

Activities report

Experts group meeting

On February 22, 2003, the Forum for Medical Ethics Society (FMES) organised the first experts group meeting in the YMCA, Mumbai Central, on a study that it has undertaken on pharmaceutical promotion practices. This study, funded by the World Health Organization through the Drugs Controller General of India, is for a period of six months. It will use qualitative research methods to identify promotional practices meant to influence the prescription, supply, purchase and/or use of medicinal drugs.

A group of expert resource people representing industry, voluntary organisations, chemists' organisations, medical representatives, the WHO, pharmacologists and researchers discussed the study in detail and gave valuable suggestions on modifications. With this study, FMES has branched out into a new activity—research on ethical issues of importance in our society.

National editorial board meeting

On February 22 and 23, 2003, the FMES held the first meeting of its national editorial board which includes Delhi, Thiruvananthapuram, Pune and Wardha. Those who were unable to make it were sorely missed as a host of important issues were discussed. Besides being an opportunity for many FMES members in Mumbai to meet after a long time, the meeting was also the first opportunity for the group to meet the new editor and assistant editor in person.

Among the topics discussed were our current efforts to grow as an organisation both by expanding our subscriber base and by taking on new activities. A status report was given on the legal cases filed by FMES on the Maharashtra Medical Council elections and future plans for this activity were discussed. FMES is also involved in a campaign against communalism among medical professionals. Various efforts to obtain funding were reported, and a discussion was held on whether funding could influence the journal's editorial content. A brief account was given of the journal's subscription trends. It was felt that the journal must reach medical colleges and mainstream medical professionals. Plans were announced to publish an anthology of the last 10 years of the journal.

The new-look journal was also discussed, and plans to restructure work for the journal so as to distribute responsibility. Starting with the April 2003 issue, we have taken the help of the Delhi-based editorial consultants Byword for the journal's production. The meeting concluded with an assessment of the January issue and a discussion of articles in future issues.

Announcements

Master's programme in Applied Ethics

Utrecht University, the Netherlands, offers a one year Master's programme in Applied Ethics, starting on September 1, 2003. The programme, an interdisciplinary activity of Utrecht University, is aimed at students from various backgrounds (for example medicine, veterinary medicine, biology, philosophy, theology or law), who have completed a bachelor or comparable programme and have developed basic academic competence in ethics. The programme focuses on the interaction between moral practice and ethical theory. The lecturers work in the Centre for Bioethics and Health Law and in the departments of Philosophy, Theology, Law, Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. The course is taught in English.

For further information go to www.ethics.uu.nl or contact Frans Brom, Marcel Verweij, Marcus Düwell, Utrecht University Centre of Bioethics and Health Law, Heidelberglaan 2 NL - 3584 CS Utrecht. Tel: 0031 30 2534399

June 25–28, 2003 Third National Congress of Medical Ethics, Bursa, Turkey

The Third National Congress of Medical Ethics to be held in Cekirge, a historical region of Bursa in Turkey, is expected to have many discussions with an international perspective. Simultaneous translation from English to Turkish and from Turkish to English will be available. Nine conferences have been planned, one round-table, one workshop, one course and one student session, as well as a number of panels and oral and poster presentations. Among the topics to be covered are philosophy and medicine, research ethics, clinical ethics, healthcare ethics, medical law, ethics education in medicine, a feminist approach to bioethics, and the role of the media. Papers will be accepted up to April 15, 2003.

For further details contact the Congress President, Professor Aysegül DEMIRHAN ERDEMİR, Uludağ University Faculty of Medicine, Department of Medical Ethics, 16059 Görükle/Bursa, Turkey. e-mail: ademirer@yahoo.com or visit <http://www.burkon.com/biyoetik/eindex.htm>

Remembering Bhopal

Suroopa Mukherjee's *Bhopal gas tragedy: the worst industrial disaster in human history* is a book for 'young people on the threshold of their careers'. A generation has grown up since the night of December 3, 1984, when tonnes of deadly pesticide leaked out of storage tanks in Union Carbide's factory in this central Indian city. Thousands of people were killed in one stroke and people continue to die every day in Bhopal. The survivors continue to suffer more than 18 years later. Ms Mukherjee pulls together information from a variety of sources including survivors' groups, organisations concerned with health and human rights, and the media, to tell the story of the Bhopal gas disaster—who was responsible, efforts to seek justice, and what is happening today. The book is illustrated with charts, diagrams and a number of photographs by Raghu Rai.

Suroopa Mukherjee. Bhopal gas tragedy: the worst industrial disaster in human history. Tulika Publishers, Chennai, 2002. For copies, write to Tulika at kaka@tulikabooks.com or tulbooks@md4.vsnl.net.in or visit www.tulikabooks.com. Goodbooks Marketing Pvt Ltd, 76 Fourth Street, Abhiramapuram, Chennai 600 018. www.goodbooksindia.com

Raghu Rai's *Exposure: portrait of a corporate crime* contains a collection of deeply moving photographs taken in 1984 when Raghu Rai arrived in Bhopal the day after the disaster, and then on a return visit in 2002. The introduction is written by Bhopal-based journalist Anil Sharma who was an eye-witness to the gas disaster.

Raghu Rai. Exposure: portrait of a corporate crime. Photographs of Bhopal by Raghu Rai. Published by Greenpeace International, Amsterdam, August 2002. For copies write to Greenpeace India, J-15 Saket, New Delhi 110 017 or visit www.greenpeaceindia.org