



*News and Views*  
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ESSAY

*Osler Student Societies, IMH Launch  
Bioethics Bowl at UTMB*

August 21 marked the First Annual Bioethics Bowl at UTMB. Three teams, from the Asclepius, Ashbel Smith, and Vesalius Osler student societies, competed and the Vesalius team eked out a narrow victory. The winning Vesalius team included Kristen Crowell, Rimma Osipov, Michael Schmerber and Jaime Villarreal.

Oslerian mentors Drs. Jack Alperin, Judy Aronson, and Bill Mileski were there to cheer on their students. Drs. Mike Malloy, Jason Glenn, and Lexi Nolen served ably as the panel of judges. Behind the scenes, Drs. Malloy and Cheryl Vaiani had done the lion's share of the work in organizing this event, assisted by staffers Rosemary Lindley and Jennie Gounah.

Bioethics Bowl began as a creation of the National Undergraduate Bioethics Conference, an interesting annual event organized by college undergraduates interested in bioethics, which is held each year at a different college campus. Somebody there thought of the idea of a competition to spice up the program and NUBC has now had a Bioethics Bowl for a number of years.

This then attracted the attention of the bioethics and humanities program at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. Tod Chambers and other colleagues there borrowed the NUBC materials and modified them for use by medical students. When I talked with Tod at a joint speaking appearance this past spring, he was enthusiastic about the success they'd had with their first roll-out.

I had for some time been looking for a competition that we could somehow incorporate into IMH's medical student teaching, having noted the immense suc-

cess of competitive exercises in the gross anatomy and endocrine courses. What especially attracted me about Bioethics Bowl was the fact that it was a case-based exercise, but was *not* a formal debate.

There are at least two ways you could create a bioethics competition that would *misrepresent* the field in a serious way. First, you could do a quiz-show format that required answering factual questions. ("I'll take Medical Futility for \$200, Alex.") This would create the mistaken impression that accomplishment in bioethics consisted of knowing a bunch of factual answers, rather than being able to reason one's way through an ethical problem.

Second, you could do a formal debate. This would require, in many instances, that one team take a silly position and then try to develop reasonable arguments to defend that silly position. We have all seen in bioethics dialogue that a skill in scoring debating points may be very far removed from skill in seeking out ethical wisdom.

For those reasons, most of us teaching bioethics to medical students try to avoid multiple choice exams and prefer to evaluate our students by assigning them essays based on case studies. Bioethics Bowl has very nicely turned these essay-writing assignments into an engaging and entertaining form of competition. One team presents their position on a case. The opposing team replies, either agreeing with the first team but offering new and deeper reasons why, or else offering a contrary perspective. The presenting team then gets a rebuttal/reply session. The teams then switch roles and talk about a second case to complete the round.

Our challenge for coming years is to find ways to build Bioethics Bowl into the fabric of the required Humanism, Ethics and Professionalism course for the second year medical students. Given the success of our pilot effort this summer, it seems worth pursuing.

—Howard Brody

## IMH NEWS IN BRIEF

**Anne Hudson Jones** has been named holder of the Harris L. Kempner Distinguished Professorship in Humanities in Medicine, effective August 15, 2009. The purpose of the distinguished professorship is to advance inquiry into the connections between the humanities and health care and to explore the ethical issues and concerns with which contemporary medical practice and biomedical research are faced.



Practice of Medicine, Year 2 (POM-2) was voted the best course for 2009 by the sophomore class of the School of Medicine (SOM). This is the fourth consecutive year this course has received this prestigious award. **Cheryl Vaiani** is the course co-director. We all owe Dr. Vaiani a great debt for the very able way that she represents the IMH in leading this important course, within which the Humanities, Ethics and Professionalism (HEP) sequence occurs.



The John P. McGovern Academy of Oslerian Medicine announced this year's award recipients during the 8th annual Osler Oration held last month at the Tremont Hotel Davidson Ballroom. The Academy was established in 2001 through generous support of Dr. John P. McGovern, a Houston physician and philanthropist and longtime UTMB supporter. Dr. McGovern, who passed away in 2007, was a lifelong scholar of Sir William Osler.

Two IMH graduate students were among the honorees.

**Susan McCammon**, MD, assistant professor and residency program director, Department of Otolaryngology, received a John P. McGovern Excellence in Clinical Teaching Award.

**Julie Kutac** received the John D. and Mary Ann Stobo Award in Oslerian Medicine.



**Randall Horton**, an IMH graduate student, recently gave a presentation at the 7th Annual International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities in Beijing, China.

Horton and his fellow IMH graduate students **Jiin-Yu Chen, Julie Kutac** and **Margaret Wardlaw** were selected to give a panel presentation titled "Practicing Moral Medicine: Reflections on Directions for the Medical Humanities." Jiin-Yu, Julie and Margaret were not able to make the trip, but participated greatly in the preparation of the presentation Randy gave. Their presentation focused on "the challenges of bringing the humanities to health care practitioners, as well as the way medical humanities can deepen and enrich medical practice."

Horton has taken a leave of absence from the IMH graduate program and from his regular job at San Jacinto College South to accept a position as a visiting professor at Peking University Health Science Center in Beijing.



Due to Ike, the Institute for the Medical Humanities is now located in the PCP. The Institute's main office is PCP 2.301. Below are the office locations and current phone numbers for our faculty.

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