

Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture

Bioethics Links

As 2020 ends, educational systems are adapting to a world still subsumed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Zubeida Mustafa's article looks at the growing digital divide in Pakistan against the backdrop of a flawed, unequal schooling system. CBEC faculty write about their trials and tribulations (and joys) of shifting to virtual teaching and students' perspectives about the online learning experience. We also include a tribute to Dr. Renée Fox, a friend and supporter of CBEC, who died in September 2020.

Editor

Ethical Dimension of Education in Pakistan and the Impact of Post-Covid Digitalisation

Zubeida Mustafa*

Before we take up the issue of the ethical aspect of education in Pakistan a look at its legal and constitutional status itself would be in order. I shall focus on school education as it is this sector that has a pronounced human rights and ethical aspect. In 2010, the National Assembly amended the Constitution of 1973 that made education mandatory for all children. Article 25-A was adopted and according to this, "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law."

This provision should have been a landmark step towards universalizing education which is worldwide regarded as the fundamental right of all men, women and children. It naturally has to begin from childhood. It seems unbelievable that it took Pakistan 63 years to recognize this basic fact.

But Article 25-A has failed to achieve its purpose. The enrolment ratio of school age children is barely 60 percent and over 22 million children aged 5-16 years are still believed to be out of school. The resultant inequity - geographical, gender and class - has demonstrated clearly that in Pakistan

education is not the equalizer it should be. If anything, it is a factor that

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“جو ہودوقی یقین پیدا تو کٹ جاتی ہیں زنجیریں”

(Those who have faith break free of their chains) - part of a 1976 mural by artist Sadequain interpreting Allama Iqbal's poetry
Picture from *Mystic Expressions*, Topical Printers, 2011

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CBEC's Switch to Virtual Teaching

In this section, CBEC faculty write about the shift from on-campus academic modules built around discourse and close interaction to the very different world of online teaching.

CBEC in the COVID-19 Cul de Sac

Farhat Moazam

Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher living around 500 BCE, believed that education has nothing to do with filling a pail but is all about igniting a flame. The Latin root of the word education (*educatio*) means training, refining and even rearing (of children). But the root *educatio* also incorporates the concept of "bringing forth/drawing out" of what exists within the student, silent and unexplored. In CBEC we focus on this aspect of education when students in our degree programs - the Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics (PGD) and the Masters in Bioethics (MBE) - are with us during four contact modules (ten days to two weeks each) during their year of course work.

Our students are mid career healthcare professionals from provinces in Pakistan and East Africa (primarily Kenya). The modules encourage close interactions between students and teaching faculty, and between

students themselves, beyond the confines of scheduled teaching sessions to impromptu exchanges with faculty after class, conversations over tea and lunch breaks, and dinners hosted by CBEC faculty. I believe it is these out-of-class interactions that help students gain insight into, oft unquestioned values, and to understand how these shape their worldviews and influence personal and professional interactions.

For some faculty, including myself, the on campus modules, taxing and time consuming as they are and for which all else must be put on hold temporarily, also offer opportunities to become better, more connected teachers. Expressions on student faces (a puzzled look, a furrowed brow, glazing of the eyes or a widening in an "aha" moment), what students say and what they leave unsaid, provide clues to when I should pause, perhaps elaborate or change tactics, dwell deeper into the particular issue on the table. When students are with you in the room, in flesh and blood so to speak, it is easier for the teacher's finger to find their pulse.

CBEC modules have had to cease with the COVID-19 epidemic engulfing the world this year. After our first on-site module in January we too have entered the COVID *cul de sac*, a



December 15, 2020 - Dr.Kashif Shafique (head of the table), Principal, School of Public Health, DUHS, Karachi teaches the ethics of research design at CBEC in the Research Ethics and Public Health module. PGD and MBE students attend virtually while CBEC faculty maintain safety precautions.

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world of social distancing, and “virtual realities” which by definition mean the “almost real.” Like other programs around the world we have been compelled to move to online teaching to ensure enrolled students complete their course work. CBEC faculty has done a yeoman's job and successfully modified the curriculum, innovated new teaching methodologies, and learned online tricks to find strategies for student assessment more suitable for online delivery while maintaining and stimulating students' interest.

