

Press Release

The Uttar Pradesh State Nodal Centre of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics was inaugurated at King George's Medical University on the 24th November 2015. The honorable Vice Chancellor, KGMU, Professor Ravi Kant will head the unit and Professor Shally Awasthi, Head of the Department of Medical Education is Secretary of the Steering Committee. The chief guest for the inaugural function was Professor V.N. Tripathi, Director General Medical Health Education and special guest was Professor Russell Dsouza, Head, Asia-Pacific Bioethics Program, UNESCO chair in Bioethics Haifa. The ceremony was presided by the Dean, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Professor Mastan Singh. The first 3T plus E Bioethics Training Program for Medical teachers at KGMU, from 23rd-26th November was also formally inaugurated. In her welcome address Professor Shally Awasthi emphasized that it was the Vice Chancellor Professor Ravi Kant's foresight determination and drive that brought us the nodal centre. The dignitaries spoke about the need for training in Bioethics at all levels of medical education. They also emphasized the need for bioethics training in dental, nursing and paramedical science students. It was felt that training would produce more caring doctors and other health professionals. Professor V.N. Tripathi emphasized the need for bioethics training in medical, dental, nursing and paramedical science students across the state. Prof. Russell Dsouza discussed the process of setting up the nodal center and how the center links KGMU to the International Bioethics Network of UNESCO chair in Bioethics. Professor Mastan Singh spoke on the roles and responsibilities of the nodal center, including training master teacher- trainers in the constituent and affiliated colleges of KGMU for imparting formal training in bioethics.

UNESCO, Bioethics and the Core Curriculum (Note from the Nodal centre)

The Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights was unanimously adopted by 191 Member States including India of the UNESCO (United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), on October 2005.

The fifteen basic principles agreed to and described in various articles include Human dignity and human rights, Benefit and harm, Autonomy and individual responsibility, Consent, Persons without the capacity to consent, Respect for human vulnerability and personal integrity, Privacy and confidentiality, Equality, justice and equity, Non-discrimination and nonstigmatization, Respect for cultural diversity and pluralism, Solidarity and cooperation, Social responsibility and health, Sharing of benefits, Protecting future generations, Protection of the environment, the biosphere and biodiversity.

Around the same time it was increasingly being perceived that bioethical principles need to be specifically and actively taught in medical schools in the changing world. Rapid advances in

science and technology and achievement of levels in health care unthought-of just a few decades and changing social environments and globalization were creating new ethical and societal dilemmas. The principles of the UNESCO declaration were considered a sound and widely acceptable basis for developing a curriculum for medical students globally. A UNESCO Bioethics Core Curriculum was published in 2008 by an advisory Expert Committee primarily for use in training medical students, however it can be also be adapted to train other health professionals like nurses and paramedical staff and even practicing health professionals. India is a partner country in adopting the curriculum.

It is considered that training in bioethics will help health professionals to provide optimum medical care while protecting principles like human dignity and human rights, benefit and harm (beneficence and non-maleficence), autonomy, informed consent especially persons without the capacity to consent, privacy and confidentiality, non-discrimination and non-stigmatization of vulnerable populations.

A clear cut understanding of what these bioethical principles mean, their interpretations, the dilemmas and the law as relevant in our societies will go a long way in equipping students for their professional lives and deal with bioethical challenges faced constantly in medical practice and medical research.

As bioethics is the analysis of ethical issues raised by life-sciences, the application of technology in medicine and health policies and encompasses all fields of scientific development which affect human beings socially, judicially and environmentally, in the current day world it is obvious that in many branches at university level need knowledge of the principles. The core curriculum can be used as a basic tool to train students of many other life sciences and humanities streams and professionals working in related areas in basic bioethics

With the establishment of the Bioethics nodal centre it is the vision of the Honorable Vice Chancellor to integrate teaching, training and assessment of bioethics in all our undergraduate and postgraduate medical dental, nursing and paramedical sciences teaching programs. This would be in alignment with the vision of the Medical Council of India of producing ethically sound Indian Medical Graduates. The nodal centre would serve as a resource and training centre and train master trainers for pursuing the program in all constituent and affiliated colleges

With the support of the Director General Medical Services, the scope of the nodal center may be extended even further to introduce bioethics training in medical, dental, nursing and paramedical sciences colleges across the state of Uttar Pradesh. In fact in the present day context with the UNESCO's new approach of "bioethics for everyone", the training could be introduced in many more educational streams

Note: 3Tplus E training program:

More than 30 faculty members received Bioethics teachers training in the 3Tplus E course from a team led by Prof Dr Russel D'Souza, Head Asia Pacific region of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics Haifa. Expert faculty included Prof Princy Palatty, Prof Payal Bansal, Prof Derek D'Souza, Prof Santosh Salagre, Dr Shaguptha Shaikh, Dr Pradip Barde, and Dr Pinaki Wani. This program is part of the National program of Health Science Universities of India and UNESCO Chair in Bioethics, introducing the vertically integrated bioethics curriculum of the UNESCO initially for undergraduate medical and health science training and then to extend the program to all post graduate training programs.

In this program, the teaching of Bioethics continues through an integrated curriculum right throughout the 4 ½ yrs of Undergraduate and subsequently the three years of Post graduate medical education. This curriculum has been piloted for 4 years in various medical colleges in India and has been found to be very useful for the Indian medical training. The advantage is that it does not increase the hours of training and the resource of teachers is met with all teaching faculty being trained and accredited to have the competencies to be a teacher of bioethics in Medical and Health science training courses.

This fully accredited certificate course covers Principles of Bioethics, Human Rights and Human Dignity, Vulnerability and protection; Bioethics Teaching Technology; Integrating Bioethics in all the subjects.

The objectives of the course being that of faculty development and capacity building of medical teachers to introduce the vertically integrated bioethics curriculum in UG & PG training programs. On successful completion, participants will be certified to secure registration with the International Forum of Teachers of Bioethics UNESCO Chair Paris.

The trained faculty on return to their institution, with the consent of their Deans will establish Bioethics units of the International network of the UNESCO Chair in bioethics in their respective colleges. These units will also establish student wings who will collaborate the network of student units in Indian program of the UNESCO with the international network. Even for practising doctors or specialists, the bioethical awakening persists through CME's, Conferences and IMA meetings. Hence the motto is to "sow the ethical seeds early" and advance towards providing "ethically excellent healthcare"