



Bioethics Caribe – Winter 2009

Newsletter of the Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean

Issue 3 Number 1
December 2009

CONTENTS

Editors Corner

BSEC's 3rd Annual Forum

Highlights of BSEC's 3rd Annual Forum

- Selected Presentations
- Additional Presentations

Regional News

- The National Bioethics Committee of Jamaica (NBCJ)
- Bioethics and You – Why Should You Care?
- Bioethics Increasingly Important in Jamaica
- New Pan American Bioethics Initiative (PABI)
Funded by the Fogarty International Center
- Stakeholder Involvement Needed to Protect Women's Health in Guyana
- Nations Should Make Narcotic Drugs Available for Treating Pain

BSEC's News

- Plans and Accomplishments
- Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Johns Hopkins University
- Notable Activities

Contributors



BSEC'S 3rd Annual Bioethics Forum (June 5-6, 2009)

From left: Donald Simeon (BSEC Treasurer), Richard Schulterbrandt Gragg (Director of the Environmental Sciences Institute, Florida A&M University), Grace Sirju-Charran (BSEC member), Daniel Piedra-Herrera (BSEC Honorary member), Derrick Aarons (BSEC President)

EDITOR'S CORNER

Cheryl Macpherson, Editor, Bioethics Caribe and BSEC Vice President

BSEC's 3rd Forum (June 5-6, 2009 at UWI's St. Augustine campus in Trinidad) built upon the success of the 2008 Forum by increasing the number of presenters and audience size and surpassing expectations. The theme "Bioethical Standards: People and the Environment" drew attention to some of the problems associated with the health impacts of climate change. Several students were among the presenters attesting to regional concern about the problem and the growing regional value of bioethics. The abstracts of several of these presentations are included herein.

A major step was taken with the official launch of the National Bioethics Committee of Jamaica (NBCJ) on October 1, 2009. BSEC members who were central to its establishment and spoke at the launch have graciously agreed to publish their remarks about the NBCJ in this issue.

A significant development was the birth of Appiah Dawkins-Cox to BSEC's Secretary, Shereen Dawkins-Cox and her husband. Appiah was born on October 16, 2009 at the University Hospital in Kingston. Congratulations to Shereen on her new role as a mother.

Notable bioethics news is reported herein in the Regional News Section which has also grown thanks to readers contributions. The section addresses regional developments pertinent to bioethics and BSEC. BSEC members are influential but modest so this section helps inform readers of their efforts - upon which we can learn from and build. Readers are encouraged to submit news of their bioethics related activities and that of their colleagues. Such news may include press releases, editorials, letters, research findings, or anecdotal observations, and may be submitted informally in the text of an email. Kindly send your news and accomplishments including publications, grants, or invited lectures to kwilliams@sgu.edu for the 2010 newsletter. ■

BSEC'S 3RD ANNUAL FORUM

Derrick Aarons

BSEC's Bioethics Forum in St. Augustine, Trinidad on June 5-6, 2009 was a tremendous success especially in content, organization, and knowledge exchange! The theme "Bioethical Standards: People and the Environment" was most appropriate, and the presentations around this topic were particularly germane to the Caribbean. Special mention must be made of our keynote speaker, Dr. Richard Gragg, Director of the Environmental Sciences Institute, Florida A&M University, whose presentation on the subject was innovative, exhaustive, profound, and held the audience spell-bound for just under one hour! The presentations by representatives of UNESCO from Latin America and subsequent discussions regarding establishing National Bioethics Committees in the Caribbean were also very enlightening and beneficial. We look forward to further work with our bioethics colleagues from Latin America.

Special congratulations were extended by all for the excellence of the work done by the local organizing committee in Trinidad, led by our Treasurer, Dr. Donald Simeon, and Dr. Grace Sirju-Charran, BSEC member and UWI Lecturer. We are turning our attention to BSEC's next Forum scheduled for Georgetown, Guyana, May 27-28, 2010. You will receive a "Call for Abstracts" as soon as the local organizing committee there has completed its initial work. Other postings are available at our BSEC interactive website www.bioethicscaribe.org.jm. One of BSEC's aims is to broadly disseminate pertinent information on Bioethics and our website is the principal vehicle for this. ■

HIGHLIGHTS OF BSEC'S 3RD ANNUAL FORUM

Grace Sirju-Charran (Modified from article in UWI Today, the Trinidad Guardian, June 2009)

BSEC's 3rd annual forum featured two significant addresses. Dr. Donald Simeon Chaired the Opening Session, reminding participants that the theme for World Environment Day in 2009 (Your Planet Needs You-UNite to Combat Climate Change) parallels the focus of this years Forum.

"The second Great Period in the History of Mankind is looming large" and will, of necessity, be accompanied by "a radical change in morality." So proclaimed Dr. Daniel Piedra –Herrera, Professor of Biochemistry and Executive Secretary of Cuba National Bioethics Committee, in his feature presentation "*Ethics and Bioethics: A Change in Morality*" at BSECs Forum which was held on World Environment Day at UWI, Trinidad. Close to 100 participants listened with rapt attention as he continued to develop his thesis describing the first Great Period of human history as one characterized by the biological evolution of humans governed by Genetics and Darwinian evolution, followed by the cultural evolution of societies in "Lamarckian" mode, through the "progressive and selective accumulation of knowledge." Human social constructions he argued were based on "immediacy rather than prevision," and in finding immediate solutions to our problems, we learnt to "favour ourselves in the modification of our environments."

Piedra-Herrera continued: "the strongly inequitable distribution systems...emanate-perhaps unconsciously-from the admission that the *creation and accumulation of wealth is the ultimate aim of human life*" (my emphasis). "Money" he reminded us came after "Life". The second Great Period, he suggests will require a paradigm shift centred on "being" and not on "having" and which acknowledges the "essential identity of human beings." dismantling the existing "strong hierarchies" and "the exercise of power by quite a reduced minority of the population, on the absolute majority." This Existing World Order he argues is the "fruit of unequal commodity exchange" It is anti-scientific and anti-natural, promoting among states asymmetrical political relations. The proposed New World Order will organize societies based on the "essential identity of all human beings...It will feature the coherent construction of horizontal, species-centred, and inclusive societies, with an unbounded holistic cultural development and a controlled technological development aimed at its ecological sustainability." Any deviation in charting this new world order could either optimistically result in either "extinction of the human species resulting from the current ecocide of the planet" or pessimistically in "its self-annihilation in war."

