John Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care

Report 1996
John Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care
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Mission Statement

The mission of the John Plunkett Centre for Ethics in Health Care is to examine the ethical aspects of contemporary practices in health care and, by research, postgraduate education and community service, to contribute a Catholic perspective to public discussion about what constitutes good conduct and wise decision-making in health care.

The goals of the John Plunkett Centre are:

1. to conduct research into the ethical and theological aspects of health care and to contribute from a Catholic perspective to the development of standards and practices in health care;

2. to educate health care professionals in basic ethical and theological principles;

3. to facilitate association between the University, the Hospital, other universities and other health care institutions in matters pertaining to ethics;

4. to provide advice, assistance and other services in the field of ethics to the University and the Hospital;

5. to cooperate with other centres in relevant fields, especially any other ethics centres which may be established within other Divisions of the University; and

6. to seek and raise funds from Government, industry and community sources for research and other related activities.
Director's Report

Once again I am very pleased to introduce and report on the accomplishments of the John Plunkett Centre. Our activities are set out in this annual report for the past year under the four main headings of 'research', 'publications', 'teaching' and 'community service'. In the main, they speak for themselves. None the less several features of the year deserve a specific mention.

A highlight of the year was the Centre's application, on behalf of Australian Catholic University, to the Australian Research Council for an Australian Postgraduate Award (Industry). These awards are made, on a competitive basis, for research projects which involve strategic partnerships between universities and industries. The research project for which the award was sought was entitled: The philosophical and ethical issues of de-institutionalisation policy, benchmarking psychiatric services and the role of the community in the allocation of health care resources, with special reference to the treatment of schizophrenia.

In late October, the University was informed of the success of the Centre's application. We then advertised nationally for a philosopher to undertake the research project. The successful applicant was Mr Charles Naylor. Charles is a graduate in Philosophy from the University of Sydney who was awarded First Class Honours in Philosophy. He also won the John Anderson Prize for the best philosophical work in the fourth year of his honours degree.

Supervision for this research will come from Professor Gavin Andrews (for whose work at the Anxiety Disorders Clinic the research will have direct implications), Dr Anthony Fisher (who teaches philosophy at the Melbourne campuses of Australian Catholic University and whose own doctoral thesis (from the University of Oxford) was entitled "The Principles of Distributive Justice considered with reference to the Allocation of Healthcare") and the Director of the Plunkett Centre. Congratulations are due to both Gerald Gleeson for preparing the successful research project and to Charles Naylor for winning the postgraduate scholarship!

The project will be a study of the ethical bases for the community's role in the allocation of health care resources in relation to people with mental illness. It thus raises issues of justice, political process and democracy. Building on the current revival of interest in a virtues-based approach to ethical theory, the research will seek to develop an account of ethically-sound criteria for health care allocation, to show how priorities can be established amongst these criteria and how the criteria can be applied in practice. It will be conducted in conjunction with a critical analysis of the philosophical assumptions which inform the NSW Schizophrenia Best Practice Project which has been developed by Professor Gavin Andrews of the Anxiety Disorders Clinic at St Vincent's Hospital.

In 1996, the Centre held its third annual Intensive Bioethics Course which was attended by over twenty participants who spent the weekend at the Ave Maria Retreat Centre at Point Piper in Sydney. A highlight of the course was the talk given by Professor John Molony on contemporary Australian Catholicism. John Molony is the
author of the only full-length study of John Hubert Plunkett, after whom this Centre is named.¹ Later in the year, a day-long seminar on the ethics of the new genetics took the place of last year’s Advanced Bioethics Course. It was held at the Garvan Institute for Medical Research and was attended by over forty participants. The main presentations will be published by the Centre during 1997.

Bioethics Outlook, the Centre’s quarterly publication, continues to attract appreciative comments from readers both within Australia and overseas. Indeed we receive a steady stream of requests for permission to reprint our articles in other publications.