While these difficulties are no different from those faced by others, CBEC has had to face a unique challenge. A majority of our students are clinicians who are now involved in duties connected to COVID patients with heightened physical, mental and emotional stress when some of them and/or their family members have contracted the infection. These realities have necessitated that we spread out online teaching sessions and restrict them to weekends. The 2020 academic year has therefore been extended into the first few months of 2021 instead of ending this month.

So, until the world finds a path out of the pandemic CBEC faculty will continue to engage with students reduced to two dimensional, disembodied heads on computer screens with indecipherable facial expressions, and must deal with situations when these talking heads “freeze” in mid-sentence or disappear entirely due to vagaries of internet connections/bandwidths. The primary aim however will remain unchanged - not filling pails but kindling flames.

Making Lemonade in COVID

Aamir Jafarey*

Covid-19 is a lemon we have to contend with, at least for the time being. Playing safe is

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essential till either the virus tires of us, or we find a way to beat it, but until then, we have to make do with what we have.

As we struggle to reshape our lives in this new normal, and put on hold nonessentials, we have to innovate to keep the essentials going. And education is one of the essentials.

Education, essentially, is a contact sport. It involves interaction, eye contact, and establishing a physical connection, possible only when teacher and student are face to face. But this is, largely, on hold for now.

Heading into the virtual world, our baggage of “this is not the same” weighs us down, our denial slowing us to capitalize on this forced opportunity. Yes, it will never be the same, but different is not always bad. What is needed is a change in perspective, not lowering our standards, but making new ones.

I see Covidized education as an opportunity to learn, to innovate, and when the old normal returns, to enrich it with new tricks we learn in our virtual classrooms. Hating it won't make it go away.

What can I say, I have always been partial to lemonade.



'Lemon Plant' - Ghazal Shahid, 2020

Shift to Online Teaching: Brave New World?

Sualeha Shekhani*

I am a 'digital native', the only faculty member at CBEC in this unique position. Sorting technological glitches, finding quick solutions to tech-related problems by using the Pakistani technique of "*jugaar*" (innovation) is in my blood.

At the same time, I am deeply averse to technology. The emotional distance that it creates despite its constant availability gives me a sense of discomfort. When the Covid-19 pandemic struck Pakistan leading to the cancellation of our contact modules, I was thoroughly disappointed. I had just graduated from the role of 'student' to 'teacher' and now I had to adapt to teaching online? I was going to fall way behind on my learning curve. After all, this was the year where I was going to learn the ropes of running the academic year from an 'insider's perspective.'

Teaching online, however, was a whole new learning curve! From figuring out ways to schedule sessions in a manner convenient to students/faculty, to handling administrative challenges, to developing novel methods of engaging students online, (despite my discomfort with technology, my geeky side gets excited at the prospect of learning new skills), to devising challenging mechanisms for assessing students, it was a whole new world. May I be courageous (or naïve) enough to call it "Brave New World" as Miranda innocently proclaims in Shakespeare's "*The Tempest*"?

These are new times, exciting times also! I was able to conduct a teaching session from the comfort/safety of my home. Pre-Covid, I would have been unable to take the session since I could not make it to the venue physically, depriving me of a unique learning opportunity. Has the shift to online teaching sessions compromised students' learning?

Yes, it has. Would we have been able to continue our program without the abundant technological tools at our disposal in current times? It would have been impossible to do so.

As a fellow faculty member is fond of saying, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade."



'Brave New World of Online Teaching' - Ghazal Shahid, 2020

The Challenge of Online Teaching

Ali Lanewala*

"Hello! Can you hear me? Can everyone see the slide?" This is the usual opening sentence of a virtual teacher. Teaching bioethics involves an interactive discourse between students and teacher. It requires active participation of the whole group and most of the time the session is tailored according to the understanding of the group. When a teacher is not even sure that the students can see or hear, then conducting the session becomes more challenging.

The non-verbal body language of students helps a teacher to control the pace of the session and re-emphasize points that are not very clear to the students. In virtual teaching I feel handicapped in this regard. Moreover, in a virtual session only one person can talk at a time and if someone else even whispers in between, nobody can hear the conversation clearly.

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Due to the pandemic, most of the academic sessions are either postponed or have moved to a virtual setup. Since it is a new mode of education, all of us will need some time and practice to adapt to this form of teaching.