Dr Richard Schulerbrandt Gragg III, Director, Center for Environmental Equity and Justice at Florida A&M University delivered the public lecture *Bioethics and the Environment*. He highlighted the role and responsibility of humans to the physical environment and other biological life forms within it, suggesting that we treat the entire biosphere as a living entity. He suggested that we can no longer continue the practice of interacting with the Environment based on preconceived knowledge (*epistemology-based ethics*), but rather implement the practice of listening to and learning from the Environment (*ethics-based epistemology*). He further argued that the engagement and resolution of environmental and human health issues confronting humanity required a new conceptual framework which integrated bio- and environmental ethics. At the end of the day, the link between Human Health and a Healthy Environment was clear. We all went away with the feeling that we had learnt a lot. I close with Dr. Piedra-Herrera's closing statement: "If we dare try it, knowledge will make us free".

The original article is available online from http://sta.uwi.edu/uwitoday/archive/june_2009/article4.asp ■

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Bioethics and the Environment

Richard Schulterbrandt Gragg

Humanity has historically and consistently questioned its role and responsibility to the physical environment, and the biological life forms within it. Human interaction with the environment is characterized and shaped by our economic and social activities, which are manifest in the built environment. Globalization is driving the analysis of human behaviors on spatial and temporal scales, organizational structures within and between the physical and biological environments and the subsequent impacts on human life and endeavors. We now have a choice between continuing the predominant practice of interacting with the environment based on preconceived knowledge (epistemology-based ethics) or implementing the practice of listening to and learning from the environment (ethics-based epistemology). This public lecture will present an overview of the relationship between bio- and environmental ethics and a conceptual framework for the integration of these philosophies in the engagement and resolution of environmental and human health issues confronting humanity in the 21st century.

Bioethical Standards: The Jamaican Environment and Some Ethical Concerns

Derrick Aarons

The scope of bioethical debate regarding justice in health and care for persons should include issues such as air pollution, water quality, occupational hazards, safe housing, food and drug safety, pest control, disaster preparedness, literacy, and other environmental factors that affect or can cause differences in health. However, not all societies have sufficient resources to address all of these environmental factors simultaneously, and so each society must set priorities in regard to policy formation in these varied areas.

In recent years, the field of environmental ethics has contributed much to the understanding of our general duties and values to nature, animals and plants, populations, and ecosystems. Further, a close relationship has been shown to exist between the protection of the environment and social justice.

In Jamaica, atmospheric pollution from burning sugarcane for harvesting, deforestation, soil erosion, and inadequate protection of streams and rivers from squatters, are some of the specific environmental issues that the country faces. In addition, in recent years, there has been a rapid increase in the construction of “mega-hotels” along the north coast of the island. The thousands of trees destroyed to facilitate these construction sites cannot be re-planted, and the land used cannot be re-claimed in the foreseeable future. This paper will analyze some of the ethical challenges that some of these issues present for sustainable development for the Jamaican populace.

Asbestos Abatement in Succabba, St. Catherine: Action-oriented Research

Ishenkumba Kahwa, Elva Clarke and Norbert Campbell

Whereas the adverse health effects of occupational and environmental exposures to asbestos in developed countries have been well documented and for the most part, limited attention has been accorded to this issue in developing countries. [1, 2] Despite the numerous and diverse reasons for this, the fact is that workers and residents are in precarious working and/or living conditions due to the threat of asbestos-related diseases. [3] Recognising the multi-factoral nature of health determinants, important questions of equity and the protection of such vulnerable populations raise important ethical issues for consideration. [4] This paper seeks to demonstrate the effective use of research by the Chemistry Department of the UWI, Mona, to characterize environmental risk of asbestos exposure in the damp, asbestos contaminated, squatter community of Succabba, St. Catherine, Jamaica. The paper examines mobilization of the community with funding from the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica (EFJ) to clean up pollution in the squatter community and regularize their land tenure.

1. Disease Control Priorities Project (World Health Organisation): In Developing Countries can reduce occupational hazards. Available online : <http://www.dcp2.org/file/139/DCPP-OccupationalHealth.pdf> (Accessed 31/1/2009)
2. Joshi, Tushar¹; Gupta, Rohit¹. Asbestos in Developing Countries: Magnitude of Risk and Its Practical Implications. [Human and Ecological Risk Assessment](#), Volume 11, Number 1, February 2005, pp. 239-247(9). Available online : <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/tandf/bher/2005/00000011/00000001/art00027> (Accessed 31/1/2009)
3. Fernanda Giannasi, Paulo Gilvane and Lopes Pena. Asbestos in Brazil. Asbestos European Conference, 2003. Available online: <http://www.abrea.com.br/enpenadresden.pdf> (Accessed 31/1/2009)
4. World Health Organisation. Determinants of Health: In Health Impact Assessment. Available online: <http://www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/index.html> . (Accessed 31/1/2009) ■

Promoting Public Health Standards in Mobilizing Community Response: 2005 Flood Experiences on the East Coast Demerara, Guyana

Merle Mendonca

Following on the disastrous floods of January 2005, religious and community leaders from the villages between Plaisance to Industry, East Coast Demerara, Guyana, got together at a church in Plaisance – the only religious building above water at the time - to plan a ‘clean-up campaign’. The aims of the campaign were

- Ensure the clean-up campaign was effective and thorough
- Ensure the clean-up was a positive experience in terms of community building
- In disseminating a guide for conduct, to ensure that the campaign was carried out in a manner that respected the dignity and rights of affected persons

A schedule of actions was undertaken including

- Gather information on needs related to clean-up campaign
- Provide people with basic information related to health hazards
- Provide information with regard to quantities and types of materials needed for clean-up
- Provide materials to families who cannot afford adequate clean-up materials

- Provide assistance to shut-ins and others who cannot clean their own premises
- Address the need to clean-up public areas

Guiding Principles were produced for all actors engaged in local disaster relief activities. The experiences of these communities were duplicated in a number of other affected communities along the East Coast, who later came together and shared the key 'Ten Lessons Learnt' in confronting the floods situation. Most of the community leaders have since stayed together and continue to advocate for better village and regional sanitation standards in garbage collection/disposal and safe water.

