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The Stars Are Aligned for the Launch of the Online Master of Science in Health Care Ethics Program

by Amy Haddad, PhD

More than ten years ago, the Center for Health Policy and Ethics' core faculty and staff, faculty associates and affiliates, and others members of the Creighton community began discussing the possibility of starting a graduate program in health care ethics. For various reasons, the program that was originally designed as an on-campus doctoral degree did not move past the preliminary proposal stage. The idea never faded, however, and this fall, the fully online Master of Science in Health Care Ethics (MSHCE) program becomes a reality. The stars are indeed aligned to guarantee the success of the MSHCE program including the presence of outstanding faculty and staff, a university-wide move to expand online education, and program approval by the Creighton Graduate Board and the Higher Learning Commission.



***Amy M. Haddad, PhD,
Director of the Center for
Health Policy & Ethics***

Furthermore, the establishment of an online MSHCE program is consistent with Creighton's current mission. The final line of the Mission statement reads, "Faculty and staff stimulate critical and creative thinking and provide ethical perspectives for dealing with an increasingly complex world." Creighton's commitment to values-based education is apparent in its mission statement and the MSHCE program supports the mission and educational goals. Specifically, the MSCHE program will highlight several core institutional values such as the promotion of justice, as evidenced by such courses as Theories of Justice and Social and Cultural Contexts of Health Care. Another ideal of Creighton's mission refers to the inalienable worth of each individual and appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity. Health care practitioners are trained to meet the needs of individual patients, which include having an understanding of a patient's cultural values, family structure, religious beliefs, as well as medical risk factors. These concepts are interwoven throughout the program. At present, Creighton University offers no opportunities for students who specifically seek advanced education in health care ethics. The addition of a graduate level program in health care ethics fills this gap in educational offerings in the area of ethics at Creighton.

The new program is also a good example of a multidisciplinary University initiative. As stated in the Center's mission, our faculty represent "a multidisciplinary group of scholars dedicated to the study and teaching of ethical dimensions of health care and health policy." The Center faculty and faculty associates include representation from all of the health professions on the campus (dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, occupational therapy, pharmacy, and physical therapy) as well as theology and philosophy from the College of Arts and Sciences.

The creation of this program is also consistent with Creighton's recent commitment to create additional online educational opportunities for non-traditional student populations. In his 2008 Convocation Address, Fr. John P. Schlegel, SJ, emphasized e-learning as a pillar of the University's building blocks for tomorrow (<http://www2.creighton.edu/administration/president/speeches/2008convocation/index.php>). He cited the untapped market of working professionals and the opportunity the University should leverage by offering learners a values-centered Creighton education online. Several other online and hybrid graduate degree programs have recently been inaugurated, including a Master of Science degree in negotiation and dispute resolution, and the Master's degree in security analysis and portfolio management.

The MSHCE program will produce graduates with an intimate knowledge of what it means to be women and men for others, and it will provide them with the knowledge and skills to be catalysts for the ethical improvement of health care, especially for the most vulnerable in our society.

Caring for All: Social Justice, Vulnerability, and Marginality

by John Stone, MD, PhD

In the Master of Science in Health Care Ethics (MSHCE) program, a focus on vulnerability and marginality will thread through all courses. This emphasis fully resonates with the missions of Creighton University and the Center for Health Policy and Ethics. Stress on social justice is the primary reason, coupled with stress on equal respect and humanistic concern for all. A crucial background factor is the critical causal relationship among health, health care, and vulnerability or marginality.

In light of this focus, the MSHCE program's second objective is that successful students will be able to: "Discuss how the general concerns of ethics, particularly regarding vulnerability and marginalization, apply to health care practices, systems, policies, and laws." Students will explore relevant moral issues in all courses, including health policy, biomedical research, theories of justice, the practicum, and the capstone.

In one sense, modern bioethics has always focused on understanding and reducing the vulnerability and marginality that health care encounters produce in those who come for assistance—already vulnerable because they are sick, suffering, and/or apprehensive. These engagements further disempower and sometimes even dehumanize the ill, enhancing their vulnerability and sustaining for them a marginal role in determining their health care. In response, bioethics has worked extensively to enhance the autonomy or agency of those seeking and receiving health care and to ensure that provision of care is more humanistic and patients' rights are protected. Such efforts have also importantly influenced biomedical research and policy.