During the year the first cohort of students in the University’s Master of Arts in Applied Ethics (Health Care) completed their studies. The three students, Paul Glare (a Medical Oncologist and Palliative Medicine Physician at Westmead Hospital), Elaine Wallace (previously Head of the Social Work Department at St Vincent’s Hospital) and Judith Kennedy (a Clinical Psychologist in private practice) have since presented an ornamental clock to the Centre to record their appreciation of the value of the course: it is now hanging in the Centre’s meeting room. A second cohort of students began their studies towards this degree during 1996.

Throughout the year the staff of the Centre were often called upon to assist others understand, and reflect in a disciplined way upon, the issues raised by the passing of the Northern Territory’s ‘Rights of the Terminally Ill’ Act. Two things emerged clearly in those discussions: widespread confusion over what is (and what is not) genuine euthanasia and widespread failure to appreciate the social cost (both in the practice of medicine itself and to the fabric of Australian society) of a law which would permit doctors to kill their patients at the patients’ request. Responding to the challenge to help Australians to deepen and to discipline their thinking on these difficult issues was an important part of our activities in 1996. In that, we were greatly helped by the availability, in a published form, of Luke Gormally’s ‘Why the Select Committee of the English House of Lords Unanimously Rejected the Legalization of Euthanasia’.²

I would like to express my personal gratitude to Dr Gerald Gleeson who acted as Director for the six months from March until September during which time I was on sabbatical leave from the Centre. Dr Gleeson added the tasks of Acting Director of the Centre to his already substantial responsibilities at the Catholic Institute of Sydney. He ably directed the affairs of the Centre in that time: both the University and the Hospital have good reason to be grateful to him.

I would also like to record my gratitude to Barbara Reen, the Centre’s Administrative Officer. Barbara has made an extraordinary contribution to the flourishing of the Centre, well beyond that which might legitimately have been expected of her.

Bernadette Tobin
March, 1997

² Gormally, Luke, Why the Select Committee on Medical Ethics of the House of Lords Unanimously Rejected the Legalization of Euthanasia: Proceedings of a Seminar, John Plunkett Centre for Ethics, 1996
Staffing

Director:

Bernadette Tobin, M.A., M.Ed (Melb), Ph.D (Cantab) Full-time
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, Department of Theology and Philosophy, Australian Catholic University

Academic Staff:

Gerald Gleeson, STB, M.A. (Cantab) PhD (Leuven) Part-time .2
Senior Lecturer, Catholic Institute of Sydney

Keith Joseph, M.A. (Macq) Part-time .5
Associate Lecturer in Philosophy, Department of Theology and Philosophy, Australian Catholic University

Martin Kelly, MSC, M.B., B.S. (Qld), B.A. (Hons) (Macq) Honorary Researcher

John Quilter, B.A. (Hons) (Syd), M.A. (Pittsburgh) Part-time .3
Lecturer in Philosophy, Department of Theology and Philosophy, Australian Catholic University

Administrative Staff:

Barbara Reen, M.A. (Syd), Dip. Ed. (UNE) Full-time

Sam Reeve, B.A. (Woll) (to April 1996) Part-time .6

Linda Chapman (from April to August 1996) Part-time .6
Management

Management Committee:

From the University:

Professor Wolfgang Grichting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Chairman

Associate Professor Tim O’Hearn (Director (Pro-tem), New South Wales Division)

Professor Pamela Joyce (Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences) (to December 1996)

Professor Elizabeth Cameron-Traub (Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences) (from December 1996)

Dr Robert Gascoigne (Head of the School of Theology)

Dr Bernadette Tobin (Director of the John Plunkett Centre)

From the Hospital:

Dr Ron Spencer (Chief Executive Officer) (to December 1996)

Dr Denise Robinson (Chief Executive Officer) (from December 1996)

Professor Reginald Lord (Professor of Surgery, University of New South Wales)

Dr Brian Dwyer (Retired Head of the Brian Dwyer Anaesthetics Department, St Vincent’s Hospital)
Research Projects

It is no accident that the primary goal of the Centre is to conduct research into the ethical aspects of health care. The research projects undertaken in 1996, involving all the staff of the Centre, were its major activity. From that research has flowed publications and presentations, teaching and all the other forms of community service which are listed in this Report.