Air Pollution Caused by the Trinidad Cement Plant: Profit or Loss of Health

Ranu Persad and Dave D. Chadee

Air pollution is truly a global public health emergency with one fifth of humanity living in areas where the air is not fit to breathe. In the Claxton Bay area where the Trinidad Cement Plant is located, there is a significant pollution due to large quantities of gas emissions and dust. Although their gas emissions diffuse, they do not reach the upper levels of the atmosphere to be dispersed/ transported by the prevailing winds. In addition dust emissions in the surrounding environment greatly influence the surrounding population's health. Gases emitted from the stack of these plants are Carbon dioxide (CO₂), Sulphur dioxide (SO₂), and Nitrous oxides (NOX), synthetic compounds and particulate matter. The oxides of nitrogen and sulphur are associated with respiratory health effects especially in individuals with a particular susceptibility.

Studies conducted on chronic exposure to cement dust have demonstrated an increase in the prevalence of chronic respiratory symptoms and a reduction of ventilatory capacity. There are different categories of health effects. First, there can be some temporary damage to the respiratory system which will disappear rapidly when the person is no longer exposed to dust. Second, there can be the occurrence of insidious damage to the respiratory system such as bronchitis or occupational asthma after long-term exposure to dust. The reaction is not as explosive as an allergic reaction, but has various symptoms such as coughing, shortness of breath, or a reduction of pulmonary capacity.

The Bioethical questions which arise include: should the Cement Plant administration accept liability for the impact of its pollutants on the surrounding populations? Do they have any responsibility to the affected population? What measures have they put in place to reduce the emission of these pollutants? What role should the Environmental Management Authority play?

Ethics and Bioethics – Changes in Morality

Daniel Piedra-Herrera and Darel Avalus-Zimertán

The paper is part of on-going methodological work which supposes an integral approach to human reality. The present coordination and planning stage will be followed in Cuba by succeeding stages still under design. The approach proposes a periodization of human history according to which we are bound to a radical change in morality. This approach is based on current advances in neuroscience, axiology, behavioral sciences, law, psychology and other sciences, achieved in the last decades. It is aimed at providing an integral view of human reality from which useful proposals could be derived in the specific

Cuban conditions, with health and education systems allowing the targeting of higher purposes related to the integral realization of the human individual. Although the social, health and education systems adopted in Cuba have been taken as starting points in this approach it does not necessarily correspond to an ideologized view as it mirrors human beings in the most open and faithful way described by established science.

At the beginning of the current period we humans, as any other species, have instinctively gone after survival. Moved by fear and diverse instinctive reaction mechanisms, but endowed with singular neuronal structures, we grouped ourselves in societies organized with the aim of emergently solving the problems we were facing. That is how we learned to favor ourselves in the modification of our environments. In the knowledge process implied by such an approach we have started spotting the limits to the exploitation of nature (trespassed against with a certain risk to survival itself) as well as the serious imperfections of the extant social structures.

But our most challenging exploration is in a very peculiar frontier of knowledge –the knowledge of human nature itself. According to this view, the current period has extended from prehistory and will cover the total use of nature in a single direction – with the help of the S&T [science and technology] Revolution – in search of results allegedly and locally fruitful although with uncertain perspectives. Human social constructions have been all along a result of immediacy rather than prevision. In the next [frontier] the human species will seek survival in a highly self-dependent mode.

This prolonged historical lapse will be followed by a period born from the growing scientifically bolstered mastering of the new human reality. It will feature the coherent construction of horizontal, species-centered, and inclusive societies, with an unbounded holistic cultural development, and a controlled technological development aimed at its ecological sustainability. The optimistic alternative to this future is the extinction of the human species resulting from the current ecocide of the planet. The pessimistic one is its self-annihilation in war.

Conservation - An Ethic of Resource Use, Allocation, and Protection

Ralph Robinson and Byron Wilson

The primary focus of conservation is upon maintaining the health of the natural world: its oceans, forests, savannahs, wilderness areas...its **biodiversity**! Popular interest in protecting the world's biodiversity has intensified in the last 50 years. Recognized conservation biologist and author Richard Primack argued that we are living in a period of unprecedented loss of biodiversity instigated by “beings who claim reason, a moral sense, and free will as their unique and defining characteristics” (Primack, 2006).

Regrettably, the situation is exacerbated by human population increase and rising consumerism (Harding, 1998). With a current population of ~6.78B (USCB, 2009), human numbers are likely to stabilize at 10-15B in the next 50-100 years (Wilson, 1992). The loss of ecosystems is also likely to stabilize around that time, but the effect will have been a loss of 10-25% of our current biota. Naess, in 1973, documented a shift in professional thinking of ecologists (and the ecological movement) that has culminated in the emergence of a ‘shallow’, but presently rather powerful group, and a ‘deep’, but less influential, movement.

The dominant world view of “Conservation Ethics” is concerned only with the worth of the environment in terms of its utility, or usefulness to humans. It is often referred to as “shallow ecology” which maintains that the instrumental value of the environment is projected by an anthropocentric viewpoint; the environment is cared-for to improve man's conditions (Naess, 1989). Proponents of shallow ecology provide compelling arguments in support of conservation based on ecological economics. Ethical arguments, however, possess additional, unique authority: the value systems here are also found in most religions/philosophies; hence they are readily accessible to the general public.

On the other hand, several overlap with the “deep ecology” movement, and not all conservationists/scientists agree on all the arguments proposed. The main ethical arguments for preserving biological diversity include the right for each and every species to exist. Here, two positions are presented for promoting the survival of each species: all species represent unique biological solutions to the challenges of survival; and they have worth as living repositories of accumulated experience and history of previous life forms through their continuous, evolutionary adaptation.

However, the focus on species would appear to challenge the traditional Western philosophy of individualism. Do all species, have rights e.g. a moss, an amoeba? Does *Plasmodium falciparum*, the causative agent of malignant tertian malaria, have a right to exist? This parasite still kills ~1.5M people every year! Another ethical argument for preserving biological diversity is based on the premise that the complexity of interactions between species is often significant, and that they occur almost exclusively in natural settings; the loss of one species may have far-reaching affects on others, resulting in extinctions of species, and destabilization of communities. Clearly, extinctions of [non-disease-causing] species should be prevented; scientists acknowledge that species disappear at an estimated rate of one species per million per year, with new species replacing the lost ones at about the same rate. Recently, however, humans have accelerated the extinction rate to where one species disappears, on average, every 13 minutes! Nature will take millions of years to repair what we destroy in just a few decades!