Modern bioethics has also had a significant emphasis on justice within health care institutions and in entities such as managed-care organizations. For example, work to explain, justify, and motivate transparency, accountability, and appeal processes in managed care is particularly based in justice. Stress on empowerment in decision-making reflects a background focus on promoting equal and substantial respect of all who seek care. The focus on equality flows from fairness conceptions of justice. Similar justice concerns motivate bioethical investigations in organ transplantation and resource allocations.

The stress on social justice in our graduate program, with our related emphasis on vulnerability and marginality, is an important expansion of bioethics' focus on justice. Inherent in a social justice focus is particular concern with unjust social conditions that most strongly disadvantage and marginalize our people. Our concern for social justice gives special priority to understanding what ethically should be done about vulnerability and marginality and to promoting better health outcomes for our worst off. In our graduate program, these goals center on direct health care, health policy, and biomedical research. However, health care institutional responsibilities for addressing health at community levels will also be an emphasis. Finally, insights that social determinants interactively influence health will importantly inform the program's focus on social injustice involving vulnerability and marginality.

This thread of social justice weaves through the courses in the MSHCE program. In addressing vulnerability and marginality, for example, the course on Theories of Justice in Health Care will apply justice theory to analyses of health and health care inequalities. Research Ethics will consider its foundations in the abuse and exploitation of certain populations and more recent work on inclusion and community-based participatory research. The course on Health Policy will consider how inequalities related to vulnerability and marginality should influence policy development and content. The Practicum course will require that students actively engage in the critical analysis of a significant ethical issue or problem surrounding the provision of health care for a particular vulnerable population.



Dr. John Stone, speaks about ethical perspectives on AIDS as a member of a panel sponsored by the Minority Health Sciences Student Association for World Aids Day.

Goodness, Rightness, Justice, and Beauty . . . in Bioethics Graduate Education

by Christy Rentmeester, PhD

One of the objectives of our budding online Master of Science in Health Care Ethics (MSHCE) degree program is to integrate the humanities into ethical reflection about significant problems in health care. Arts and humanities are important epistemological sources in bioethics. For example, one way to come to know goodness, rightness, justice, and beauty is through our aesthetic experiences of literature, music, film, painting, sculpture, and performance art. Debate persists about how arts and humanities actually facilitate learning in bioethics and health professions education. Despite the apparent immeasurability of the impact of aesthetic knowledge on students' abilities to reason through ethically complex problems, moral development appears to be fostered not only by examining what's good, right, or just, but also by questioning what we construe as beautiful and why.

Questioning of these values—goodness, rightness, justice, and beauty—falls broadly under the disciplinary umbrella of value theory, according to most philosophers and most undergraduate and graduate philosophy programs. Value theory applies broadly and deeply to investigations and analyses about health care and health policy. Arts- and humanities-based approaches to education in health care ethics resist the kind of rubric-based instruction so dominant in health professions by inviting nonlinear, creative, capacious approaches to inquiry about values in health care. Indeed, arts- and humanities-based approaches are central to facilitating students' more robust understanding of historical, social, and cultural dimensions of ethics and health policy. For example, a review of recent history in colonial visual arts reveals morally problematic representations of people of color, which have shaped personal and political discourses that contextualize current inequalities in health care. Concisely, arts- and humanities-based approaches are sometimes better equipped than argument or exposition to poignantly illuminate the central role played by nonrational features of our humanity and vulnerability in our practices of reasoning.



Dr. Christy Rentmeester facilitates a small group discussion.

Graduate Education in Health Care Ethics at a Catholic and Jesuit University

by Jos Welie, PhD

As a Catholic university, Creighton University students “are challenged to pursue an education that combines excellence in humanistic and cultural development with specialized professional training..., to continue the search for truth and for meaning throughout their lives, since the human spirit must be cultivated in such a way that there results a growth in its ability to wonder, to understand, to contemplate, to make personal judgments, and to develop a religious moral and social sense.... They should realize the responsibility of their professional life, the enthusiasm of being the trained ‘leaders’ of tomorrow, of being witnesses to Christ in whatever place they may exercise their profession” (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, § 23). In other words, a Catholic university cannot limit itself to acquisition and provision of knowledge because of its usefulness. Instead it “is distinguished by its free search for the whole truth about nature, man and God. The present age is in urgent need of this kind of disinterested service, namely of proclaiming the meaning of truth, that fundamental value without which freedom, justice and human dignity are extinguished” (§ 4).