Gleeson, G.P.

Brain death: current Australian practice together with challenges to the brain function criterion
Care and treatment of anencephalic infants
Ectopic pregnancies
The difference between euthanasia and legitimate refusals of treatment

Joseph, K

Ethical issues in genetic medicine
Issues in resource allocation
Teaching applied ethics

Kelly, M.

The role of virtue in knowledge: virtues epistemology
Trustworthy research
Trust and the clinical relationship
Autonomy and responsibility in clinical settings

Quilter, J.G.

Moral luck
Ethics and psychiatric medicine
Professional ethics of health promotion
Ethical issues in resource allocation in a multicultural environment
Tobin, B.M.

Ethical and social issues in (cadaveric and living) organ donation
Drugs and brain death
Euthanasia: intrinsic ethics and social implications
Reproductive technologies
Publications

Gleeson, G.P.
"The status of the Church's teaching that ordination is reserved to men alone", Australasian Catholic Record 73, 1996, pp. 286 - 294
"The infallible teaching", The Catholic Weekly, February 18, 1996, p. 11
"Non-infallibly infallible", National Outlook, March, 1996, pp. 6 - 7
"Ethical guidelines from the NHMRC: an update", Bioethics Outlook Vol. 7, No. 3, September, 1996, pp. 6 - 8
"A good but erroneous conscience: what does this mean", AD2000, September, 1996, pp. 10 - 11

Joseph, K.
(ed) Australian Association of Professional and Applied Ethics Newsletter

Kelly, M.
"Trust me, I'm a doctor", Bioethics Outlook, Vol. 7, No. 1, March, 1996, pp. 5 - 11
Code of Ethics for Pastoral Care Chaplains in Health Care Settings, August, 1996 (with M. Devoy et al.)

Quilter, J.G.
"Health promotion - promises and pitfalls", Bioethics Outlook, Vol. 7, No. 3 September, 1996, pp. 1 - 5 (with Judith Kennedy)
"A questionable view of the place of science in the foundations of the law of life and death", Death Studies, (forthcoming)
Tobin, B.M.

From the Centre

Bioethics Outlook Volume 7

Number 1, March, edited by Bernadette Tobin
  Morality: Life's meaning and human equality by John Quilter
  Trust me, I'm a doctor by Martin Kelly

Number 2, June, edited by Gerald Gleeson
  “Opting-out” vs “Hot pursuit”: Organ donation and the family by Martin Kelly
  Euthanasia: Clarifying the issues by Gerald Gleeson
  Genetics: The ethical questions by Keith Joseph

Number 3, September, edited by Gerald Gleeson
  Health promotion: Promises and pitfalls by Judith Kennedy and John Quilter
  Ethical guidelines from the NHMRC: An update by Gerald Gleeson
  The re-emergence of eugenics by Keith Joseph

Number 4, December, edited by Bernadette Tobin
  Autonomy in the debate concerning the care of mentally ill people by Elaine Wallace and John Quilter
  The McKay Report on optimum utilisation of the psychiatric workforce by John Quilter
  AHEC issues new guidelines on reproductive technologies by Bernadette Tobin

Monograph

Teaching

As the Centre is a University research centre, it is natural that postgraduate teaching has formed an important part of the year's work. Alongside making a contribution to the teaching of the University's Master of Arts in Applied Ethics (Health Care), the Centre's staff were also involved in the variety of forms of teachings which are listed here.

Gleeson, G. P.

Course Co-ordinator, Intensive Bioethics Course, April

Joseph, K.

Course Co-ordinator, "Our Genetic Future: The Ethical Issues, October

Kelly, M.

Lecturer, Ethical Issues in HIV Medicine, in Palliative Care for Persons Living with HIV Disease Course, Sacred Heart Hospice, July and November
Presenter, Course for Clinical Pastoral Experience students, St. Vincent's Hospital, March, July and October
Presenter, The Rural Doctors' Resource Network Conference, Armidale, April

Quilter, J.