It is now well established, if not fully recognized or accepted, that evolutionary mechanisms lead to increased biological diversity. Living populations should be allowed to evolve under natural conditions. There is, as yet, no consensus by philosophers as to which type of ethics (shallow (economical) ecology, or deep ecology) is more appropriate: philosophical and practical justifications for both exist. The role of the scientist is therefore not to attempt to resolve such problems, rather to consider the integrity of scientific knowledge and understanding to inform an ethic that can be applied to conservation and environmental challenges (see Alexander & Fairbridge, 1999). And the sooner the better!

Among several other worthy global and regional interventions, UNESCO in 2005 launched the project *Education for Sustainable Development*. While still in its early stages, several LAC countries are now on board (33 delegates attended the Bonn 2009 conference). Education for Sustainable Development is designed to “enable us to face the major challenges of today: preserving the environment, respecting biodiversity, protecting human rights” (UNESCO, 2009).

1. Alexander, D.E. & Fairbridge, R.W. (1999). *Encyclopedia of Environmental Science*. Kluwer Academic Publishers.

2. Harding, G.W. (1998). Human Population Growth and the Accelerating Rate of Species Extinction. <http://www.earthportals.com/extinct.html>

3. Naess, A. (1973). The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary. *Inquiry* 16: 95-100.
4. Naess, A. (1989). *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle; an Outline of an Ecosophy*. Cambridge University Press.
5. Primack, R.B. (2006). *Essentials of Conservation Biology*. 4th Edition. Sinauer Associates, Inc Publishers.
6. UNESCO (2009). Education for Sustainable Development
http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=27234&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
7. United States Census Bureau (2009). <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/popclockworld.html>
8. Wilson, E.O. (1992). *The Diversity of Life*. Harvard University Press.

.....
 Further reading

- Garrett Hardin (1968). The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science* 162:1243-1248.
 Essays by Gary W. Harding http://www.strom.clemson.edu/becker/prtm320/tragedy_of_the_commons.html

Bioethics as Added Value in an Environmental Health Programme for Medical Students

Henroy Scarlett, Tomlin Paul, Norbert Campbell, and Satnarine Maharaj

Approximately 25% of the world’s population suffers from ill-health due to preventable environmental factors. At the University of the West Indies, Jamaica emphasis is placed on exposing medical students to a range of environmental health determinants. This paper describes how this programme brings medical students face to face with bioethical issues and considerations related to the environment.

During the first year of training, students receive a 30-hour long course which addresses the role of the environment as a major determinant of health. Risk factors, environmental hazards and disease occurrence in diverse occupational and environmental settings are highlighted. In the fourth year, select issues are further emphasized inclusive of field visits to wastewater and water treatment plants, food handling establishments, the National Solid Waste Management Authority (the main solid waste disposal site in Jamaica), a major abattoir, and a poultry processing facility.

Apart from being exposed to different aspects of technology, environmental health hazards, prevention and control strategies, students also develop an appreciation of how socioeconomic, demographic, and political factors impact environmental health and ultimately people’s lives. The limited availability of appropriate and adequate technological solutions raises realistic ethical dilemmas for reflection and discussion.

The structure of this undergraduate programme in environmental health and its mode of delivery provides a framework for real life ethical consideration of the contribution of the environment to disease causation and the significance of equity considerations in the implementation of public health strategies to address these issues.

The Role of the EMA in Environmental Protection

Marcia Tinto

The paper addresses the following:

- Background information on the establishment of the Environmental Management Authority (EMA)
- Objectives and functions of the EMA
- Environmental protection through subsidiary legislation - overview of current legislation including
 - Noise Pollution Control Rules, 2001
 - Certificate of Environmental Clearance Rules, 2001
 - Environmentally Sensitive Areas Rules, 2001
 - Environmentally Sensitive Species Rules, 2001
 - Water Pollution Rules, 2001 as amended by the Water Pollution (Amendment) Rules, 2006
 - Environmental protection through enforcement (role of the Environmental Police Unit)
 - Environmental protection through voluntary compliance
 - Environmental protection through education and awareness ■

ADDITIONAL PRESENTATIONS (Alphabetical by First Author)

The Bioethical Dilemmas Presented in a Retrospective Study on *helicobacter pylori* Epidemiology in Trinidad (1994- 2003)

Nisha Mangroo and Dave D. Chadee, Dept of Life Sciences, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago

Bioethical Issues Associated with Rodent Control in Trinidad

Andrea Mohan and Dave D. Chadee, Dept of Life Sciences, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago

Ethical Considerations in the Use of the Plant Growth Regulator Benzylaminopurine in Graduate Research

Devika Narine, Dept of Life Sciences, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago

Bioethical Issues Associated with Gastrointestinal Illnesses in the Caribbean Region

SueMin Nathaniel and Dave D. Chadee, Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) and Dept of Life Science, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago

Medical Students' Reflections on taking a Spiritual History

Tomlin J. Paul and E. Anthony Allen, Dept of Community Health and Psychiatry, UWI, and the Whole Person Resource Centre, Kingston, Jamaica

Dengue Control and its Associated Bioethical Issues in Trinidad, West Indies

Karmesh Sharma and Dave D. Chadee, Ministry of Health and Dept of Life Science, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago.

■

REGIONAL NEWS

The National Bioethics Committee of Jamaica (NBCJ)

Presented at the Launch Ceremony, October 1, 2009

Anthony Mullings

Jamaica is one of 6 Nation States that recently established a National Bioethics Committee with the assistance of UNESCO. It is the first and only English Speaking Caribbean Territory to do so. This noteworthy step is to be lauded as it recognises the value and importance of reflection on and examination of matters from an ethical perspective.

This giant leap by a society can be put in perspective by a quotation from the Bioethics section of the European Commission: “As the life sciences and biotechnology develop, they contribute considerably to securing personal and social welfare, as well as to creating new opportunities for our economies. At the same time, the general public is increasingly concerned about the social and ethical consequences of these advances in knowledge and techniques, as well as about the conditions forming the choices made in these fields”.