'The Challenges of Virtual Teaching' - Ghazal Shahid, 2020

Time Tells its Own Tale

Bushra Shirazi*

The year 2020 has created disorder on many fronts. Amongst the affected areas, academia and education have been severely wounded. Curriculums, teaching and assessments have taken on new forms in order to maintain standards while finding practical solutions in these testing times. Teachers who are immigrants to online education are trying to minimize the stark differences between online and face to face academic sessions. The schema in our minds is that of a real-world classroom which we strive to create through technology.

Like other programs, academic sessions for CBEC's Postgraduate Diploma in Biomedical Ethics have shifted online. The experience has been exhausting at many levels involving the revision of the curriculum and redefining what is a "must know" in comparison to things that are "good to know." It has meant rethinking the time and content that is appropriate for an online session in comparison to the physical classroom. We are also trying to find new ways of engaging

students so that screen time fatigue is minimized by the use of different tools. Are these forced changes the initial steps of permanent change? Only time will tell.

However, in all this chaos there is a silver lining. We have learned new skills, we have been forced out of our comfort zones. Some innovative ideas appear to work well while others require reconsideration. It is difficult for us to say whether the outcome will be positive or otherwise, the idea is to play the game the best as we can. Hope for success underlies our actions - but we need to complete them in an efficacious manner.

Zooming in COVID

Nida Wahid Bashir*

Teaching has been my passion despite my fear of public speaking. I love being with young minds and their inquisitive nature energizes me to seek new knowledge and stay updated. Eyes, movement of the eye brow, posture, hand movement and above all, a hand going up to ask a question, these often make me pause and redefine my teaching strategy. It took me years to gain this confidence in my abilities as a teacher.

Moving from teaching surgery to teaching bioethics was a tough task and it is only in the last couple of years that I began to feel confident teaching the subject. And just when I started to relax and enjoy the process, COVID-19 made its entry with a big bang, forcing all teaching online. No eye contact or brow or hand movement, we cannot even see the student's posture. There is only the 'raised hand' icon on Zoom. All elements of communication are gone except the voice which gets interrupted often because of the poor internet connection or because another person is speaking at the same time. To add to this uncomfortable scenario, I end up looking at my own face while speaking, diverting my

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attention to my hairdo and camera angles.

The silver lining to this situation is that I can teach in another city or continent without the uncomfortable air travel and join any meeting from anywhere, be it the operation theater, surgeons' lounge, my sitting room and even my bedroom.

Like all the teachers of this world, I have come to terms with this change and unlike my first online bioethics related journal club with the pediatric surgery residents of an institution, in which it seemed impossible to make residents discuss the topic, my most recent session was spent listening to postgraduate diploma students eagerly sharing their own experiences and contributing their bright ideas. In a recent bioethics meeting, a speaker from the UK shared his wisdom from an animal field surrounded by cows, something that one could not have imagined before COVID.

Lost in Translation

Anika Khan*

It was my shoulder they used to cry on: the weepy ones, the lost ones, the ones who were hard to like. In chats during tea breaks and lunch, they would tell me they were struggling or homesick or missing their children.

I did not particularly enjoy my status as the Resident Tear Blotter. But now that teaching is virtual and students are one-dimensional figures on screens, I wonder if it was such a bad thing to be the wimp who was never able to say no to students who needed a shoulder to cry on.

At CBEC, we're getting used to teaching virtually; humans get used to anything after a while...smells, sights, digital lives. The technology seduces me - the speed, the ease, the gimmicks, the apps - but I don't really know the students anymore. On screen students look small and distant, as though they are on other planets and I am viewing them through a cheap, blurry telescope. I try to get a sense of who they are but it is much harder to know people when

you're looking at them through a pinhole.

Online interaction closely simulates physical experience - closely, but not exactly. Teaching online is a bit like translating poetry from one language to another. You scratch your head over the nuances that cannot be captured, that are lost in translation.

Sessions on *Akhlaqiat* (Ethics and Conduct) for MSOs at SIUT



Medical Social Officers at SIUT attend ethics sessions coordinated by Dr. Ali Lanewala, focusing on interaction with patients and families. Speaker, Dr. Mudassir Laeeq, is seen addressing the audience.

CBEC is running a series of sessions for nursing staff, medical social officers (MSOs) and non-clinical staff of the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT), Karachi focusing on the importance of good manners and compassion when dealing with irate patients and their relatives. Associate CBEC faculty, Dr. Ali Lanewala and PGD alumnus, Dr. Mudassir Laeeq are conducting the sessions.

