Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centres for Bioethics

Annual Report 2010-11

World Health Organization

1. Introduction

The Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centres for Bioethics (hereafter referred to as the "Network") was founded in May 2010 to "support the WHO-HQ Ethics and Health Unit (Geneva) to implement its mandated work in the field of ethics and health, including:

- 'Articulating ethical and evidence-based policy options' (WHO core function);
- Advancing 'ethics-and rights-based approaches to health promoted within WHO and at national and global levels' (WHO organization-wide-expected result 7.4); and
- Increasing "capacity to assess and act upon ethical issues in public health at country, regional and global level and within the Organization (WHO/HQ-specific expected result 7.4.1)."[1]

The Network augments the contributions of individual WHO Collaborating Centres for Bioethics (CC) by fostering "connections and synergies between CCs to achieve enhanced results, to facilitate resource mobilization, and to strengthen (institutional) capacity, in particular at regional level" with respect to public health ethics, research ethics, and clinical ethics.[2] As of August 2011, the Network is comprised of six CCs in three regions (see Appendix).[3]

In this document, we provide an overview of Network activities in its inaugural year, including network development and collaborative projects in public health ethics and research ethics.

2. Network Development

In May 2010, the JCB hosted the first Annual Meeting of the Network. Funding for this meeting was provided by a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) 'Meetings, Planning, & Dissemination' grant and the CIHR-funded Canadian Program of Research on Ethics in Pandemic (CanPREP). Network members met to ratify the Network Terms of Reference,[4] to draft a Network Workplan, and to develop a communications plan for broader engagement of WHO and Network stakeholders. Subsequent to the meeting, the Network undertook the following development activities:

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[1] Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centres for Bioethics Terms of Reference (May 26, 2010). Available at: www.who.int/ethics/partnerships/global_network_terms_of_reference.pdf.
[2] Ibid.
[3] In the report, WHO Collaborating Centres for Bioethics will be identified by abbreviation rather than full name. See Appendix: Network Members for abbreviations.
[4] Op cit.

- *Network Website,* which was launched in July 2010 to inform WHO stakeholders about the Network and to facilitate access to emerging Network resources, including policies, tools, and other materials related to the WHO's ethics priorities.

- *Network Brochure*, which is intended primarily for external engagement with WHO staff and stakeholders to provide relevant information about the Network, its activities, and contact information for any stakeholder seeking to collaborate.

- *Inventory of CC Activity*, which is intended primarily for internal use by WHO Ethics & Health Unit and by CCs to share information about local within-CC and WHO-CC ethics activities and hence to enhance opportunities for knowledge exchange and identification of collaborative synergies.

- *Network Workplan for 2010-11*, which was drafted in May 2010 and developed iteratively over the subsequent six months in response to emerging WHO ethics priorities.

3. Collaborative Activities

The Network Workplan for 2010-11 targeted collaborative projects in public health ethics and research ethics, drawing on existing capacity within CCs and aligning this with WHO ethics priorities. Projects are in various stages of development, including some which are already generating high value translational outputs for WHO stakeholders (e.g., ethics and tuberculosis) and others which are laying the foundation for similar outputs in future years. In the following section, we highlight some of these collaborative activities, noting the leading and/or participating CCs in parentheses.

3.1. Public health ethics

The Network has been undertaking collaborative activity on a number of projects related to public health ethics, particularly related to ethics and infectious diseases. Over the last year, Network activities have focused on the following activities:

- *WHO guidance document on ethics of tuberculosis prevention, care, and control*, which was developed in conjunction with the WHO Task Force on Addressing Ethical Issues in TB Care and Control Programmes and published in late 2010.[5] (ANU, JCB)

- *WHO on-line training tool on ethics in TB control and care and patient isolation checklist for healthcare managers and front-line providers, policymakers, and national*

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[5] See http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2010/9789241500531_eng.pdf.