Jamaica faces a challenging future as far as our development is concerned. The scourge of corruption, the high crime rate, issues in relation to our value system such as the place of games of chance and the freedom of individual choice, the distribution of scarce resources, the role of government in society in the context of the economic realities of today, our responsibility to and for the environment, the appropriate path to development, and others, are among the challenges faced by our society and which threaten to lead to even further instability in our society thus threatening to stifle our progress.

The skeptic may well ask of what value is a National Bioethics Committee? In an attempt to answer the question let me refer to three sources. Firstly, UNESCO, a facilitator of the establishment of our own and other national committees, acknowledges the value of such committees through the words of Prof. Henk ten Have as the creation of “an independent platform for public debate and policy advice in bioethics”. More specifically the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights of 2005 states in Article 19 that “Independent, multidisciplinary and pluralist ethics committees should be established, promoted and supported at the appropriate levels” to assess the relevant ethical, legal, scientific and social issues related to research; advise on ethical problems in clinical settings; and formulate recommendations regarding scientific and technological developments; and foster education and public engagement in bioethics.

Secondly, in a scholarly paper, Wenmay Rei and Jiunn-Rong Yeh of the National Science Council of Taiwan, attempted to answer this question by evaluating the role of the National Bioethics Committee of Taiwan, a State that is often mentioned as an example in economic growth and development. Rei and Yeh indicated that National Bioethics committees from their perspective are “both a problem and an answer”, that when properly constituted they are institutions creating an opportunity for the reaching of a “moral consensus” through “dialogue and deliberation” and promote “public consensus”.

Thirdly, Europe is focused on the development of the “Knowledge Based Bio-economy (KBBE)” but recognise that it “cannot afford to focus exclusively on the scientific and research aspects to the detriment of social dialogue”. These views seem almost an acknowledgement of the correctness of Noam Chomsky’s view that “States are not moral agents, people are, and can impose moral standards on powerful institutions”.

Our society needs “channels of dialogue” to provide “societal scrutiny” and “ensure that science delivers what people need and complies with an acceptable ethical consensus”. A National Bioethics Committee is one important channel through which public dialogue can be achieved and generate an acceptable ethical consensus. A National Bioethics Committee is able to facilitate the necessary dialogue by virtue of being independent, multidisciplinary and pluralistic. It is a Committee that operates at the level of the State as a whole and has the possibility for impact on policy-making.

The NBCJ was established in September 2008 with the appointment of the first members being ratified by the then Minister of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports, the Hon Olivia Grange, now the Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture. The establishment followed the work of a Preparatory Committee which was convened in June 2007 with the support of the Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO and the then Ministry of Education & Youth. Although the National Bioethics Committee was been established through the efforts of UNESCO and the Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO (an agency of a government ministry) we have been careful in creating an operational plan which enables the committee to function independently. According to the Constitution and its rules of procedure the NBCJ is to be “an independent advisory body that shall determine its own work agenda” and “persons appointed to the committee shall not act as representatives of specific interest groups but contribute, based on their individual expertise and experiences”. Further, “persons elected or appointed to a position in the Parliament are ineligible for appointment to the Committee during their tenure in such a position and for two years thereafter”.

The Committee is led by an executive with myself as chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, and Secretary. The executive was elected by members who include the following.

- Dr Anthony Mullings, Chair
- Dr. Derrick Aarons, Deputy Chair
- Miss Nancy Anderson, Secretary, Attorney at Law, Chief Legal Officer of the Independent Jamaica Council for Human Rights
- Dr. John Ayotunde (Tunde) Bewaji, Coordinator of the Philosophy Section in the Department of Language, Linguistics & Philosophy, at UWI, Mona
- Dr. Audia Barnett, Executive Director, Scientific Research Council of Jamaica
- Ms. Cheryl Marlene Lorane Brown, Attorney at Law, Manager of the Office of Sponsored Research at UWI, Mona, and Jamaica’s representative to UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee.
- Mrs. Shereen Dawkins-Cox, Pharmacist, BSEC Secretary
- Dr. Sheila Campbell-Forrester, Chief Medical Officer, Jamaica Ministry of Health
- Rt. Rev. Dr. Howard Gregory, Anglican Bishop of Montego Bay
- Rev. Garth Minott, Lecturer in Ethics and Christian Worship at the United Theological College of the West Indies, Chaplain to UWI
- Dr. Claude Packer, Educator, President of the Mico University College
- Mrs. Angela Patterson, Chief Executive Officer of the Creative Production and Training Centre
- Prof. Ralph Robinson, Professor of Parasitology at the Dept. of Life Sciences, UWI, Mona

- Dr. Herbert Thompson, President of the Northern Caribbean University, and Independent Member of the Electoral Advisory Committee
- Mr. Everton Hannam, Secretary-General of The Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO

The Members of the Committee were appointed by Minister Grange on the recommendation of the Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO with advice from the Preparatory Committee and in relation to the fields of knowledge, organizations and institutions determined by the preparatory committee. A list of 22 fields ranging from the Humanities to Information Technology and including such as School teachers, the environment, health care, law, human rights groups and civil society was established and attempts made to identify persons to serve who would be representative of these groups.

It was determined that the Committee should not consist of fewer than 15 members. The appointment as a Member is for three years with eligibility for reappointment. The chairperson cannot be reappointed for more than two consecutive terms. Other members of the committee cannot be appointed for more than three consecutive terms.

It is the intention of the Committee to involve the wider society in its work and this launch ceremony is the first step. From the programme you will see that we intend to have a web presence and also wish to involve the community in developing an appropriate Logo. From time to time we hope to be able to enlist the assistance of others, drawing on the wide range of expertise in our country, in addressing specific issues of national interest, serving as a reference point for government and society, and alerting society and government to issues of ethical concern.

It is our hope that the NBCJ will make a valued contribution in providing that frame work for the necessary debate and assist in bringing greater clarity to the issues thus enhancing decision making at all levels of our society. The NBCJ interprets Bioethics to be “A field of critical reflection on, and examination of, ethical issues of life and human existence” not for its own sake but for the known benefit that this brings to organised society. The benefits of this type of activity has been established as long ago as the time of the early philosophers who recognised the need to be guided by some central themes or shared values or principles. It is therefore with great excitement that we have accepted the mandate to serve on The National Bioethics Committee of Jamaica.