Conflict occasionally arises in interactions between patients, their families and staff. In these sessions, participants are encouraged to bring up real life incidents and discuss how conflict could have been avoided. Participants appreciate the opportunity to talk about problems they face in dealing with patients and to think about the ethical perspectives.

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promotes inequality.

In Pakistan, education barely receives 2.8 percent of the GDP per annum (2017-18). In the absence of funds the authorities have failed to expand and upgrade the physical infrastructure, teachers' training and the availability of teaching material and technology. This has had an impact on the accessibility of education as the number of schools is too limited to cater for a large population. Many areas, notably in Balochistan, do not even have schools.

This scarcity of schools led to the private sector entering the field of education in Pakistan in a big way. Taking advantage of the growing demand for schools, private proprietors soon escalated their fees and thus good education moved beyond the reach of the common man. In due course a new category of private schools proliferated, the low-fee institutions which are a step above public schools. Today nearly half the schools in Pakistan are in the private sector.

The existence of this large private sector creates disparities as there is a stark contrast between the quality of education and facilities provided at public and private schools. These disparities have markedly increased following the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of physical classrooms for four months.

When COVID-19 struck in February-March 2020, education for the poor in Pakistan was already in tatters. In the lockdown period, all educational institutions closed down and it became a sort of prolonged holiday season for all. Initially the focus of the government was on the economy and what was termed in common discourse as 'lives versus livelihood'. Education was never its priority.

The private sector, however, was concerned about its survival and profitability. Hence, private schools and universities went

into action and came online. It was not easy at first as nobody - neither the students nor the faculty - was trained for it. The international world of technology responded immediately and new apps and programs were created to meet the needs of the classroom and one heard of Zoom and Google Classroom. Teachers were trained or asked to train themselves and the digital classroom went on air by the end of May.

So far, there is no consensus on the effectiveness of online education. The utility of the new system is being debated and the jury is still out. At some private schools, teachers actually left their jobs as they admitted that they could not cope with the tiring demands of the new style of teaching. Children initially enjoyed their new experience until the novelty wore out. Then they began to miss the socialization dimension of education.

The low-fee schools tried to compensate for the absence of classroom teaching by devising substitutes such as assigning homework, circulating newsletters or providing links to story-telling and educational videos on smartphones.

But that was all limited to private education. The main reason *Continued on page 8*



Dr. Moazam and former residents unmask and hold their breaths for a picture on the CBEC terrace - (From left to right), Drs. Nadeem Khurshaidi, Nida W. Bashir, Muneer Amanullah, Farhat Moazam, Bushra Shirazi, Mohammad Arshad and Aamir Jafarey

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was that private institutions - particularly 'elite' ones - had the resources needed to provide connectivity, the essential requirement of online education. These schools were able to shift their classrooms to online platforms because they could pay for the technology. Even more importantly, all teachers and students possessed laptops, wi-fi and also back up to provide electricity in case of load shedding or power breakdowns.

In the public sector, the situation was very different. As more households own televisions than computers in Pakistan, the government's response during lockdown was to offer Teleschool via the state-run Pakistan Television Network. This was an opportunity to innovate and devise original presentations based on a mix of technologies such as videos, documentaries, animations and the use of sound and light to make lessons interesting. In reality, some of the presentations were engaging but others involved a droning voice reading from the dull pages of textbooks.

Teleschool failed to make an impact for many reasons. While 98% of well off Pakistanis have access to digital learning technology, only 15% of the poorest Pakistanis have access to any sort of remote learning technology, including televisions. Also, digital learning, even at its best, requires greater freedom from distraction and for younger children, requires the assistance of an educated adult who can facilitate learning. For many families, it was hard to understand the Teleschool daily schedule which dedicated an hour's lesson to each grade.

Schools partially opened in September 2020 with all the SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) being observed. However, on

November 26, the government again closed all educational institutions because of a rapid rise in COVID cases. According to expert opinion, education in Pakistan has fallen back by a decade and the pandemic may have reduced the future earning capacities of many children currently in schools.