The ‘need’ referred to in the latter quote from *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* is not a market force; it has no direct economic relevance. Indeed, it is the kind of need that arises precisely because the good concerned is not a marketable commodity. Thus, by virtue of its Catholic identity, Creighton University is called to offer educational programs for which there is a grave cultural, social or spiritual need, even if it does not directly contribute to the relief of our nation’s current economic crisis.

Ex Corde does not specify in which disciplinary areas our present age most urgently needs this kind of disinterested service from the university. But the health sciences surely are among them. Notwithstanding the many benefits the health sciences have brought the world, offering people a much greater chance at a long and healthy life, they have also invoked some of the greatest challenges to the moral fabric of modern societies. It is for this reason that the curricula of all health sciences degree programs at Creighton University contain at least 3 credit hours of formal ethics education. However, at present, Creighton University offers no opportunities for advanced education in health care ethics. The new CHPE degree program is intended to fill that void.

As a Jesuit university, Creighton is challenged to promote “reverence for and an ongoing reflection on human experience.” For St. Ignatius Loyola, “reverence was first an attitude of regard before the majesty of God, but it was also a regard for all that God had created as both a gift from God and a way into God’s presence. Inspired by this sense of reverence, the Jesuit ideal of seeking and finding God in all things presupposes this genuine regard for the mystery within the universe” (Jesuit Conference Board: Communal Reflection on the Jesuit Mission in Higher Education, 2002, p. 3). In recent decades, health sciences research, biomedical engineering, and clinical care have become veritable co-creative enterprises, taking human stewardship of God’s creation to new levels. Our technical and practical successes must be matched by an equal reverence, a willingness and competence to seek, find and regard the transcendent in our co-creative ventures. While we would be overtaxing health professionals if we expected each and every one of them to develop such competence, the new MSHCE program offers those professionals who are willing and able to become leaders in health care ethics the education necessary to achieve that goal.

A second hallmark of Jesuit education is its emphasis on “the service of faith and the promotion of justice.” As Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ, former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, pointed out in his 2000 address on *Faith, Justice, and American Jesuit Higher Education*, “Jesuit universities have stronger and different reasons than many other academic and research institutions for addressing the actual world as it unjustly exists and for helping to reshape in the light of the Gospel.” Marginalization, health disparities, underserved patient populations, preferential option for the poor, access to basic health care for all – these notions all capture aspects of the overarching concern for justice that characterizes Jesuit higher education in general and the new MSHCE program in particular.

Just the Facts: M.S. in Health Care Ethics

by Chris Jorgensen, MSLIS

Who? The new Master of Science in Health Care Ethics (MSHCE) program is designed for professionals who have an advanced degree in a health care field, as well as students with some undergraduate coursework in health care or bioethics who are seeking a deeper understanding of the ethical relevance of historical, cultural, philosophical, political, economic and legal issues in health care practices and policies, especially regarding their impact on vulnerable populations.

What? The program is a fully accredited MS program offered entirely online. The curriculum is comprised of 30 credit hours: 27 core credit hours and 3 elective credit hours allowing the students to select a course that is relevant to their distinct career objectives. The program is customizable based on the elective choice and student-designed practicum experience. For details about the full MSHCE curriculum, visit <http://www.creighton-online.com/programs/online-masters-degree-in-healthcare-ethics-course-descriptions.asp>

When? The program will commence on August 31, 2009. Applications are being accepted NOW!

Where? Anywhere! There is no on-site or residency component, allowing students to complete the entire program online. How long? Each 8-week module allows the student to concentrate on just one content area at a time. Students who take one course each term will complete the program in less than two years.

Why? Professionals and the public need the skills that ethics education offers to address the injustices within health care and the larger society.

More questions? For more information or to apply for the MSHCE program, visit <http://www.creighton-online.com/programs/online-masters-degree-in-healthcare-ethics.asp>

The Online MSHCE Degree: Designed with Working Professionals in Mind

by Chris Jorgensen, MSLIS

Firmly committed to supporting the mission, educational philosophy and goals of Creighton University, the Center for Health & Policy Ethics has launched an online degree program: the Master of Science in Health Care Ethics (MSHCE).

The program is consistent with Creighton's commitment to create additional online educational opportunities for the non-traditional student population. The importance of such initiatives was stressed by Fr. John P. Schlegel, president of Creighton University, in his 2008 Convocation Address in which he cited the untapped market of working professionals and the opportunity the University should leverage by offering learners a values-centered Creighton education online.

