

Two decades or so ago, a senior gynaecologist, approximately of my age and standing, had discussed one of her indoor patients with me. We happened to be attached to the same institution. Subsequently, she went on leave, deputing me as her *locum tenens*. The next day, I first saw my own patients and then those being attended to by her. Her patient then asked me, "Does a patient have the right to change her doctor?" It was obvious that she

was referring to her own specific case and implied that she wished me to look after her care for good. How was I to resolve the dilemma ethically? After some thought, I told her, "The patient has an absolute right to change your doctor. But then the patient must consider the fact that her current doctor, who has treated her for years, knows all about her illnesses and understands her system. A new doctor would be ignorant of several details.

Hence, if the patient has faith in her original doctor, it would be wise for her to continue to seek her help." She got the point and continued with her original consultant.

ARVIND R. KAPADIA

Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist
Basement Clinic, Bhatia General Hospital
Tardeo Road, Mumbai 400007

Conference Announcements

Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research has announced its schedule of meetings.

6 November 1997: Conference entitled *Reviewing and revising the expedited categories of research*. Among the topics for discussion are:

- a) expedited review of routine m-approval applications' b) disposition of growing number of adverse experience reports;
- c) expedited review of compassionate or treatment USC of FDA-regulated 'test articles'.

7 December 1997: Applied Research Ethics National Association holds its annual human subject research conference on *TUSKEGEE: Can past lessons guide researchers in the future?* Among the topics for discussion are:

- a) the impending challenges for institutional review boards; b) the Tuskegee syphilis study legacy; c) managing continuing review and adverse event reports; d) IRB liability issues; c) regulatory updates from FDA and OPRR.

8-9 December 1997: Annual human subject research conference on *Ethical research in an ethical society*. Among the topics for discussion are:

- a) update on NIH/FDA guidelines for the inclusion of women and minorities and the new guidelines on the inclusion of children in clinical trials; b) a review of the 'headlines' in human subject research and an analysis of what constitutes a research 'scandal'; c) the model informed consent form designed for use in obtaining tissue for research; d) creative informed consent procedures.

For further information contact: Joan Rachlin, Executive Director, PRIM&R, 132 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116. Fax: (617)423-1185. e-mail: PRMR@AOL.COM

International Conference on Human rights, Bioethics and Health

11-13 September 1997, Paris, France.

Although broadly considered to be a fundamental human right, access to health care still raises many issues, notably as regards its implementation in practice. On the one hand the number of persons deprived of social protection is increasing, even in the industrialised countries. On the other hand, the emerging new biomedical technologies are influencing the control of vital human functions (notably in the fields of procreation, genetics and neurosciences). This has resulted in a challenge to human rights, encapsulated in the formula - 'Towards greater freedom, OR, towards the acceptance of greater risks'.

Sessions: (1) Achieving solidarity in the light of economic constraints, (2) Health and medicine in situations of crisis: Medicine in wartime, disaster medicine, (3) The history of the right to health as a human right, (4) Human rights and bioethics: Some innovative developments, (5) The protection of the vulnerable and the risks of the betrayal of medicine, (6) Conceptual, legal and ethical aspects of health as a human right, (7) Role and limits of ethical committees and (8) Concluding session: Ethics and law in the development of public health policy in conformity with human rights.

This conference is directed to persons involved in the practice of medicine, ethics, health law, policy making in the public health sector, human rights and international cooperation. The official languages of the conference are English and French, and simultaneous interpretation will be assured.

Organised by: Council of International Organisations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) and International Association of Law, Ethics and Science (IALES). For more information, write to: BYK Christian, Secretary General, CIOMS, 62 Rd. Port Royal, 75005, Paris, France. Fax: (+33)(1) 43 37 47 10