The National Bioethics Committee Of Jamaica (NBCJ) (October1, 2009)

From left: Dr. Ayotunde Bewaji, Prof. Ralph Robinson, Bishop Howard Gregory, Mrs. Shereen Cox-Dawkins, Dr. Derrick Aarons (Deputy Chairman), Dr. Anthony Mullings (Chairman), Mrs. Angela Patterson, Miss Nancy Anderson (Secretary), Ms. Cheryl Brown, Mr. Everton Hannam, Rev. Garth Minott and Present at the launch but not in the photo were Dr. Claude Packer, Dr. Audia Barnett, Dr. Sheila Campbell-Forrester and Dr. Herbert Thompson.

Bioethics and You – Why Should You Care? Presented at the Launch Ceremony, October 1, 2009

Derrick Aarons

Why should you care about Bioethics? How might it affect you? Firstly, to answer these questions, we have to be clear in our minds as to what bioethics is. So let's look at the conceptual framework.

To start off – if we commence with “I” – the “id” – we start with issues of personal morality. What do I perceive to be wrong and right. Once we move beyond ourselves and begin interacting with other persons – matters of “ethics” then begin. Simply put – ethics is “how should I conduct myself in the presence of others?” There are ethical principles and societal rules that guide us in the answer to this question – how should I conduct myself in my interaction with others?

This leads us from the matter of ethics to bioethics – which is applied ethics – simply put – ethical contemplations applied to the term “bio” – that is – life in general, including plants, animals and man. It was the biologist Van Rensselaer Potter who proposed the term “bioethics” in 1970, to encompass a field that lay at the intersection of ethics and the biological sciences in general. Since then, the scope of bioethical debate in regards to justice in health and care for persons has been expanded in some quarters to include issues such as occupational hazards, air pollution, water quality, safe housing, food and drug safety, pest control, childhood nutrition, literacy, disaster preparedness, and other environmental factors that affect health or can cause differences in health.

Ethical contemplations, ethical issues, ethical considerations – what ought we to do in certain situations? Is the topic now clearer? Bioethics and you – why should you care? The simple answer – you and I should care because every aspect of bioethics affects us in one way or another, since we are human beings interacting with other animals and our environment. Bioethics aims to tell us how we should conduct ourselves in these situations, and to provide us with strong reasons for doing so!

As human beings, we have bodies that are subject to health and illness – and we are all interconnected in a community of persons, where we most times require some help to overcome illness or to maintain health (for example, garbage collection, issues of the environment or environmental ethics). Ethical issues in health care, as well as ethics in conducting research to gain knowledge that would benefit us and the society – are all bioethical issues. Formulation of policies at the national level or within institutions should be done in a fair and just way – another bioethical issue – as policies by their very nature affect you and me and the quality of our lives.

Many other examples in Jamaica of why you should care about bioethics could be given, but I will only point out a few. Jamaicans have always been concerned about matters of fertility and infertility. The matters of assisted reproduction, fertility treatment and any destruction of left-over embryos are all bioethical issues that are frequently discussed in many countries. However, would Jamaicans wish to also discuss the ethics of transplanting ovaries – which is one of the current bioethical topics of discussion? Jamaica is one of the few Caribbean countries that currently offer fertility treatment.

Discussions about homosexuality among humans and other members of the animal kingdom, considerations of what role genetics and the environment may play, and how we should treat and interact

with persons is also a bioethical issue. Others include the effects of HIV stigma and discrimination on the quality of life for persons and their relatives; atmospheric pollution from the burning of sugar cane at harvesting that eventually affects our health; pollution of rivers and streams that affects our health; and how we care for animals at home, on farms, and in research projects.

Matters of honesty and corruption in the Jamaican society are currently very topical, and are classified under virtue ethics – very relevant to us at this time. Ethical care for persons both at the start and the end of life is underscored by bioethics. The use of steroids in sports and their possible effects on the health of the individuals that use them is a bioethical issue. Policy formulation regarding issues such as the right to effective pain relief for the very sick and terminally ill patients, matters of euthanasia or assisting suffering patients to die peacefully, are all issues of bioethical discussion.

The right to a decent minimum of health care for all persons in Jamaica, and the effects, if any, of reduced budgetary allocation for health care on professional standards, the number of posts for health care personnel in public institutions remaining the same while the population increases, as well as the rationing of scarce medical resources – be it limited intensive care beds, limited access to kidney dialysis, or expensive medications – are all bioethical issues

Overseas, we hear of many bioethical issues – genetic engineering to improve specific features or prevent certain illnesses - and stem cell research which seeks to provide cells that can be used to repair damaged organs and tissues. Stem cells could potentially provide a cure for numerous illnesses involving tissue damage such as diabetes, heart disease, spinal cord injury and paralysis, and Alzheimer's. Do any of these issues – local or foreign – affect you, or touch the lives of any of our friends or relatives? If so, then bioethics is important to you.

Addressing these and other bioethical issues will involve a broad range of perspectives and considerations, including ethical theories, principles and codes, contemplations of culture, law, religious and secular traditions, personal beliefs and values, as well as social and political realities, consequences, and rational arguments. Where values, principles, and goals conflict, bioethics provides the analytical tools and methodology to guide the way forward out of ethical challenges and quandaries. And matters of social bioethics are increasingly discussed in Jamaica emphasizing values in schools, church, families, and communities. Bioethical dialogue involves all sections of society in this process.

Therefore, why should you care about Bioethics? From the few examples I have given, you can easily see that bioethical matters are directly affecting your life right now or will in the future! We all wish a good quality of life for ourselves and our loved ones in a safe, eco-friendly and well-maintained environment, and bioethics seeks to promote discussions that will help to achieve those goals.

Bioethics Increasingly Important in Jamaica

Modified from article in the Jamaica Observer, 15 Feb, 2009

Link to full article: http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/html/20090214T210000-0500_146209_OBS_WHY_BIOETHICS_IS_BECOMING_MORE_IMPORTANT_.asp#

BSEC's President, Derrick Aarons, is often in the news in Jamaica and was recently interviewed by the Jamaica Observer about BSEC, bioethics, and controversies in medicine. He is spearheading the Medical Council of Jamaica's ethics seminars for doctors, and discussed with the Observer BSEC's efforts to establish a national bioethics committee in Jamaica. These efforts contributed to the official launch of Jamaica's new committee in October 2009. Papers presented by 2 BSEC members at the launch are included in this issue of BSEC's Newsletter.