One indicator of the damage done by the pandemic is a possible increase in the number of Pakistani children who cannot read by the age of 10 years. According to estimates, this figure is projected to increase from the current 75% to 79%. Illiteracy affects negatively the quality of life of those who cannot understand the written word. It restricts their ability to get good jobs and improve their living conditions. It also leaves people open to exploitation by the unscrupulous. Good education on the other hand is a catalyst for change not only in respect of people's material life but also in terms of their personality, economic productivity and intellect.

The damage done by school closures can only be counteracted by the creation of learning opportunities that the government can provide, with remote learning gaining increasing prominence in the post-Covid world. The impact of such opportunities will depend however on the quality of the facilities provided and who is able to access them. Recently, the government initiated 'radio school' to reach children who cannot access other technology but the effectiveness of this measure remains to be seen.

As digital learning becomes more important, the gap between the rich and the poor will become wider. As a result, disparity and inequity in society will grow. But the ethical dilemma is - if the government shirks its duties in promoting the standards of education for the poor should the private sector be pushed down to promote equity? This sounds unethical too. Then what?

Online Versus On-Site Teaching Experience: Perspectives from our Students

Sualeha Shekhani and Bushra Shirazi*

The past few months have been an experiment that has seen us restructuring our program massively. With the suspension of our intensive two-week contact module system spread over the course of one year, we have shifted to alternate full (and rigorous) Saturdays for teaching. In many ways, we are sailing in uncharted waters, unsure of the effectiveness of what we are doing.

We combatted this uncertainty by devising brief student feedback forms to be filled in after each online session. While student feedback has always been an integral part of CBEC's teaching methodology, the forms were redesigned significantly to include questions pertaining to strengths and weaknesses of the online component.

We present here some key areas from the students' perspectives about the online learning experience. We discovered that our students, all mid-career professionals, while previously unfamiliar with Zoom and its various features quickly adapted to technology.

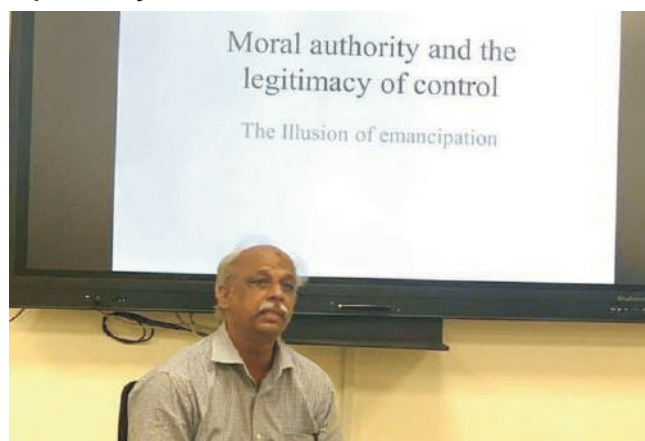
Our students voiced their appreciation of new methods of assessment including in-class quizzes (conducted through the online tool, Flexiquiz) which provided instant feedback. A student stated, *"I personally found them a good tool of self-assessment."* Another strategy students found helpful was the assigning of pre-session tasks (the majority of the students rated these as "Most Useful" or "Quite useful") pertaining to the readings for a specific session. Initially developed to ensure that students read the assigned material, this tool also proved an asset during the session as it allowed the faculty to advance to higher concepts.

Despite a reduction in assigned reading material and scheduling sessions on only two Saturdays per month, the students found the online sessions to be more intensive than the contact module. This was due to their multiple

responsibilities as mid-career professionals alongside household duties/chores. For front line healthcare professionals, this was exacerbated because Covid-19 translated into an increase in working hours. According to one of our students, *"[There was] compromise in equity based on different work, household and resource dynamics."*

Students also felt that there was reduced interaction with faculty in online sessions as compared to on-site, contact modules. This is perhaps an inherent limitation of the online teaching process. While we encourage our students to engage, online sessions have more definite cut off points so that interaction with faculty is possible only within designated periods. In contrast, during contact modules students loiter after sessions to discuss confusing points (often with Dr. Moazam) and class discourse extends into informal group discussions with the faculty.

