An Overview of EMRC’s Activities

Medical Ethics Unit
(2002-2006)

Endocrinology & Metabolism Research Center
Tehran University of Medical Sciences

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Message from the Head of EMRC

The Endocrinology and Metabolism Research Center (EMRC) of Tehran University of Medical Sciences was established in 1993 and the organizational plan and policies were approved in 1996. The primary aim of EMRC is to provide a stable framework on which to conduct multi-disciplinary studies in the field of Endocrinology and Basic Sciences and to promote scientific enhancement of young investigators. The founding goals of EMRC are to carry out basic and clinical research in the field of Endocrinology and Metabolism with a special focus on the medical ethics issues, and to disseminate information among fellow professionals as well as public education.

EMRC consists of different departments including Research, Educational affairs, Patient Care Services, Administration and International affairs. The Research Department consists of 12 divisions, including Division of Medical Ethics. Regarding the importance of ethical issues and moral considerations in medicine, particularly in medical research, EMRC has established Medical Ethics Division in 2002.

According to endeavors to strengthen medical ethics in Iran, development of National Committee of Medical Research Ethics has paved the way to establish Medical Research Ethics Committees nationwide. Consequently, the Research Ethics Committee of EMRC initiated its activity under direct supervision of the Medical Ethics Division to advocate ethical principals and moral rights of the research participants. All research projects have to obtain an ethical approval from Research Council as well as EMRC Research Ethics Committee.

We warmly welcome the cooperation and support of our peers in the region and further afield.

Bagher Larijani
Professor of Medicine & Endocrinology
Director of EMRC and Chief Medical Ethics Division

Medical Ethics Unit Academic Staff

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Farzaneh Zahedi, MD
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Members of the Research Ethics Committee:

Mohammad Pajouhi, MD (Endocrinologist)
Seyed Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad, PhD, BA, MA
Eghbal Taheri, MSC, Pharm. D (Pharmacologist)
Hossein Fakhrazadeh, MD (Cardiologist)
Reza Majdzaadeh, Ph.D (Epidemiologist)
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Introduction

The increased recognition of ethical problems has contributed to the resurgence of ethics in relation to health care, and to the emergence of medical ethics as a new collaborative discipline in the world. Traditional medical ethics has changed much in the recent century. Currently, contemporary medical ethics does not only present admirable characters of physicians and it is not merely representing rules of etiquette in the field of medicine. On the contrary, it is a practical discipline that provides a structured approach for identifying, analyzing, and resolving ethical issues in clinical practice.

In recent decade, many attempts have been performed by scientists, ethicists, jurisprudents and lawyers for strengthening medical ethics in Iran. The ever-increasing concerns in this field have been accompanied by a parallel progress in the numbers of published manuscripts. Development of National Committee of Medical Research Ethics (1997) has been paved the way for establishment of Medical Research Ethics Committees at universities and medical research centers. In this way, the Medical Research Ethics Committee and the Medical Ethics Unit of EMRC have been established in 2002.

Responsibilities and Objectives

- Authoring and translating necessary documents (books, papers,...) about different issues of medical ethics
- Publishing of the Islamic views on medical ethics
- Ethical review of research projects of EMRC and protecting human rights via conducting national and international ethical codes
- Performing the fundamental, epidemiological and clinical research in the field of medical ethics
- Establishing medical ethics education programs and workshops for researchers, physicians and other health care professionals
- Collaborating with national, regional and International medical ethics and bioethics centers and specialists
The Rules of Activities

- The holy Quran and narratives of The Prophet Mohammad (PBH) and his successors
- The religious opinions of Islamic scholars
- The National Codes of Ethics for biomedical research and International Guidelines
- The norms of society

The National Codes of Ethics for biomedical research, including 26 ethical guidelines, was prepared by MOHME in 2000. The Specific National Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research were also compiled recently. These codes are in accordance with the international declarations such as Helsinki Declaration and CIOMS guidelines that they have been customized according to Islamic codes and Iranian cultural issues.