As chair of the Ethics Committee of the Medical Association of Jamaica (MAJ) Aarons spearheaded a groundbreaking code of ethics governing the confidentiality of doctors regarding HIV/AIDS patients. He successfully proposed that doctors be allowed to warn third parties who were at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS from a partner who had the disease even if the patient requested confidentiality. "When the Hippocratic Oath was made, there was nothing like AIDS around" Aarons said.

On behalf of the MAJ he made submissions to the Ganja Commission in Jamaica arguing that ganja should be decriminalised because the harm it causes is less harmful than cigarettes - which are legal. The MAJ proposed that persons under 18 years of age be banned from using ganja because it harms short-term memory at a time when students need to retain knowledge. Adults, on the other hand, should be allowed to smoke it if they choose to, in the privacy of their homes but not in public places. The Ganja Commission accepted the position.

Aarons argued for updating abortion laws and proposed a conceptual model which put the mother and fetus at the centre of the concern, surrounded by other considerations including religious, financial and social impacts. He also suggested that instead of approaching the debate on homosexuality from a position of right or wrong, debaters should look at the fundamental issue of what makes one male or female. "Is it our chromosomes, the genital organs, the sexual hormones that flow through us, or how we are brought up to look at ourselves? If we were to look at all of these inputs, it would not be as easy to come to a conclusion on homosexuality," he argued.

In preparation for a vote on the International Convention Against Human Cloning for Reproduction, Jamaica's foreign ministry accepted advice from Dr Aarons through the health ministry, and the Jamaican delegation voted accordingly. "I recommended that research on cloning techniques should be regulated with strict oversight that would enable scientists to find ways of correcting genetic abnormalities and to grow cells to provide tissues and organs as replacement parts to lessen the suffering of patients," Aarons disclosed.

New Pan American Bioethics Initiative (PABI) Funded by the Fogarty International Center

Ken Goodman

The University of the West Indies' Mona campus is one of the key sites for a recently awarded research ethics grant from the U.S. National Institutes of Health's Fogarty International Center to the University of Miami. The grant establishes the Pan American Bioethics Initiative (PABI), which has the goal of enabling participants from Latin American and Caribbean countries to foster clinical research integrity and the responsible conduct of research activities their research institutions. Participants have practical responsibilities for the development and/or oversight of research ethics programs at their respective institutions. This approach to build research integrity and research capacity emphasizes a strategy where decision makers currently involved in research ethics education and policy development are supported to develop or expand ethics programs at their institutions using the collective expertise and resources of the University of Miami Ethics Programs and the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), with networking and mentoring provided by the faculty.

Seminars and in-country capacity building workshops will be provided in conjunction with the CITI Program's online resources to provide bioethics education to faculty, staff and students at participating organizations. The CITI Program offers web-based education in human subjects protection, Good Clinical Practice (GCP), lab animal welfare and research integrity. CITI has Spanish and Portuguese libraries of nearly 60 modules presented on a multi-language course site. The program will be sustained by each fellow recruiting a peer at another institution to participate in the PABI program. Participants – more than 20 decision leaders and fellows – come from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico and Peru, in addition to Jamaica.

University of the West Indies participants are Dr. Anthony Mullings, a regional leader in research ethics and senior lecturer in UWI's Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Child Health; Dr. Georgiana Gordon-Strachan, with expertise in biochemistry and health policy and planning; and Cheryl Brown, a lawyer with a longstanding interest in research ethics. It is hoped that other UWI campuses will join the initiative as it progresses.

Dr. Paul Braunschweiger, co-director of the CITI Program, and Dr. Kenneth Goodman, director of the University of Miami Bioethics Program and the newly designated World Health Organization Collaborating Center in Ethics and Global Health Policy, are principal investigators on the Fogarty International Grant.

Stakeholder Involvement Needed to Protect Women's Health in Guyana

*Summarized from a press release by the Guyana Human Rights Association
on International Women's Day, 8 March 2009*

Commemoration of International Women's Day on Sunday March 8th found Guyanese women in an embattled position. Vigorous assurances that violence against women is high on the political and legal agenda abound but reality suggests otherwise. Men inclined to do violence against women continue to

have little to fear from the law. The first two months of 2009 witnessed a spate of deaths, wounding and maiming of women, mainly by former or current boyfriends, husbands or lovers.

One study demonstrated a conviction rate of less than 1% in a range of sexual offences cases. The underlying reasons pointed to outdated laws and practices which re-victimized the victim, the slowness of the legal process and untrained police personnel. Figures released this year indicate an average of 1,000 new cases per month all of which are handled by seven permanent and two temporary magistrates who also deal with the back-log of cases accumulated over years.

Efforts by the police to mediate neighbourly disputes and other minor offences in police stations have led to them attracting blame for not taking matters to court when things don't work out. Not unreasonably the police now tend to the side of caution, referring everything to the courts. The additional delays implied by this wave of matters clogging the courts will undermine the resolve of even the strongest of women victims. Turning up at Magistrates' Court for two and three years only to be told after wasting several hours that the matter has been again put down for a future date is soul-destroying.

The list of cases for the current Assizes in the High Court shows 34 from a total of 94 indictable cases – more than a third are sexual offences. There is a strong argument to be made for a court dedicated to addressing sexual offences. Successful implementation of reformed Sexual Offences legislation is vital and should focus firmly on sexual offences against women and girls. To secure the active cooperation of the Bar, the Bench, the Office of the DPP and the Guyana Police Force, these agencies should be systematically engaged within an over-all strategy.

The GHRA reiterates its conviction that a Task Force is required to develop and implement a strategy. All of the legal and civil society agencies affected by or engaged in reform of Sexual Offences legislation should be invited to participate.

Nations Should Make Narcotic Drugs Available for Treating Pain

Cheryl Macpherson

Human Rights Watch called upon the UN General Assembly in 2009 to address the lack of access to pain relief medicines in many countries. Tens of millions of people worldwide suffer from severe but treatable pain. A collaboration between BSEC's President and Vice President resulted in a publication that outlines the impacts of this problem in the Caribbean (Macpherson CC and Aarons D. *Overcoming Barriers to Pain Relief in the Caribbean. Developing World Bioethics*. Accepted 20 Feb 2009).

