The Minnesota Center for Bioethics at 20: Coming of Age in Minnesota
By Dianne Bartels, RN, MA, PhD

The stars must have been in alignment in 1985. “There was a sense of excitement, a spirit of collegiality,” said Mila Aroskar, Professor Emerita and first Director of Graduate Studies in the Center. “It was as if the University of Minnesota Center for Bioethics was meant to be.”

Prior to 1985, bioethics education in the health sciences at the University of Minnesota consisted of a spring quarter lecture series sponsored by the multidisciplinary Student Committee on Bioethics. The lectures were not providing the ethics education students and faculty wanted so they requested additional resources. The Vice President for Health Sciences at the time, Neal Vanselow, responded by appointing a University-wide task force to consider the request. The task force recommended centralizing and using available University ethics resources, and created a mission statement that described a center that would address “newly emerging biomedical ethics questions and developing dilemmas in health care delivery.”

Dr. Vanselow, mission statement in hand, requested and almost immediately received start-up funding from the Northwest Area Foundation. Paul Quie, MD, accepted the position of Interim Director, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The Center’s twentieth anniversary creates an opportunity to look at how the issues, the field of bioethics, and the Center have changed over its history. For example, Dianne Bartels outlines the early history of the Center—how it got its start and who were the key early proponents of bioethics at the University, helping to launch the Center and fostering its fledgling efforts. She also highlights some of the issues the Center took on in its early days, making clear that our mission from the beginning has included the examination of pressing and controversial issues. The spring issue of the Examiner will feature an assessment of the state of the field of bioethics by...
in the early 1980s AIDS was an emerging issue, end of life decision-making was a new area, and managed care was a novel approach to a growing problem of rising health care costs.

A Center-sponsored conference in 1986, *AIDS: Medical Facts, Social Challenges and Ethical Dilemmas*, was the first AIDS education effort in the country to address ethical, as well as medical challenges of this new and frightening disease. AIDS raised questions not only about how health care decisions would be made for AIDS patients, but for other terminally ill individuals. Concerns about death and dying prompted a number of recommendations for respecting and maintaining control of one’s own health care decisions.

In 1987, Arthur Caplan became the Center’s first full-time director. Mila Aroskar, Dianne Bartels, Muriel Bebeau, and Ronald Cranford, all of whom were members of the original task force, have continued to be active over the succeeding twenty years of the Center’s efforts to address challenges in bioethics.

“Right to die” cases advanced through the courts and established legal support for patient and family control over end of life care. Ronald Cranford, a neurologist who studied brain injury, advocated for patients and their families in many of these cases. Steven Miles was the physician who cared for Helga Wanglie as the hospital and her family disagreed over who should make end of life decisions on her behalf, a question that would eventually end up in the Minnesota courts. In 1992, the Center convened a conference, *Managing Mortality: Ethics, Euthanasia and Termination of Medical Treatment*, to address ongoing concerns about end of life issues. This conference gave health care professionals and community members an opportunity to hear the voices of professionals and families who had been actively involved in landmark right to die cases. Speakers described their ethical perspectives and the profound personal impact of their involvement in the processes of decision-making in this uncharted territory.

These are just a few examples of the pioneering work of the Center and its faculty and staff. Twenty years ago, those involved in founding the Center would have had a hard time imagining bioethics as it has evolved at the University of Minnesota. Today the Center for Bioethics is a home for thirty regular and affiliated faculty. Graduates, trainees, and visitors now populate numerous universities and research institutions across the country and around the world. The Center’s impact over its twenty year history is hard to measure, but by any account it played an important role in the evolving field of bioethics, a legacy we all hope will continue over the next twenty years.

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**Save the Date**

*Center for Bioethics Celebrates 20 Years*

May 18, 2005

McNamara Alumni Center

The Center will host a symposium celebrating the Center’s 20th anniversary, including reflections on the Center’s contributions to the development and growth of the field of bioethics. Features will include the Center’s place in a “genealogy of bioethics,” showing the relationship of the Center, its faculty, and students to the development of the field, and highlights of past and present work by the Center and its faculty.

