

Healthcare Ethics Committee (HCEC) of NBC
Monday, January 19, 2015, 9.00 am to 11.45 am (Meeting # 8)

Venue: CBEC-SIUT, Karachi

Present: Aasim Ahmed (AA), Abdul Ghani (AG), Aamir Jafarey (AJ), Farhat Moazam (FM), Haroon Ahmed (HA), Muhammad Hafizullah (MH), Shaukat Jawaid (SJ), Asma Humayun (AH) on Skype

Regret: Saima Pervaiz Iqbal (SPI)

Absent: Dr. Farid Khan (FK)

Minutes: by FM

1) Review of August 12 meeting minutes, and matters arising:

FM welcomed MH and expressed her appreciation to him for flying in from Peshawar to attend the meeting. She noted that this was the first meeting in which a PMDC representative was present to provide input into the undergraduate ethics guidelines document HCEC members are developing.

The minutes of August 12, 2014 were reviewed and approved without change.

In matters arising, MH stated that he had reviewed the HCEC undergraduate ethics guidelines document and found it to be excellent and comprehensive. He added that ethics education should also be an integral part of postgraduate medical education. Currently universities and CPSP have no system in place for ethics education of postgraduate trainees including in any of the workshops they organize MH suggested that HCEC should get involved in a similar process for ethics education at all levels and specialties awarded by CPCP and universities, and that emphasis should be on clinical aspects for clinical degrees/diplomas and research for basic sciences. While agreeing that ethics education at all levels was important, FM explained that the TOR for HCEC are currently confined to developing ethics guidelines for undergraduate colleges, and that it is not possible for members to expand their activities to other domains. However she noted that NBC has a CPSP representative and perhaps the issue of ethics education by CPSP can be raised with him in one of the future NBC meetings.

2) Ethics Guidelines for medical and dental undergraduate students:

As HA and MH had to leave early, this agenda item was discussed next. The modified guidelines and Handbook drafts (circulated to HCEC members earlier) based on suggestions in the August 2014 meeting were reviewed and discussed in detail. There was a consensus that Topic No. 19, "Ethics of Genetic Screening," was perhaps too advanced for undergraduates and should be

eliminated. It was also agreed that the chapter (related to legislation) from AH's book on Behavioral Sciences be included in the Mental Health section of the Handbook. Further minor changes were suggested in a couple of topic titles. The importance of formal student assessments was revisited, and it was decided to emphasize this point more strongly in the Introduction section (page 7).

The current PMDC curriculum (2011) recommends that a total of 50 hours be spent altogether on three subjects - Behavioral Sciences (BS), Ethics, and Professionalism. However HCEC members were unanimous that a minimum of 50 contact hours, spread over 5 years, be devoted to ethics alone. Unfortunately many public colleges do not yet teach BS, and in fact do not have appropriate teachers to do so, and therefore flexibility should be maintained in by whom and how ethics should be taught. It was reemphasized that ethics is multidisciplinary in nature (not restricted to any one specialty) and should be taught vertically throughout the 5 years of college (4 for dental colleges). As there may not be dedicated faculty to teach ethics in the imminent future, all clinicians and basic science teachers with an interest in ethics could be involved in ethics education.

MH informed the group that PMDC has begun deliberations on converting medical college curriculum into the modular system and he was optimistically hopeful that this change would be implemented in 2016. In his opinion, the HCEC document could therefore be used as the ethics component of the new curriculum. In the ensuing discussion members noted that the HCEC document offers broad guidelines and resources/tools to help teach ethics and does not constitute an ethics curriculum in itself. Nevertheless, sections of the document could be incorporated by colleges within the curriculum modules being contemplated by PMDC. MH stated that including greater details in the document about the year/rotations for ethics teaching and contact hours required for different topics, as well as assessment methodologies for each section would be helpful to the PMDC curriculum committee. After discussing the pros and cons of this, members arrived at a consensus that the guidelines draft be modified along some of the suggestions by MH.

HCEC members requested that MH convey to PMDC their following recommendations - that the language of the PMDC Code of Ethics when recommending ethics education should be strengthened by changing "may" to "*should* be taught;" and that a process be introduced for PMDC recognition of professionals with formal bioethics qualifications (postgraduate diplomas, MA, etc.) and centers and institutions that offer such programs. HCEC members were unanimous that PMDC role was crucial for formal implementation of ethics education in medical/dental colleges and for national recognition of this subject, and hoped that MH would play an important role in achieving these goals. In MH's opinion, PMDC should also encourage and facilitate formal postgraduate education of ethics on the pattern of medical education.

Actions –

- a) Modification of ethical guidelines document and Handbook will be undertaken by AA, AJ, and FM **to be completed by Jan. 31, 2015**. The modified draft will subsequently be circulated to HCEC members for review.
- b) MH will discuss modified ethics guidelines draft after it has been finalized with relevant committees/departments of PMDC at the earliest convenient occasion. **He will share the outcome of this with HCEC members at the next meeting this year.**
- c) MH will present to PMDC suggestions by HCEC members re. strengthening PMDC Code of Ethics, and formal PMDC recognition of professionals with ethics qualifications and ethics centers/institutions.

3) Progress post-Quetta NBC meeting and ethics workshop, Nov. 2014:

AG updated members on relevant developments subsequent to the Nov. 2014 NBC meeting held in Quetta. Dr. Farooq Jan has now been confirmed as DG Health Balochistan and AG met him briefly prior to this HCEC meeting. Dr. Jan is very interested in pushing for ethics related activities, including education, in the province. FM stated that this was her impression too as he had attended all two days of the ethics workshop in Quetta (he was not DG then) and had also personally expressed his interest to her at the time. She hoped that Dr. Jan will make it a point to attend future NBC meetings.

In response to a question, AG said that there has yet been no meeting of the PBC, Balochistan and that unfortunately, the Secretary Health has not yet sent out official “notification” letters to the proposed members. The matter of the PBC had come up during AG’s meeting with Dr. Jan (and with Dr. Dad later). AG was reminded that NBC members, during the Quetta meeting, had strongly recommended that the PBC, Balochistan meet and review their TOR and also expand membership beyond current members all of whom are from Quetta. He was requested to pursue this matter with Dr. Jan and other relevant people, and to keep HCEC members informed of the progress.

Actions –

- a) FM will inform the NBC Secretariat about Dr. Jan’s appointment as DG Health and that he be requested to himself the next meeting in AJK scheduled for March 2.
- b) AG will keep in touch with HCEC re. progress in Balochistan.

4) Proposed ethics workshop in AJK, March 3-4, 2015:

The general consensus, supported by AG's comments, was that the two day ethics workshop organized by HCEC in Quetta was considered very useful by PBC members and others who attended it. It was agreed that a similar workshop be organized for AJK on the two days following the NBC meeting scheduled for March 2. This has also been requested by Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, the NBC member (AJK DG Health representative) who is making logistic arrangements for AJK meeting and workshop with the NBC Secretariat.

Actions –

- a) AA and AJ, together with FM, will work out the ethics workshop sessions and teachers' list as soon as possible.
- b) The proposed schedule will be emailed to Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed **no later than Feb. 7, 2015**, and a list obtained from him of expected number of workshop participants and their backgrounds.

5) AOB:

The next HCEC meeting will take place in **May 2015 on a Monday** (to accommodate MH) in CBEC as usual. The tentative date proposed was May 11, to be confirmed later.