For students, the opportunity to obtain the Creighton MSHCE degree online offers significant advantages over a traditional campus-based program. The online degree offering allows health care professionals to advance their knowledge and skill sets as they continue in their existing career. The 8-week course modules are taught one at a time, making it possible for the students to focus on their education and work commitments simultaneously.

The online learning environment is a collaborative environment, because all students participate in the discussions and assignments. This fosters a communal development as students learn from each other's experiences. This exposure to practical knowledge lets the student learn from situational experiences and to apply class concepts to real health care situations. Additionally, this "global" classroom exposes students to content, situations and experiences shared by fellow-students from anywhere in the world.

The student-centered learning environment is a comfortable classroom for all students. Here they can confidently develop their voices and participate in assignments and conversations; while in a traditional classroom, some might not have shared their opinions and experiences. The 24/7 e-classroom allows learners to interact anytime, anywhere and complete assignments and share information when it is most convenient for them. Adult learners excel in this environment. A more obvious benefit to online learning is the direct relation to technology in the classroom. Online learning encourages students to participate in online conversations, research and communication, thus receiving the exposure to skills that are critical for success in the 21st century.



Dr. Amy Haddad interacts with online nursing students from her office.

WE WANT YOU!

by Jos Welie, PhD

One of the greatest attractions that the discipline of health care ethics has to offer is its interdisciplinary nature. The field is populated by scholars from the widest variety of academic backgrounds, including medicine and ministry, hygiene and history, physical therapy and philosophy, anatomy and anthropology, law and literature, economics and engineering. Consistent with this identity, the curriculum for CHPE's new Master of Science in Health Care Ethics (MSHCE) program is multidisciplinary, the faculty teaching the courses will be multidisciplinary, and we expect the students to be as well. At the same time, the world of health care ethics is rather small. In some ways it is a global village. Consequently, we not only know about colleagues, we actually know our colleagues, regionally, nationally, and even internationally. For example, CHPE faculty members regularly present at conferences all around the US and our Senior Visiting Fellows have come from places as close as Illinois and California and as far away as, Puerto Rico, Hungary, and Azerbaijan. Because all course work will be online, the new MSHCE program should be accessible to students everywhere. With students from Alaska and Alabama, New Hampshire and Nevada, Hawaii and Ohio, the discussions are guaranteed to be insightful, enriching, and always challenging.

I am a nurse educator at a college of health sciences and a member of the hospital ethics committee with which the college is associated. I intend to use a graduate degree in health care ethics to expand my knowledge of ethics in health care, enhance my role and knowledge for the ethics committee, and teach an undergraduate health care ethics class. I searched for institutions that offer this in an online format because of my experience with online education and because of my role as a mom, wife, and educator. It fits better. I looked into Creighton because of your reputation for offering excellent educational opportunities.

~ Jodi Nelson, prospective student

Finally, the field of health care ethics is very diverse in its application. Some graduates will apply their skills in their own clinical practice; others will assume leadership positions on institutional review boards, professional ethics committees, or state disciplinary boards; still others will take on educational responsibilities or engage in scholarship and publication, thereby moving the field itself forward. The common denominator among all of these activities is a deep interest in and indeed concern about the ethical foundations of health care. The new MSHCE program is designed to nurture that passion and provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively implement such ideas and ideals.

Best Selling Author Barbara Delinsky to Speak at 20th Anniversary of Women and Health Lecture

by Marybeth E. Goddard, MOL

Ms. Barbara Delinsky will present the 20th Annual Women and Health Lecture on Wednesday, October 7, 2009 at the Witherspoon Concert Hall at the Joslyn Art Museum at 7:00 p.m. The lecture is free and open to the public and is entitled: Family Crises and Other Little Bumps in Life. Those interested in attending the lecture will need to register for it via the Center for Health Policy and Ethics (CHPE) website <http://chpe.creighton.edu/>. Registration will open August 1, 2009.

Ms. Delinsky earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Tufts University and a Master of Arts degree in Sociology from Boston College. She served on the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center and on the MGH's Women's Cancer Advisory Board.

Ms. Delinsky's books are highly emotional, character-driven studies of marriage, parenthood, sibling rivalry, and friendship. They regularly appear on the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Publishers Weekly, and USA Today bestseller lists. Her newest novel, *The Secret Between Us*, was published in January 2008. *While My Sister Sleeps* is Ms. Delinsky's most recent publication and deals with the timely and complex issues surrounding decisions by family members to continue or remove life support from loved ones.