In a way, being online has led to a decrease in the feeling of sharing the same "social" space. Being enrolled in a program is not just about learning a bunch of concepts. Especially when it comes to *Continued on page 11*



September 23, 2020 - In a Journal Club with CBEC faculty, Dr. Abdul Wahab Suri discusses how states are using health systems during COVID-19 to assert moral authority and legitimize coercive policies

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Dr. Renee C. Fox, our Friend: In Memoriam

Farhat Moazam*

Dr. Renee C. Fox, Annenberg Professor Emerita of Social Sciences and Emerita Senior Fellow of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania, died in Philadelphia on September 23, 2020 at the age of 92. With her death the world lost an erudite medical sociologist of towering intellect who made invaluable contributions to the sociology of medicine and bioethics. Dr. Fox was an itinerant participant-observer par excellence and extraordinary in that her professional experience and groundbreaking research extended well beyond the confines of her country to Europe, Central Africa and China. Her seminal books and publications provide invaluable sociological insights into a wide array of topics such as physician-investigators conducting research on patients, medical education and ethics, and groundbreaking work on the trajectory of organ transplantation in the USA.

Dr. Fox's death is a profound loss for me at a personal level, the loss of a generous mentor and selfless guide who grew into a dear friend over the years. And with her passing, CBEC-SIUT has lost a supporter who followed with keen interest its birth (2004) and its growth, and championed its faculty and activities. To our immense pride, Dr. Fox included a chapter about CBEC, its ethos and its programs, in her book *Observing Bioethics*, co-authored by historian Dr. Judith Swazey, which was published by OUP in 2008.

I first met Dr. Fox in my sabbatical year at the University of Virginia (UVA) in 1998 during a talk she gave at the Center for Biomedical Ethics. I was thrilled to speak with the author whose *The Hastings Center Report* article (1992) "Leaving the field" (co-authored by Dr. Swazey who was also present) I had read in Karachi. The article had left an indelible impression on me as a surgeon with a growing interest in the social

and cultural underpinnings of medical ethics. Later, when I returned to UVA for my doctoral studies, Dr. Fox agreed to be the external supervisor for the ethnographic study I conducted in Pakistan for my dissertation. We would laugh recalling how I "crashed" her fax machine in Philadelphia with my voluminous handwritten notes sent every week from Karachi.

In 2000, while I was Associate Dean for Postgraduate Medical Education in AKU, Dr. Fox accepted our invitation for a keynote address in an international conference focusing on bioethics, medical education and clinical practice. A participant-observer to the core, perpetually curious about human experiences, she shared insightful observations gleaned through her conversations with AKU faculty and residents and with waiters and doormen of the hotel where she stayed. Aamir Jafarey, an Instructor in general surgery at that time, assigned to record an interview with Dr. Fox, recounts how awestruck he was when she stopped speaking to point out, "I think your tape has run out; you need to change it."

Over time, Dr. Fox's

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Dr. Renee Fox (on the left) conversing with Ms. Sualeha Shekhani and Dr. Farhat Moazam on her last virtual 'visit' to CBEC, on July 10, 2020

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#CBEContheweb - Webinar Series

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Pakistan
Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, SIUT
WHO Collaborating Centre for Bioethics

Balancing Research with Therapy during COVID-19: MEURI and Beyond

August 5th | 3:00 -4:30 pm (Pak Time)

<https://www.facebook.com/cbec.siut/>
https://twitter.com/cbec_siut
<http://www.siut.org/bioethics/>

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Andreas Reis
WHO, Geneva


Aasim Ahmad
The Kidney Centre, Karachi

Moderator: Aamir Jafarey
CBEC - SIUT, Karachi

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Data Privacy & Public Health - all is fair in love and war?

#CBEContheweb

Wednesday, September 16
5:30 - 7:00 pm (PAK)


Dr Joseph Ali
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, USA


Dr Haroon Jehangir
Punjab Health Services, Pakistan



Nighat Dad and Shmyla Khan
Digital Rights Foundation, Pakistan

www.facebook.com/cbec.siut/
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www.siut.org/bioethics/

Moderator: **Dr. Natasha Anwar**

CBEC's webinar series related to COVID-19 themes continued during 2020, helping the Centre stay connected to academics, experts and the general public.

In August and September 2020, CBEC held two webinars attended by an international audience. The first of these virtual events,

"Balancing Research with Therapy during COVID-19: MEURI and Beyond" focused on research design appropriate for COVID related research. The second webinar, "Data Privacy & Public Health - all is fair in love and war?" looked at data privacy issues in times of public health emergencies,

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ethics it is about learning through discourse, through interactions with faculty and colleagues. Limited interaction with colleagues and a chance to learn from them was also considered as a weakness of being online. As expressed by a student, *"lack of physical feeling gave a virtual touch to the whole experience."*

Technology itself poses challenges. A weakness that resurfaced repeatedly from nearly all feedback received was the quality of the internet which at times fluctuated from CBEC's end. While connectivity is sometimes beyond our control, this is a serious limitation with online teaching especially from a developing country's perspective.

