



Program in Human Rights and Medicine

The Program in Human Rights and Medicine was founded in 1988 by Professors GEM Anscombe of Cambridge University, John M Dolan of the University of Minnesota and Hymie Gordon of the Mayo Clinic. Joined by current co-chair Steven E Calvin, MD, in 1996 the Program affiliated with the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Women's Health in the University of Minnesota's Medical School. Jasper Hopkins, Department of Philosophy, and Brian Dowd, School of Public Health, joined as co-chairs in 2002.

The Program is devoted to conducting scholarly investigation, practical projects and educational programs that bear on a wide range of moral, legal and public policy problems involving medicine. One source of the problems addressed is the (astonishingly) swift progress that has been achieved in genetics, medical diagnosis, transplantation procedures, reproductive technologies, artificial organ systems, therapeutics, and general biomedical sciences. A second source is the steadily widening gap between the medical care available to the affluent and that available to the poor (particularly in developing nations). A third source is the recent explosive growth of medical costs.

A Focus on the Vulnerable

In its inquiries concerning fundamental questions about human rights in health contexts, the Program maintains a distinctive focus on various classes of vulnerable persons, for example, infants with handicaps, adults with disabilities, poor people, debilitated elderly patients and nursing home residents. The Program's work is informed by a powerful sense that certain transformations underway in medical practice and public policy are threatening important protections of human life once securely established, while other transformations are posing wholly new and hitherto unconceived risks. Thus, one question the Program asks about actual and proposed technologies, procedures, and policies is: "What risks and burdens does this impose on the vulnerable?"

Debate and Inquiry

Questioning preconceptions is an important source of the strength and health of a university. The Program is firmly committed to nourishing that source of strength and giving real service to the ideal of encouraging many voices to be heard in the on-going urgent conversations about matters of access, life and death. This goal is not simply a moral ideal; it is a requirement of intellectual advancement, particularly in the fields of ethics and policy. Each of us has only partial

understanding and only part of the competences required to find our way through the difficulties. To restrict discourse to a single moral perspective or to a single discipline or narrow range of disciplines would be to undercut investigations from the outset. As scientific, technical advances in medicine do not dictate their own application, nor process in policy automatically achieve efficiency with equity, the Program in Human Rights and Medicine casts its net wide to develop a deepened understanding in questions of law, science, morality and public policy which affect the vulnerable and larger community, inviting to the table persons and perspectives from the academy and the community.

Recent Program lectures, seminars and series:

- * Is the Economy the Patient? - Prenatal Diagnosis under Cost/Benefit Analysis
- * The Healing Power of Stories: The Role of Story in the Medical Relationship
- * Genetic Engineering: Revising the Foundations of Ethics?
- * AIDS, Drugs, and Africa: Patent Rights or Patients' Rights?
- * The Ziagen AIDS Drug License: University Commitments and Constraints
- * Refugees / Immigrants: Unrecognized Torture Sequelae Affect the Health of Many
- * Mental Health Issues of Aging Holocaust Survivors and the 2nd Generation
- * A Patient Not 'Seen': Coercion, Prostitution and Medical Awareness
- * Cloning and the Challenge to Human Dignity
- * Health Insurance, Demand, and 'The Case of the Vanishing Welfare Gain'
- * Human Rights and Public Health Series

Audio recordings of programs are often available. For a more comprehensive list of programs, resources and related information, please visit our website at www.umn.edu/phrm.

Should you have a specific interest in human rights and health or wish to be notified of upcoming events via email or post, please contact us.

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