Lecturer, Ethical Issues in Nursing and Aged Care, Graduate Certificate in Gerontological Nursing, NSW College of Nursing, June
Presenter, Monthly seminars, Social Work Department, St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, February - December
Presenter, Workshops for Midwifery Nurses, Central Coast Area Health Service, Gosford, April
Lecturer, Research Methods and Critical Thinking, Master of Arts in Applied Ethics (Health Care), Australian Catholic University, Semester 2
Supervisor of thesis for Master of Philosophy, Australian Catholic University
Tobin, B.

Co-Presenter, Monthly seminars, Social Work Department, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, September - December
Facilitator, Interactive Session in the Ethics of Medicine, Year 6 Medical Students, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, October
Invited Keynote Speaker, *Teaching and Learning in Bioethics*, Third Residential Summer Seminar, Bioethics Research Centre, University of Otago, Dunedin, February
Presenter, *Five difficult cases*, Post-Registration Nurses, Sydney Hospital, Sydney, December
Community Service

Presentations

Gleeson, G.
*Ethical research in late dementia*, Psychiatry of Old Age Conference, Prince Henry Hospital, Little Bay, February

*End of life decisions and the virtue of prudence*, Intensive Bioethics Course, John Plunkett Centre for Ethics, Point Piper, April

*Principles of ethics and palliative medicine* Training Course in Palliative Care for General Practitioners Mt Olivet Hospital, Brisbane, May

*Ethical issues for a Catholic hospital*, The Ethics of Health Care Workshop, Australian Catholic Health Care Association, May (with Sr Antoinette Baldwin)

Symposium on Euthanasia, John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle, June

*The early induction of anencephalic infants*, Catholic Moral Theology Association Conference, Corpus Christi College, Melbourne, June

*Refusal of treatment*, Grand Rounds, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, July

Participant: Debate on euthanasia, St James Ethics Centre, Institute of Administration, Little Bay, July

*What is an ethical question?: Clinical ethics*, School of Nursing, University of Sydney, Sydney, September

*Autonomy, responsibility and ‘advanced directives’*, Third International Conference of Public Trustees and Public Guardians, Brisbane, September

*The cultural context of the euthanasia debate*, Conference of Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand, Sydney, September

*Palliative care and withdrawal of treatment*, Workshop for Southern Area General Practitioners, Calvary Hospital, Kogarah, October

Moderator of hypothetical: "Clinical and ethical issues in relation to hereditary cancers", John Plunkett Centre for Ethics Seminar, "Our Genetic Future: the ethical issues", Garvan Institute, Sydney, October

Moderator of hypothetical on "Clinical and ethical issues in relation to hereditary cancers", St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, October

Joseph, K.

*Professional confidentiality: Rival ethical theories*, Intensive Bioethics Course, John Plunkett Centre for Ethics, Point Piper, April

*Confidentiality*, Australian Association for Professional & Applied Ethics, Uniting Church Centre for Ministry, North Parramatta, April

*Chaos Theory and Genetic Engineering*, Australian Association of Philosophers, University of Queensland, Brisbane, July

*Ethics and Genetic Screening*, Hunter Postgraduate Medical Institute, Newcastle, July

*Issues in military ethics*, Chaplains Course, Australian Army, Bonegilla, August

*Case studies in ethics*, Oncology Nurses, Royal Australian Nurses College, Glebe, August

*Who should teach applied ethics?*, Australian Association for Professional & Applied Ethics Conference, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, October
Genetic chaos and the precautionary principle, Department of Philosophy, University of Newcastle, October

Ethical issues in genetic manipulation, John Plunkett Centre for Ethics Seminar, “Our Genetic Future: The ethical issues”, Garvan Institute, Sydney, October

Participant in hypothetical on “Clinical and ethical issues in relation to hereditary cancers”, John Plunkett Centre for Ethics Seminar, “Our Genetic Future: The ethical issues”, Garvan Institute Auditorium, Sydney, October

Ethics and genetic screening, Young Lawyers Association of NSW Conference, Terrigal, November

Kelly, M.

