as one or both of the satellites will receive worthwhile discounts on their overall registration fee. For more details please visit www.fabnet.org and www.australasian-bioethics.org.au.

Host city Sydney's friendly and relaxed atmosphere will provide the optimum environment for Congress attendees to meet colleagues from around the world, and develop new professional and personal contacts. This wonderful multi-cultural city is built around one of the largest and most beautiful harbours in the world and boasts many attractions including: art galleries, museums, markets, theatres, opera and music, parks, gardens, magnificent beaches, hundreds of top restaurants, cafes, pubs and bars.

The University of New South Wales is located a short distance from the centre of Sydney, providing access to these wide range of academic and social activities. The campus is well equipped for meetings, parties, international

conferences and other large scale events and has recently been named one of the "State of New South Wales' top meeting spots".

For more details about the Congress Theme, Sub-themes, program, Special Symposium applications, abstract submissions for Concurrent, Conversation and Poster Session Presentations, as well as travel and accommodation information, please visit the official Congress website: www.bioethicsworldcongress.com. □

An interview with the President

The new President of the International Association of Bioethics is Professor Florencia Luna. Deborah Diniz asked her how she came to be interested in bioethics:

DD: Florencia could you tell us something about your academic background?

FL: My academic background is in philosophy. I started out by doing theoretical philosophy rather than bioethics. Mainly this was from an analytic philosophy perspective which is quite unusual for an Argentinean philosopher, because most philosophy here is in the continental tradition.

DD: So, what led you to change to bioethics?

FL: Despite my background in theoretical philosophy, I was always attracted to applied ethics. At the end of my studies Prof. Eduardo Rabossi, taught, for the first time, a course in applied ethics. It was also the end of the dictatorship in Argentina, when many banned philosophers entered the University of Buenos Aires. I decided to work with him. He was my adviser for several years. Although I first came across his work in applied ethics, he switched to Metaphysics (mind-body problems) and Philosophical anthropology shortly after that and so for some years I followed his intellectual path into these areas. Finally, when I won a full fellowship and decided to do an M.A. at Columbia University I decided I had to come back to my first love: applied ethics and since then I have been working in bioethics.

DD: What areas do you work in mostly?

FL: In my opinion there is a need to think about what bioethics means from the perspective of the South. I'm currently working in research ethics and in reproductive issues from a gender perspective and from a southern perspective. For instance, we import certain technologies (PGD, prenatal diagnosis) from the north even though in our society it is at the same time forbidden to destroy embryos or to do an abortion due to fetal abnormalities. This creates a paradoxical situation and high levels of hypocrisy. I think it is important, particularly for bioethicists from southern countries to consider issues such as these and help to highlight the problems they imply.

DD: How is bioethics in Argentina? Tell us for example about your Fogarty Programme.

FL: I have mentioned the problems caused by international dimensions of reproductive technology. Another hot topic in the region is research ethics. With the modification of the Declaration of Helsinki there has been more and more awareness of the implications of some of these changes. Brazil has reacted very strongly and well organized, and in a way Argentina is also entering the debate. Now there is a flourishing of a lot of activities regarding research ethics.

For example, I have been working (as co-director) together with Ruth Macklin (as Director) in a training programme on research ethics sponsored by the Fogarty International Center of NIH. This programme which was carried out partly in New York and partly in Buenos Aires, has now developed to a point where it can be based completely in Buenos Aires. It gives us the opportunity of training not only our trainees from all over Latin America but also researchers and people from research ethics committees from Argentina and Uruguay by opening our special seminars to people interested in the topic. The spirit is to foster debate, analysis and thinking in these controversial and important issues. □

Thank you for the support of the International Association of Bioethics

Deborah Diniz

In September of 2002 I was fired from the Catholic University of Brasilia where I was teaching bioethics. The reason for my dismissal brought about a relevant discussion on a key-issue for Brazilian university teaching in general, and for the field of bioethics in particular: the constitutionally guaranteed right to academic freedom, a right not yet regulated, but a constitutional right just the same. As a result of this lack of regulation, there are no sanctions or punishments for universities which do not respect such right.

At the time of my dismissal I was a professor and researcher of feminist bioethics specialized in the subject of abortion in Brazil. My connection to ANIS: Institute of Bioethics, Human Rights and Gender, Latin America's principal non-governmental bioethics organization, put the university under continuous pressures on account of my dismissal. After approximately a year and a half of professional instability I was fired in the midterm of a semester. Their argument was that a catholic university could not tolerate a professor who worked with and wrote about abortion.

News of my dismissal got around two months before the international FAB and IAB congress in Brasilia. The international reaction was vigorous, generating an enormous political pressure within the university. The IAB was one of the entities that made haste to affirm its position, repudiating the freedom of speech restriction and affirming that academic freedom is a condition for bioethics research and teaching.

Restricting freedom of speech is a serious attempt against human rights. Owing to Brazil's slow pace of political proceedings, my dismissal has generated a series of academic discussions oriented towards the definitive regulation of the principle of academic freedom. Being an IAB member at the time, the support I received from this organization, along with that of other institutions, universities and international

researchers, was essential to advancing this discussion in Brazil. □

Support for Directors' Participation in Board Meetings

Following discussion by the Board of the International Association of Bioethics about the question of support for members of the Board of Directors in attending World Congresses, the following statement was read out by Professor Alex Capron on behalf of the Board, at the open meeting of the IAB membership in Brasilia, on November 2nd 2002.

"As someone who was a member of the founding board of our Association and hence has personal familiarity with the initial deliberations on this topic back in 1992, and as someone who has served as the President of a World Congress, and hence implemented the policy in question, I have been asked by the board to report on a policy that the IAB has followed for the past decade and that the Board has recently had occasion to review. This report is presented for your information and for any response you may wish to provide to the board; a copy will be circulated in the next newsletter to the entire membership.