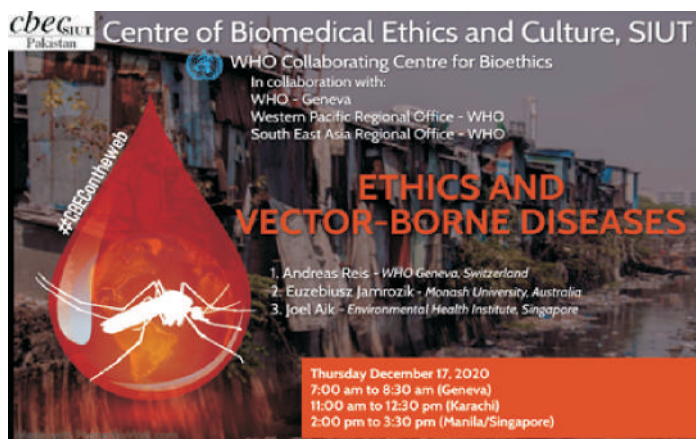
Students identified "Zoom fatigue" as a

serious problem that compromised the learning process - sitting at one place from morning until evening was viewed as tiresome and difficult. In our on-site sessions that perhaps required students to sit for even longer durations, students had more flexibility. They could get up and stretch their legs within the classroom, pick up a cup of tea/coffee, munch on *aloo ka samosa* and *bun kebab* (supplied in abundance) while listening to the presenter, and share a feeling of connectedness with their peers.

Can online teaching replace the on-site teaching modality? Our students do not see it as a replacement. However, as one student aptly remarked, *"I think it is better than nothing."*

CBEC Disseminates 'Ethics and Vector-Borne Diseases: WHO Guidance'

Aamir Jafarey*



In its role as a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Center for Bioethics, CBEC is assisting in the dissemination of WHO's important new guidelines 'Ethics and Vector Borne Diseases: WHO Guidance.'

The Centre organized and co-hosted a series of three webinars on December 9, 11 and 17, 2020 which were developed in collaboration with WHO Headquarters, Geneva, and regional offices in the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO), African (AFRO), Western Pacific (WPRO), and Southeast Asian (SEARO) regions. The events were attended by the scientific community involved in control of vector borne diseases, ethics committee members, regulators and academics.

In the well attended webinars key speakers who had been involved in the development of the guidelines were invited to give an overview of ethical and technical guidance from the document. Participants included scientists and researchers from each region as well as those interested in the unique ethical concerns raised by VBDs.

VBDs have been largely neglected in public health initiatives despite the fact that they contribute to around 17% of the global disease burden and disproportionately affect the poorest and most vulnerable populations in developing countries.

Another strategy employed by CBEC for making the WHO document accessible to a greater number of people was the translation of a summary of the guidelines into Urdu with the involvement of CBEC alumni. The summary has been circulated among relevant scientific circles within the country (link: <http://siut.org/bioethics/WHO-Ethics-and-Vector-Bone-Diseases.pdf>).

In 2021, CBEC plans to produce and release a teaching video focusing on the ethics of vector borne diseases which will be available for free dissemination worldwide. The film will highlight issues of justice, individual rights and community engagement relevant to low and middle income countries.

"Dr. Renee C. Fox, our Friend: " from page 10

increasing physical frailty, aggravated by residual effects of bulbar polio contracted as a teenager, prevented her travelling to Pakistan again, a disappointment to her and to us. However she did visit CBEC "virtually" on July 10 this year. I watched Dr. Fox's face light up on the computer screen as we connected. "I can see you Farhat. It is like I am in CBEC." I listened as she engaged animatedly with Sualeha Shekhani telling her about her sociological study targeting frontline COVID-19 healthcare professionals. "Yes of course send me the transcripts of your interviews. I would love to go over them," she said to an excited Sualeha. I was transported back to 15 years ago when Dr. Fox had said the same thing to me.

Renee, you will be sorely missed.

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