Refusal of treatment, Grand Rounds, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, July

Brain death and transplantation, Clinical Pastoral Education, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, March

Ethical issues in chaplaincy, Chaplains, St Vincent’s Hospital Conference Room, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, March

Research using human subjects, Intensive Bioethics Course, John Plunkett Centre for Ethics, Point Piper, April

Euthanasia, Rural Doctors Resource Network Conference, Armidale, April

Confidentiality, Rural Doctors Resource Network Conference, Armidale, April

Euthanasia and suicide, Clinical Pastoral Education, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, July

End of life decisions and Church teaching, St Paul’s National Seminary, Kensington, August

Euthanasia and end of life decisions, University of New South Wales Catholic Students Association, Erskineville, August

Euthanasia: Christian perspectives, Macquarie University Christian Students, Macquarie University, Sydney, September

The right to live, the right to die - Who’s right?, Aquinas Academy Dialogues with Youth, Sydney, October

The soul of the hospital - resource allocation and the Pastoral Care Service in a Catholic hospital, Clinical Pastoral Education, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, October

The declaration on euthanasia - A Catholic social teaching, Marrickville Parish Faith Development Committee, Marrickville, November

Medical end of life decisions, University of the Third Age, Chatswood, August

Quilter, J.

Virtue ethics as an alternative to traditional theories: strengths and weaknesses, Intensive Bioethics Course, John Plunkett Centre for Ethics, Point Piper, April

Confidentiality and the seal of confession: Professional-ethical critique of religious practices, Australian Association for Professional & Applied Ethics, North Parramatta, April.

Should we legalise euthanasia? Panel Debate of Distinguished Experts, Wesley College, University of Sydney, Sydney, April

Ethical issues for social work in HIV/AIDS care, Hypothetical, Social Work Department, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, May
Ethics and medical end of life decisions in HIV/AIDS care, Albion Street Centre, Sydney, May

Williams’ Practical Necessities, John Plunkett Centre for Ethics Philosophy Colloquium, Sydney, May

Philosophy and the millenium: a philosophical credo, School of Theology, Australian Catholic University and Catholic Institute of Sydney Joint Colloquium, Strathfield, June

Medical end of life decisions, University of the Third Age, Chatswood, August

Resource allocation and psychiatric medicine, Philosophy and Psychiatry Group, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Sydney, October

Ethical issues in post-natal genetic testing: Testing the basic medical argument and considering problems with genetic determinism, John Plunkett Centre for Ethics Seminar, Our Genetic Future: The ethical issues, Garvan Institute, Darlinghurst, October

Medical end of life decisions, Social Work Conference, Prince Henry Hospital, Little Bay, November

Tobin, B.M.

Ethical Aspects of Organ Transplantation, AIC 96 Medico-Legal Conference, Tattersalls Club, Sydney, February

Ethical Issues of ‘Downsizing’ in the Hospital, Occupational Therapy Department Seminar, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, February

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, St Clare’s Ward, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, February and March

Clinical Ethics Committees: The St Vincent’s experience, Western Sydney Area Health Service, Clinical Ethics Committee, Westmead, February

IECs and Regulation, Ethics Research Seminar: Reproductive Technology Seminar, Melbourne, July

Euthanasia: An update on the Northern Territory Act and the ‘Andrews’ Bill, Sisters of Charity Health Services Regional Board, Sydney, October

The Human Genome Project: the ethical issues, John Plunkett Centre for Ethics Seminar, “Our Genetic Future: The ethical issues”, Garvan Institute, Sydney, October

Euthanasia, Malabar Parish, Malabar, October

Participant in hypothetical on “Clinical and ethical issues in relation to hereditary cancers”, Grand Rounds, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, October

Ethical aspects of the role of ‘Patient Support Officers’, Ethics and Health Care Session for Patient Support Officers, Health Care Complaints Commission, Sydney, November

Practical problems in the provision of palliative care and treatment, NSW Society of Palliative Medicine, Terrigal, November.