A 2009 report by Human Rights Watch defines access to pain treatment as a human right and says that countries could significantly improve access to pain medications by addressing challenges that limit their availability. Challenges include inconsistent supply of opioids, poor education on how to effectively prescribe opioids, ineffective distribution systems, overly harsh governmental regulations that could lead to prosecution of prescribers, and poor understanding by policy makers of the consequences of their inaction. The report notes that international law requires states to prevent abuse while simultaneously making opioids available for the treatment of pain. The report is available free online: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/03/02/un-stop-needless-suffering> ■

BSEC'S NEWS

Plans and Accomplishments

Derrick Aarons, BSEC President

With the establishment and launch of Jamaica's National Bioethics Committee we now turn our hopes and attention on the establishment of a national bioethics committee in Trinidad. BSEC offers continued support to members Donald Simeon and Grace Sirju-Charran who are spearheading that effort.

In other news BSEC Treasurer, Donald Simeon, has been elected Chair of the Ethics Committee in the Ministry of Health in Trinidad. Cheryl Brown, a founding BSEC member is Jamaica's representative to UNESCO's Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee [IGBC] and was elected as one of 4 Vice-Chairs of the IGBC at their meeting in July.

Plans are proceeding for our next Bioethics Forum to be held in Georgetown, Guyana, May 27-28, 2010. The title is "An Ethical Pathway to Universal Access to Health: The Role of Rights, Citizens, and Science".

Grants and Financial Support

BSEC's 3rd Annual Forum in 2009 was supported by A.A. Laquis Ltd, Alutrint Ltd, BPTT, Caribbean Health Research Council, Eastern Regional Health Authority, Ministry of Science, Technology & Tertiary Education, Nestle Caribbean Ltd, North West Regional Health Authority, Sandoz Ltd., UNESCO, and the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.

BSEC's 2nd Annual Bioethics Forum was supported by a grant of US\$8,000 from the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP), US Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS). This grant enabled Dr. Melody Lin to facilitate transportation for all overseas presenters to Grenada on October 11, 2008. Accommodation for all overseas presenters at BSEC's 2nd Annual Forum was provided by St George's University.

Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Johns Hopkins University

David Rampersad

Between August and October 2009 Dr. David Rampersad, UWI's Director of Business Development in Trinidad, was as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the Johns Hopkins University where he worked with colleagues in the Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Berman Institute of Bioethics. He presented a seminar on Research Ethics at UWI that was well attended by staff and students. The seminar was chaired by UWI's Chancellor, Sir George Alleyne, who also has a teaching appointment at the Bloomberg School. Rampersad also attended meetings of IRBs at the Bloomberg School and the School of Medicine and the International Research Ethics Program Network Meeting (organized by the Fogarty International Centre and held at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda).

Notable Activities (Alphabetical)

Publications

Macpherson CC and Aarons D. Overcoming Barriers to Pain Relief in the Caribbean. *Developing World Bioethics*. Accepted 20 Feb 2009.

Macpherson CC. Undertreated pain: A challenge for physicians and patients. *JME*. Accepted 30 June 2009.

Macpherson CC. Time for physicians to take action on climate change. (Letter) *Academic Medicine* 84: 817. July 2009.

Macpherson CC. An international perspective on American bioethics. (Invited). *ASBH Exchange* (American Society for Bioethics and Humanities). 11 (1): 3,10. 2008.

Macpherson CC and Kenny N. Professionalism and the basic sciences: An untapped resource. *Medical Education*. 42 (2); 183-188. 2008.

Macpherson CC. Grenada. In: Cultural Health Assessment (pocket guide series), 4th Edition. Mosby. C D'Avanzo and E Geissler, Eds. 2008.

Walrond, E. Ethics Amid Disaster. Medical Protection Society (MPS) Casebook vol. 17: 2. 2009.

Walrond, E. Getting your Facts Right. Medical Protection Society (MPS) Casebook Vol 17: 3 2009 pg10-3

Walrond, E. Medical Professionalism and Religion. MPS Casebook. Vol 16:2. pg 7. 2008.

Walrond, E. Capacity to practice safely; The Challenge of Keeping your Skills up to date. MPS Casebook. Vol 16: 3 pg 7. 2008.

Invited lectures - 2009

Macpherson, CC. Teaching Medical Professionalism through Basic Science Courses. International Conference on Medical Professionalism and Humanity: Science Education for Tomorrow's Health Professionals. Center for General Education, Kaohsiung Medical University, Taiwan. December 2009

Macpherson, CC. Professionalism. Professionalism Workshop for Physicians. Ministry of Health, Grenada. June 2009.

Rampersad, D. Research Ethics at UWI. Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins. September 2009. ■

CONTRIBUTORS (in order of appearance)

- Cheryl Macpherson, PhD, BSEC Vice President, Professor and Chair, Bioethics Department, St. George's University, Grenada
- Derrick Aarons, MB.BS. (UWI), MSc., PhD. (Bioethics McGill), BSEC President, Consultant Bioethicist / Palliative Care & Family Physician, Jamaica
- Grace Sirju-Charran, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Dept of Life Sciences, UWI, Trinidad
- Richard Schulerbrandt Gragg, Environmental Sciences Institute, Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, Florida, U.S.A
- Ishenkumba Kahwa, Elva Clarke, and Norbert Campbell. Dept of Chemistry; Dept of Community Health & Psychiatry, UWI, Jamaica
- Merle Mendonca, Human Rights Advocate, BSEC South Representative, Guyana
- Ranu Persad and Dave D. Chadee, Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA), Ministry of Labour and Dept of Life Science, UWI, St. Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago
- Daniel Piedra-Herrera, BSEC Honorary Member, Professor of Biochemistry, Executive Secretary of Cuba National Bioethics Committee, Cuba and Darel Avalus-Zimertán, Cuba
- Ralph Robinson, , PhD, BSEC Outgoing Secretary, and Byron Wilson, Dept of Life Sciences, UWI, Mona, Jamaica
- Henroy Scarlett, Tomlin Paul, Norbert Campbell, and Satnarine Maharaj, Dept of Community Health and Psychiatry, UWI, Jamaica
- Marcia Tinto, Environmental Management Authority (EMA), Trinidad and Tobago
- Anthony Mullings, MD, MPH, BSEC member, Jamaica
- Ken Goodman, Director, University of Miami Bioethics Program and the newly designated WHO Collaborating Center in Ethics and Global Health Policy
- David Rampersad, Director of Business Development, UWI, Trinidad
- Donald Simeon, PhD, BSEC Treasurer, Trinidad