Speakers will include:

Mila Aroskar, RN, EdD; Dianne Bartels, RN, MA, PhD; Arthur Caplan, PhD; Frank Cerra, MD; Ronald Cranford, MD; Debra DeBruin, PhD; Carl Elliott, MD, PhD; Kathy Faber-Langendorn, MD; Jeffrey Kahn, PhD, MPH; Joan Liaschenko, RN, PhD; Steven Miles, MD; John Song, MD; Maryam Valapour, MD; Susan Wolf, JD, and a number of students and visiting scholars who have worked or studied in the Center.

SPACE IS LIMITED AND PRE REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.

For information, please contact the Center at 612-624-9440.

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**Center News**

Joan Liaschenko, RN, PhD, has been elected as a Fellow to the American Academy of Nursing.

Jeffrey Kahn, PhD, MPH, has been elected as member-at-large of the American Association for the Advancement of Science: Committee of the Section on Societal Impacts of Science and Engineering.

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**Check out the new and improved Resource Center webpage**

(www.bioethics.umn.edu/resources/) with a new, user-friendly design. Now it is easier to connect with the issues and information that interest you most. You will find new short summaries on organ transplantation, resource allocation, and reproductive technologies. See our new Bioethics Overview on *End of Life Care: An Ethical Overview* on page 8.
...His work has saved countless elderly patients from medical mishaps and the hazards of institutionalized care. He’s traveled around the world to treat refugees with TB and HIV. He authored the Do-Not-Resuscitate order that allows people to die with dignity and helped develop the MinnesotaCare program. Last year, he uncovered physician complicity in the torture of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. What is this guy — some kind of secular saint? Not quite. He’s chronically late, a little moody, absentminded, and stubborn. Also, he tends to mumble. But it’s worth hearing what Dr. Steven Miles has to say.


The Center proudly salutes our colleague, Steven Miles, MD, who was named 2004 Minnesotan of the Year by Minnesota Monthly magazine. Steve Miles is an admired leader in the bioethics community. His work has exemplified a commitment to human rights issues at a local, national, and international level throughout his career. Steve is a master teacher, role model, and mentor. His work in bioethics is focused on patients’ rights to make health care decisions throughout their lifespan and at the end of their lives. He was among the first physicians and bioethicists in the United States to call for a universal right to health care. He is an articulate and prolific spokesperson and scholar who has focused on changing public policy. Congratulations to Steve for a well-deserved honor!

Steven Miles, MD
Professor,
Center for Bioethics and Department of Medicine,
University of Minnesota
Attending Physician,
Fairview-University Medical Center

Selected Publications

Book

Articles


The Center for Bioethics has been an important hub for discussion, research and policy recommendations on the important bioethics issues over the last two decades. This issue and the next two issues of the Bioethics Examiner will highlight key events in the Center’s twenty year history. In this issue, we highlight events from 1985–1993.

1985
- Center for Biomedical Ethics established with a $300,000 grant from the Northwest Area Foundation.
- Paul Quie, MD, appointed Interim Director.

1986
- The Center sponsors conference on “AIDS: Medical Facts, Social Challenges, Ethical Dilemmas.”
- Dianne Bartels, RN, MA, appointed Interim Director.
- First Center newsletter, *The Messenger*.

1987
- Arthur Caplan, PhD, appointed Director.
- Visiting Scholars Program established.
- Center receives funding from the Deinard Memorial Law and Medicine fund to implement an annual seminar on health, law and ethics.

1988
- First Visiting Scholar—Dr. John Roberts, Chief Resident, Internal Medicine, Abbott-Northwestern Hospital, Minneapolis.
- Center produces a series of reading packets on current topics in biomedical ethics; “Organ Transplantation”; “Withholding and Withdrawing of Artificial Nutrition and Hydration”; “Fetal Tissue Transplantation”; and “Termination of Treatment of Adults.”
- Center announces its first research project, supported by the Deinard Memorial Law and Medicine Fund, “Do We Need a New Ethic for Health Care in a Changing Health Care Environment?”
- The Center hosts a national conference “Beyond Baby M: Ethical Issues in New Reproductive Technologies” in Minneapolis.
- Center receives funding for a study on “The Use of Human Fetal Tissue: An Interdisciplinary Study of the Ethical and Public Policy Issues,” from the Minnesota Medical Foundation and General Service Foundation.
- Launched bi-monthly ethics rounds in the University of Minnesota (UM) Medical School’s Department of Medicine and held monthly ethics case conferences at Abbott Northwestern Hospital.
- Director Arthur Caplan writes a weekly column on ethical issues in health care for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press Dispatch*, syndicated nationally.
- Community Advisory Council and Research & Education Council initiated.