Principles of Ethics and Palliative Medicine, Training Course in Palliative Care for General Practitioners, Mt Olivet Hospital, Brisbane, November

The Moral Life: Some features, Bonaventure Lecture Series, Edgecliff, November
Consultancies

Gleeson, G.
Pharmacology Department, St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney: Re high cost drugs, July

Kelly, M.
Pastoral Care Department, St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney: Re Code of Ethics for Pastoral Care, January - May

Joseph, K.
Prof Gavin Andrews, Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety Disorders: Re resource allocation in mental health, February

Quilter, J.
Dr Ron Spielman: Re health care economics, September

Tobin, B.M.
Sr Agnes Reynolds, RSC, Director of Mission, St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin: Re ethical code for the health care services of the Sisters of Charity in Ireland, November
Sponsored Seminars

How Far May Catholic Hospitals Cooperate with Non-Catholic Providers
Prof. Germain Grisez, Flynn Professor of Christian Ethics, Mount Saint Mary’s College, Emmitsburg, Maryland, United States of America
John Plunkett Centre for Ethics, May

May an Oppressed Wife Who Should Avoid Pregnancy Try to Prevent It?
Prof. Germain Grisez, Flynn Professor of Christian Ethics, Mount Saint Mary’s College, Emmitsburg, Maryland, United States of America
St Margaret’s Hospital, Darlinghurst, May

Discussions on Readings in Moral Philosophy
Prof. Raimond Gaita, Institute of Advanced Education, Australian Catholic University
John Plunkett Centre for Ethics, Six seminars, March, April, May and August
Submissions

To the National Health and Medical Research Council’s Transplantation Ethics Working Party: Brain death: Current practices and contemporary challenges
Prepared by Gerald Gleeson, September

To the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee Inquiry into the Euthanasia Laws Bill 1996
Prepared by Bernadette Tobin, December
Membership of Committees

Gleeson, G. P.

Member, Transplant Ethics Working Party, Australian Health Ethics Committee, (NHMRC)
Member, Bioethics Consultative Committee, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney
Member, Ethics Committee, Calvary Hospital, Kogarah
Member, Human Ethics Committee, University of Sydney, Sydney
Member, Medico-Moral Committee, St Margaret’s Hospital, Sydney
Member, Research Ethics Committee, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney
Member, Faculty of Medicine Ethics Committee, University of New South Wales, Sydney

Joseph, K.

Member, Research Committee, Sacred Heart Hospice, Sydney
Secretary, Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics

Kelly, M.

Member, Bioethics Consultative Committee, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney, March - September

Quilter, J. G.

Member, Committee of Review of Post-Graduate Courses, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Western Sydney, Sydney

Tobin, B. M.

Member, Australian Health Ethics Committee, (NHMRC)
Member of Executive, Australian Health Ethics Committee, (NHMRC)
Chair, Transplant Ethics Working Party, Australian Health Ethics Committee, (NHMRC)
Chair, Bioethics Consultative Committee, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney
Member, Medico-Moral Committee, St Margaret’s Hospital, Sydney
Chair, Research Ethics Committee, Australian Catholic University (NSW)
Member, Steering Committee, Liaison between Australian Catholic University and the Caroline Chisholm Centre
Founder and Trustee, Mary Philippa Brazill Trust
Interviews with Public Media

Joseph, K.
*Change Fatigue*, Life Matters, ABC Radio, Sydney, February
*Genetic Engineering*, The Moral Map, ABC Radio, Sydney, February

Tobin, B.
*Euthanasia*, The Moral Map, ABC Radio, Sydney
*The Assisted Reproductive Technology Guidelines of the National Health & Medical Research Council*, Kick FM, Sydney
*Northern Territory’s Rights of the Terminally Ill Act*, Reformatorisch Dagblad, The Netherlands, February
*Euthanasia Laws Bill*, Reformatorisch Dagblad, The Netherlands, October