As you know, next January, the Secretariat will issue a call for nominations for candidates for the vacancies that will be arising on the IAB board of directors. That call will remind potential candidates and their nominators that Board members have a number of responsibilities:

- To represent the best interests of the IAB membership;
- To support and promote the Association to the best of their abilities;
- To be willing and able to address a variety of bioethics topics by serving as speakers and moderators at IAB meetings; and
- To participate in the board's deliberations which occur in meetings at the time of each World Congress and at a meeting held midway between congresses (as well as via e-mail throughout the year).

From the outset of the IAB, it was apparent that procedures had to be in place to ensure that all directors would be able to participate in the board meetings. Limiting membership to persons who had personal, institutional, or research funds to support the cost of attending meetings would keep the board from having the diversity (in terms of geography, discipline, and stage in career) that is essential for a representative body of an interdisciplinary, international association.

It was obvious then-and it remains true today-that the Association could not (and should not) try to fund board meetings through membership dues. We are too small and too poor to hope to do that; indeed, we have to rely on board members' institutions to subsidize a lot of costs of running the association, such as the cost of the web-site and the secretariat. Instead, to ensure that all persons who were willing to serve and who were chosen by the membership to serve could do so, the Board adopted the policy of requiring the organizers of the World Congresses, and the conferences held in odd-years between the Congresses, to cover the costs of the board meetings. This support is not a personal reward to board members or even a recognition of the work they do for the Association and at the Congresses. Rather, it is an institutional mechanism to ensure that all members of the IAB can stand for the office of director and that all who are elected can be present at the meetings of the board.

This practice differs from many other professional associations. While such groups often cover the costs of interim meetings, when board meetings occur in conjunction with conferences, officers-like other speakers at such meetings-are typically funded through their home departments, research funds, or privately, on the grounds that being an officer and/or conference speaker is sufficiently prestigious that such funding is expected. Since our Association is now ten years old, the Board has reviewed our policy, with an eye to whether it is now appropriate to change the manner of financing the costs of board meetings. In particular, concerns have been expressed that support for board meetings increases Congress registration fees and employs funds that might otherwise be allocated for attendance of

students from developing nations. At the margin, these concerns have merit. Yet the effects are likely to be very small because most directors serve as speakers at the conferences. Thus, the expense of their attendance is fungible with the speakers who would replace them; the same cost would exist-and would be reflected in registration fees-were other figures in bioethics invited to speak at a Congress instead. Indeed, this has been true at the present Congress as at past Congresses regarding many speakers who are not board members. (Of course, board members do not receive any honoraria for their talks.) As for the issue of scholarship funds, the experience of the organizers of several past Congresses has been that scholarships for registrants from developing nations are probably the most attractive item for funding agencies and foundations.

Hence, having reviewed ten years of experience with the policy on board meeting expenses in light of the concerns that have been raised, the Board has concluded that the policy has worked well and should be retained. Of course, we recognize that it creates a burden. The entire IAB is grateful to the five groups that have sponsored our interim meetings and the five that have organized the World Congresses from number II in Buenos Aires to the present number VI in Brasilia, and to the people who are organizing the interim meeting for next year and the VII World Congress in 2004. To ensure that this burden in assisting the IAB is as small as possible, we have also reviewed and reaffirmed board members' obligation to minimize costs not just by traveling in the most economical fashion but also by utilizing alternative funds whenever they are legitimately available or could be developed (for example, by accepting an invitation to lecture at or near the conference location, etc.).

In conversations with members of the IAB, we have come to see that while many are aware of the policy on funding of board meetings, some are not. Therefore, we decided to report on the policy to you now, not only to invite feedback but especially because of the relevance of the policy for the upcoming elections. The policy is relevant in two regards: first, in considering whom to nominate, it should reassure you that all

members-whether from a rich nation or institution or a poor one, whether with ready access to travel funds or not, whether an established figure in the field or a rising young scholar-will be able to participate fully in board deliberations without having to beg for support on grounds of poverty. In this way, the sort of diversity in terms of gender, geography, and circumstances that is expected by our Constitution can be guaranteed. Second, you should aim to elect to the board outstanding figures in bioethics whom you will want to have as speakers at our Congresses, since the effect of the policy is to encourage meeting organizers to draw on the board in scheduling papers, as is apparent from the present Congress programme, for example.

I hope that the purpose and effect of the policy on board meetings is clear, I invite your questions and comments, and I urge you to keep the policy in mind in nominating and electing directors."

-A.M. Capron,
on behalf of the Board of Directors
□

Some useful Bioethics websites available on the Internet

If you have an interest in keeping up to date with developments in bioethics and bioethics resources, you might be interested to try the following resources:

Bioethicsweb	(www.bioethicsweb.ac.uk)
Bioethics Today	(www.bioethics-today.org)
BioNews	(www.bionews.org.uk)

If you know of other resources you would like to bring to the attention of the membership of the IAB, let us know. □

Second Annual IRENSA Research Ethics Seminar: 2004

The UCT Bioethics Centre, in association with the International Research Ethics Network for

Southern Africa (IRENSA), is pleased to announce its Second Annual Research Ethics Seminar on 2 & 3 August 2004. This seminar is generously funded by the Fogarty International Center of the US National Institutes of Health.

Topics to be addressed are: 'The ethics of research on children,' 'Reviewing qualitative research protocols,' 'Financial conflicts of interest in research' and 'Ethical dilemmas in HIV/AIDS research.' The Programme can be found at: www.irensa.org.

No registration fee will be charged to participants. Teas and a light lunch will be provided each day. To register and to obtain a list of nearby B&B's and hotels, please contact:

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CPD Accredited □

Meet the Board

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