Strategic Planning

The Medical Ethics Unit has established a comprehensive strategic plan to achieve some short- and long-term organizational goals that consist of:

- To carry out fundamental, clinical and applied researches and to produce theoretical knowledge in the field of medical ethics, in view of Islamic outlooks
- To safeguard observance of the national and international ethical principles and guidelines in medical research
- Collaborating with relevant centers to empower medical ethics and research ethics education
- To establish and extend national and international relations
Activities of Medical Ethics Unit

Research Activities

The Medical Ethics Unit has carried out several projects. Some of them have been designed and done as national projects in collaborating with the Medical Ethics and Medical History Research Center of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) and the Deputy Minister of Research and Technology of Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MOHME).

1. *The project titled "Establishment of Medical Ethics Framework in Organ Transplantation based on Religious Insight" has been carried out as a comprehensive study in 2002-2003. The results published as a Farsi book named "Organ transplantation: medical, ethical, legal and religious aspects"*.

The main topics contain:
- Transplantation History
- Scientific review of transplantation
- Brain death
- Ethical issues
- Legal issues
- Religious opinions

2. *Compilation of a Strategic Plan for Medical Ethics Activities started in 2002 by the Research and Technology Deputy of MOHME. A report of the Medical Ethics Strategic Planning is published in Developing World Bioethics* (the companion journal to Bioethics, official journal of the International Association of Bioethics), recently.

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The prepared plan covers major areas of management, regulations, communications, research, education, training, the public announcement, monitoring and assessment of medical ethics activities at national level.

3. The Specific National Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research were compiled in 2005. The primary draft has been reviewed by lawyers, ethicists, medical and religious experts. The Guidelines are developed to observe ethical codes in research and to protect research participants’ rights.

The guidelines consist of:
- Ethical Guidelines for Clinical Trial
- Ethical Guidelines for Research on Minors
- Ethical Guidelines for Genetic Research
- Ethical Guidelines for Gamete and Embryo research
- Ethical Guidelines for Transplantation Research
- Ethical Guidelines for Research on Animals

Currently, the Guidelines have been ratified by "Policy-making Council" of MOHME and forwarded to the universities and research centres for implementation.

4. The descriptive survey entitled "Ethics Review on Externally-Sponsored Researches (ESRs) in Developing Countries" has been designed as a multinational collaborative project to collect data from Iran, Japan, Philippines, Pakistan, and India. In this investigation, we reviewed the status of the ESRs in Iran during 2002 to 2003. The target groups were vice-chancellors of research and technology of medical universities (44 public universities) and research centres affiliated to public universities. The survey has also evaluated the functions and compositions of ethics committees regarding ESRs. We reported the results of this study in 2 Farsi and one English papers.

5. The "Comparative Study of Islamic View on End of Life Ethical Issues" is the other study which the results were presented in the First International Congress on Dialogue between Science and Religion: Defining Life, the Person and Health. Tehran, Iran, 1-4 May 2006.
Publications

BOOKS

1. The book entitled "Health care professional and ethical issues" (2Volumes)\(^1\) has been published for academic education and training in 2004. The emphasis on the basic medical ethics sciences and increasing awareness of Iranian students and health care professional about bioethics is the main goal of the book. This book is also intended to impart basic principles of modern medical ethics and is a step towards new approach in medical ethics education via case presentation. The volume one consists of seven chapters that cover definition of medical ethics, important issues of medical ethics, medical ethics philosophy, education and medical ethics, research and medical ethics, history of medical ethics in the world and in Iran, medical ethics activities in recent decade in Iran, and strategic planning of medical ethics programs in the country.

The volume two is the translation of the "Bioethics for Clinicians Series", published on a monthly basis in "Canadian Medical Association Journal" (CMAJ) 1996-1998. This series were edited by Dr. Peter A. Singer and is intended to elucidate key concepts in bioethics and to help clinicians to integrate bioethical knowledge into daily practice. We translated the articles and brought them in the separate chapters. The original articles are available from www.cmaj.ca as free full text.

In this volume, issues of professional relationship in medicine, human body, consent, confidentiality, issues before birth, ethical issues in children, organ...

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transplantation, end of human life, biotechnology and genetic dilemmas, new methods for infertility treatment, aging, dementia, and medical law and ethics are reviewed.