After battling breast cancer herself in 1994, Ms. Delinsky turned her energy to compile *UPLIFT: Secrets from the Sisterhood of Breast Cancer Survivors*. She donates all of her proceeds from *UPLIFT* to her foundation for breast cancer research. In support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the Center for Health Policy and Ethics is pleased to announce Ms. Delinsky has also agreed to speak at a luncheon co-sponsored by CHPE, Wednesday, October 7th, 2009, at Lauritzen Gardens. During this lecture, entitled, *UPLIFT: Secrets from the Sisterhood of Breast Cancer Survivors – A Conversation with Barbara Delinsky*, Ms. Delinsky will focus on her personal experience with breast cancer. Tickets are \$40 per person and can be purchased via the CHPE website also beginning August 1, 2009.



Author Barbara Delinsky

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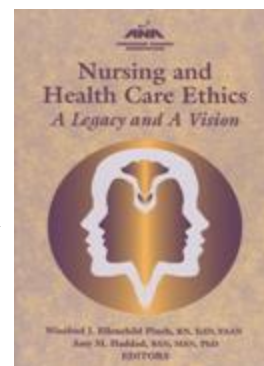
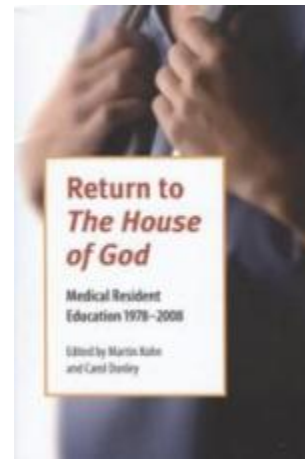
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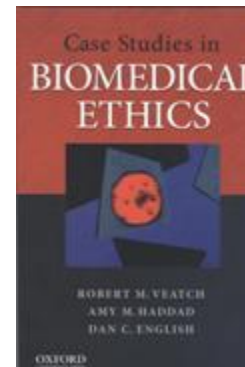
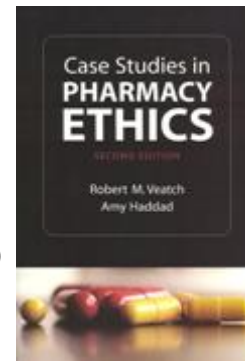
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Legacy Book Receives Award from the Society for Technical Communication

by Winifred J. Ellenchild Pinch, EdD

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) recently announced their 2008 publication awards. *Nursing and Health Care: A Legacy and A Vision* edited by Winifred J. Ellenchild, RN, EdD, FAAN and Amy M. Haddad, RN, PhD, received a Publications Award of Excellence from the Washington DC Chapter. The STC, founded in 1955, is the largest individual membership organization in the world (14,000 members) dedicated to promoting technical communication. The mission of the STC is to advance the arts and sciences of technical communication across all user abilities and media. Members include technical writers and editors, technical illustrators, academics, information architects, and web designers, for example. The *Legacy* book was submitted by Rosanne O'Connor Roe, publisher of the book and member of STC.



Dr. Pinch and Dr. Haddad pose with their award-winning book.

Comments from the judges who reviewed the book include the following:

- The book represents an original and thought-provoking effort to help students see how those who have been in nursing for many years have handled problems and ethical dilemmas they will face themselves once they leave the classroom. Well-executed and professional.
- The writing here is direct and quite compelling. Each of the contributors here show an ability to communicate their experiences in a way that anticipates the questions readers may have on ethical issues in nursing.
- I especially like the critical thinking activities at the end of each section. They're composed in a way that challenges students to consider the stories they've just read and apply them to situations they'll face in the field. Charts and tables, when they're used, complement the information well.
- Overall production and layout values are solid. The book is attractive. The logo on the cover is an especially nice touch. Different elements of the content (the contributors' stories, tables and graphs, critical thinking exercises) are easy to find.
- I liked the critical questions, poems, and section dividers (they were all shaded), which clearly marked each major section in the book. The shading provides visual interest and makes the reader want to begin the next essay. Also, the figures and reference lists are very clean and stand out from the body of the text.

More information about the book can be found in the Spring 2007 issue of *Focus* on the Center's web site http://chpe.creighton.edu/publications/focus/spring-2007/story_legacy.htm and publication information can be located at <http://nursingworld.org/books/pdescr.cfm?cnum=24#9781558102613>

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