1989
- First Annual Bioethics Retreat in Lutsen, MN hosted by the Center. More than 50 national and international participants working full-time in the area of bioethics attended the retreat.

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our colleague Steve Miles, whose advocacy positions and unique perspective issues in ethics, medicine and the broader society have made him a leader in the field for about as long as the Center has existed. In the fall issue Carl Elliott will ponder the future of bioethics; what issues should demand our attention and what we might do about them.

In addition to feature articles, this year’s *Examiner* will feature a timeline chronicling twenty years of Center events and efforts, with each issue marking a different collection of notable issues, events or achievements from across the Center’s history.

There will be a number of additional ways that we mark our 20th anniversary over the course of the year:

- The centerpiece of our recognition of twenty years of bioethics at Minnesota will be an anniversary celebration in May 2005, inviting back to campus a number of faculty and students who have worked or studied in the Center to reflect on their time in the Center and on the field of bioethics. We will highlight our faculty and the issues they have taken on in the course of the Center's history as well as showcase the Center's contributions to the development and growth of the field. This will include a “genealogy of bioethics” showing the relationship of the Center, its faculty and students to the field.
A free-standing Graduate Minor in Bioethics is approved by the University of Minnesota Graduate School and the Board of Regents.

Center for Bioethics and the University of Pittsburgh Center for Medical Ethics awarded a $1.6 million grant from the DHHS Agency for Health Care Policy Research for a 3-year study on organ and tissue donation.

Faculty and Center Associate criteria established that created new faculty appointments in the Center.

Center awarded grant from the Edwards Memorial Trust Foundation for a project on Humane Care of the Dying Patient.

“Drawing the Line: Defining a Basic Level of Health Care” conference, co-sponsored with the University of Minnesota Hospital and Clinics, the Minnesota Humanities Commission, the Hubbard Foundation and Blue Plus Quality Assurance.

The Center publishes reports on “RU486: New Issues in the American Abortion Debate” and “The Use of Human Fetal Tissue: Scientific, Ethical and Policy Concerns.”

Center sponsors a national conference on “Genetic Counseling: Ethics, Values, and Responsibilities,” funded by the Human Genome Project, NIH.

“Managing Mortality: Ethics, Euthanasia, and the Termination of Treatment” conference funded by the FHP Foundation.

A conference on “Critical Condition: African Americans in the Health Care System” (collaboration with the Illusion Theater, Minneapolis).


Arthur Caplan and Steven Miles participated on President Clinton’s US Domestic Health Policy Commission.

Twenty years is the blink of an eye in the development of a scholarly area, of course, but it is also seems long enough to be confident that bioethics is here to stay. Nobody can predict what the field will look like twenty years from now, but it seems safe to say that bioethics has filled an increasingly important role in the education of students, professionals, and the public; and that bioethics research will continue to impact science, medicine and public policy. We have been proud to be an important part of the story that brought bioethics to where it is today, and hope to play a role in what it will be twenty years from now.

We will host a series of speakers on cutting edge topics and issues, through our Center seminar series and our co-sponsorship of numerous speakers and symposia across campus (see page 6 for details).

The Center, along with our partner the Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences, will host a meeting on the future of the field of bioethics.

Finally, in conjunction with the University’s Stem Cell Ethics Advisory Board, we will host a one-day conference in Fall 2005 on public discourse and the future of the stem cell research debate.

Stay tuned for more details.
Recent Faculty Publications

BOOK

ARTICLES


Center for Bioethics Seminar Series—Celebrating 20 Years

Seminars will be held in room 2-122 Molecular & Cellular Biology Building, on the University of Minnesota campus from 12:15 to 1:30 pm. For information, contact the Center at 612-624-9440.

MAR 11
Carol Tauer, PhD, Center for Bioethics will speak on “Feeding Tubes and Moral Decisions: Jamie Butcher, Terri Schiavo, and the Pope.”