TB programmes, which is being designed to complement the WHO's "Guidance on ethics of tuberculosis prevention, care, and control" document above with an implementation date of late 2011 or early 2012 (UM, ANU, JCB)

- *WHO guidance document and training course on ethics in epidemic and disaster response for field epidemiologists and researchers*, which is in early stages of development and is slated for completion in August 2012. (JCB, EE)

- *Knowledge exchange on ethics in a pandemic among CCs and with the WHO,* including a full-day Stakeholder Forum held in May 2010 in Toronto to facilitate sharing of local, national, and international experience with the H1N1 pandemic outbreak. (JCB and other CCs with funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research)

- *"20 Q&As on Ethics & Health",* the first joint technical publication of the Network, which will provide an important reference document about key ethics concepts and principles for all WHO stakeholders and is slated for publication in 2012. (All CCs)

3.2. Research ethics

The Network has significant research ethics capacity among its members, including three CCs with NIH-Fogarty funded research ethics training programs. Over the last year, Network activities have focused on the following activities:

- *WHO Inventory of on-line research ethics training resources* (e.g., courses, programs), which was posted on the UM website for use by WHO staff and other stakeholders in later 2011. (CIEB/UM)

- *Accreditation standards and norms for regulation of scientific ethical review committees*, which are currently being piloted in workshops at the National University of Trujillo in Peru. (CIEB with funding support from NIH-Fogarty)

- *Networking of CCs with NIH-Fogarty funded research ethics training programs* to explore synergies and to leverage resources to build research ethics capacity, including early work to develop a research ethics web-portal to facilitate knowledge transfer and exchange among programs, with students and alumni, and with research ethics committees, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. (CIEB, JCB, UM).

- *WHO Guidance document on ethics of dual use in life science*, which was published in 2010 (ANU)

4. Network meeting 2011

On 18-19 August 2011, the Network held its annual meeting in Zurich. It was hosted by the Institute of Biomedical Ethics at the University of Zurich, in parallel to the 25th conference of the European Society for Philosophy and Ethics in Medicine. The purpose of this meeting was to review progress on network collaborative activities, to reflect on the network strategy and future modalities of collaboration, and to agree on a Network Workplan for 2011-12. Representatives from Toronto, Miami, Canberra, Columbia, and Zurich attended the 1.5-day meeting, along with participants from WHO's Ethics and Health team, and the Assistant-Director-General of WHO's Cluster on Information, Innovation, Evidence and Research.

The new Network Workplan sustains a focus on public health ethics and research ethics and builds new collaborations in areas such as: bio-banking, organ transplantation, e-health, priority setting, ethics and dementia, end-of-life care, and conflicts of interest. Some activities will be specifically preparatory to the 2012 Global Summit of National Ethics Committees. In 2011-12, the Network will also be exploring opportunities for expanding its membership as new CCs are designated.

The annual meeting marked the end of the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics' (JCB) tenure as the inaugural Network Chair and confirmed Nikola Biller-Andorno of the Institute of Biomedical Ethics (IBME-ZH) as the new Network Chair for a two-year term (2011-2013). The next network meeting will be hosted by the Center for the History & Ethics of Public Health in the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University (CU) in June 2012.

Appendix

Network Members (2010-2011)

WHO-CC	Region	Director	Designation Year
Centre for Applied Philosophy and Ethics, Australian National University (ANU)	WPRO	Michael Selgelid	2009
Center for the History and Ethics of Public Health, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health (CU)	AMRO	Ronald Bayer	2011[6]
Espace éthique, Assistance Publique/ Hôpitaux de Paris (EE)	EURO	Emmanuel Hirsch	2008
Institute of Biomedical Ethics, University of Zurich (IBME-ZH)	EURO	Nikola Biller-Andorno	2009
Interdisciplinary Centre for Studies in Bioethics, University of Chile (CIEB)	AMRO	Fernando Lolas	2007[7]
University of Miami Ethics Programs (UM)	AMRO	Ken Goodman	2008
University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics (JCB)	AMRO	Ross Upshur (2007-2011) Larry Librach (2011 -)	2002

[6] Designated as of 2 December 2011
[7] Discontinued as of 19 November 2011