Islamic viewpoints were also addressed as footnotes.

2. A comprehensive book about organ transplantation was published\textsuperscript{1} in 2004. A concise English version of this book is under press.

3. Translation of the book "Ethics in Medical Research" (Trevor Smith, 2002) was translated by Dr. Bagher Larijani and Dr. Mohammad Zargham. In the preface of this book, correlation between ethics and research, history, international laws, philosophy of ethics in Islam, status of ethics and research in Iran are discussed in detail.

ARTICLES

ENGLISH JOURNALS

12. Larijani B, Zahedi F. An Introductory on Medical Ethics History in Different Era in Iran. DARU 2006 (Jan), supplement 1: 10-16.
of Babol University of Medical Sciences 2006; 8(Suppl.3): 33-41.

It must be mentioned that we attempt to publish a professional journal on Medical Ethics. At present, some articles have been published as supplements in other journals including Iranian Journal of Diabetes and Lipid Disorders (IJDLD), Journal of Babol University of Medical Sciences (in Farsi), and Daru journal (in English).

Lectures and Conferences

1. The First Sub-regional Expert Meeting on Ethics Education in Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran, 28-29 Oct 2006: Medical Ethics Activities in Iran, Oral Presentation.
2. The First International Congress on Dialogue between Science and Religion: Defining Life, the Person and Health. Tehran, Iran, 1-4 May 2006, Contemporary medical ethics: an overview from Iran, Oral Presentation.
3. The First International Congress on Dialogue between Science and Religion: Defining Life, the
Person and Health. Tehran, Iran, 1-4 May 2006, Islamic View on End of Life Ethical Issues, Oral Presentation.
4. The National Congress of Applied Medical Ethics. Mashhad, Iran, 3-4 May 2006, The principles and issues of contemporary medical ethics, Oral Presentation.
5. The Symposium of Medical Universities’ Vice-chancellors. Tehran: Shahid Beheshti University, 2-4 May 2006, Medical ethics and ethics in medical research, Oral Presentation.
11. The 8th Mulasadra World congress. Iran, Tehran, 22 May 2005, Islamic point of view about Western four principles of medical ethics. Oral Presentation.
Collaborations

I. National

- The Medical Ethics and Medical History Research Center of Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS)
- The Deputy Minister of Research and Technology of MOHME
- The Academy of Medical Sciences.
- Iranian Society of Ethics in Science and Technology

Activities;
- The National Congress of Applied Medical Ethics. Mashhad, Iran, 3-4 May 2006.
- The Seminar of Ethics in Medical Researches. Tehran, Iran, 18-19 May 2005.
- Periodical workshops on “Ethics in Biomedical Research”.

II. International

- Member of International Association of bioethics (IAB).
- Member of Asian Bioethics Association (ABA).
- Registered of the Medical Research Ethics Committee of EMRC at Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) in September 2005.

Activities:
- Compiling the "Ethical Issues of Medical Genetics" as a section of book entitled "Community Control of Genetic and Congenital Disorders", containing the ethical issues of genetic disorders which are the main concerns of the region ,WHO, February 2006.
- The First International Congress on Dialogue between Science and Religion: Defining Life, the Person and Health. Tehran, Iran, 1-4 May 2006.
Future Plans

Medicine, religion, Philosophy, ethics, and law have increasingly more links. Consequently, it necessitates more understanding, analyzing and culturally-adapted resolving of different issues of medical ethics with reference to the principles of Islamic ethics. In this way:

► We will have more emphasis on publishing authorized articles about different issues of modern medical ethics.
► In the field of research, we will aim at compiling appropriate fundamental researches for production of necessary knowledge in the field of Islamic ethics.
► Strengthening Research Ethics Committee of EMRC and widening its responsibilities is an important plan to protect research subjects in practice and to provide more strict supervision of patient’s rights observance in research and therapeutic activities of EMRC.
► We will also make more efforts in the field of ethics education, particularly for EMRC researchers.
► We are also going to have more closed collaborations with medical ethics groups in medical universities and to design and establish educational workshops at different levels.