APRIL 5
Lunch Series on the Societal Implications of the Life Sciences. Alan Milstein, Esq., Sherman, Silverstein, Kohl, Rose & Podolsky will speak on “Human Subjects Protection: A Plaintiff’s Perspective” 12:15 to 1:30 pm, Mississippi Room, Coffman Memorial Union.

APRIL 8
Maryam Valapour, MD, Center for Bioethics and Division of Pulmonary Medicine, will speak on “Ethics of the Use of Psychosocial Factors as Contraindication for Transplantation.”

APRIL 18
Annual Conference. “Proposals for the Responsible Use of Racial & Ethical Categories in Biomedical Research: Where Do We Go From Here?” 8:30 to 5:00 pm, Mondale Hall, University of Minnesota Law School.

APRIL 20
Lecture Series. Professor Alta Charo, University of Wisconsin will speak on “From Stem Cells to Jail Cells” 11:30 to 1:00 pm, Mississippi Room, Coffman Memorial Union.

MAY 6
Timothy Murphy, MD, University of Illinois at Chicago School of Medicine will speak on “Members First: The Ethics of Donating Organs and Tissues to Groups.”

MAY 20
## Calendar of Events

### Mar 10
Jeffrey Kahn, PhD, MPH, will speak at Yale School of Medicine Grand Rounds, New Haven, CT. For information, email patricia.king@yale.edu.

### Mar 14–15
Steven Miles, MD, will comment on Richard Sprott, PhD, “Reality Check: What are the Consequences of Genetic Research for Aging and the Clinical Implications that Derive from the Genetics Revolution?” at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA. For information, email readca@bc.edu.

### Apr 2–3
Jeffrey Kahn, PhD, MPH, will participate in Great Conversations on the Road “Bioethics in the National Spotlight” at the University of Minnesota Alumni Association—Arizona Chapters, Tucson, AZ. For information, visit www.alumni.umn.edu/UMAA_Home.html.

### Apr 4
Jeffrey Kahn, PhD, MPH, will speak at St. Olaf College, Stem Cell event, Northfield, MN. For information, call 612-624-9440.

### Apr 7
Carl Elliott, MD, PhD, will speak on “Is That a Bioethicist in Your Pocket?” at the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH) spring conference “The Ethics of Bioethics,” held at Albany Medical College, Albany, NY. For more information, see the conference website at ethics.bioethics.net/dir.php or contact Ann Nolte at 518-3883-8042.

### Apr 12
Jeffrey Kahn, PhD, MPH, will speak on “Little Cells, Big Issues: The Ethics and Policy Debate Around Embryonic Stem Cell Research” at the Keck Graduate Institute, Claremont, CA. For information, call 612-624-9440.

### May 18
The Center for Bioethics Anniversary Event at McNamara Alumni Center, 1:00–5:30 pm. (see page 2 for information).

### May 23–27
Jeffrey Kahn, PhD, MPH, will speak at the University of California, Davis Medical Center, Internal Medicine Grand Rounds, Davis, CA. For information, email ctgomez@ucdavis.edu.

## Call for Papers—Undergraduate Bioethics Journal

The Bioethics Society of the University of Pennsylvania has announced the launch of a peer-reviewed online journal *Penn Bioethics Journal*. This journal provides a nationwide forum for undergraduate discussion of current, relevant issues in bioethics.

All undergraduates in bioethics are encouraged to submit term papers, summer research write-ups and manuscripts fitting submission guidelines. Guidelines are available at www.bioethicsjournal.com.
Center Faculty & Staff

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Announcing Our Latest Bioethics Overview

Beginning with a definition of death in modern society and continuing all the way through post-death issues, *End of Life Care: An Ethical Overview* presents significant ethical issues related to death and dying. Topics include the benefits and drawbacks of various types of modern treatment, ending life through termination of treatment or physician assistance, preserving the patient’s individual autonomy, terminally ill children, and medical research.

Available now at [www.bioethics.umn.edu/resources](http://www.bioethics.umn.edu/resources) or contact the Resource Center at 612-624-3171 or bioethx@umn.edu.

Bioethics Overviews are also available on:
- Human Stem Cells
- Research Ethics
- Organ Transplantation
- Distributing Limited Healthcare Resources
- Resuscitation Decisions
- Genetic Testing and Screening

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