

## CORRESPONDENCE

### **National Bioethics Conference: participants' comments**

Although ethical issues involved with social science research are so important, most of the research carried out in India has still not come under ethics review. The conference on national bioethics held from 6 to 8 December 2007 in Bangalore addressed a wide range of issues of ethical concerns in both biomedical and social science research.

Eminent speakers of the plenary sessions of this conference addressed a variety of ethical concerns of interest both in biomedical and social science. Issues like: ethical perspectives on research in primary health care, socio-economic dimensions of health care technologies, research in medical surgical devices, ethical challenges in genetic and stem cell research, research on reproductive and contraceptive technologies, ethical challenges faced by clinical organisations in clinical trial and so on were in focus. The plenary sessions on both days were equally stimulating, and I as a demographer have gained a lot from these.

A number of other sessions were also held parallel on all days of this conference, allowing participants to choose and attend those of their interest. A wide range of issues were covered during the three days of deliberations, and the discussions would be of immense benefit to any person with an interest in biomedical or social science research. Over the three days I was able to attend a variety of sessions that primarily addressed various ethical concerns in social science research, law and ethics, role of information technology and media, health care technologies and women, and women and health. All these sessions were lively and informative. I also greatly appreciate the moderators who had good command over the subject discussed, and their ability to organise the discussions scientifically and stay focused.

That both the scientific and organisational aspects of the conference were properly aligned is a noteworthy achievement. The sessions were well organised and the effective audiovisual system enhanced the quality of presentation. By and large

most of the sessions adhered to the timings laid down, which is mostly not the case in many conferences of this nature. Overall, I have been able to benefit from participating in this three-day conference.

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I write to congratulate the organisers for the wonderfully conducted National Bioethics Conference at Bangalore in December 2007. I was particularly impressed by the high level of participation from young people in India, apart from your overseas delegates, and the insightful presentation and discussions. This augurs well for the future as such exposure to the ethical issues that confront us in this rapidly changing, pluralistic world, where profit drives the health "industry" in health care and research, and ethical teaching or examples of good ethical practice in the health science profession are suboptimal, should have a beneficial effect on the individuals and organisations that participated, and for those who come under their spheres of influence.

I do appreciate the tremendous effort and expense that went into organising this. I sincerely wish that you and your colleagues would continue to hold the event in years to come as I strongly believe that this country and region lacks any other forum where such a variety of participants and themes concerning bioethics may be shared. We have a surfeit of jamborees that masquerade as scientific conferences. The bioethics conference stood out on this barren horizon as a beacon of hope in India.

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