

## **Editorial**

Medical ethics is actually a four- way science. Since the 1970s, many different branches of science like philosophy, history, law, medicine and psychology have paid a great deal of attention to it. Developments in medical technology and science, along with plenty of other human technical advances have led to new approaches in moral Issues. Nowadays, in respect of the relationship between physicians and patients, some new notions such as human autonomy, value and quality of life, the right to life and safety besides human dignity have had a considerable influence. Hence, many medical ethics jurists belong to different subject areas.

Biomedical ethics in Muslim societies is relatively a new subject. Although professional ethics for physicians has had a long history in Islamic civilization, ethical deliberations about medical research and procedures and their impact on patients and their families is new.

World Health Organization has endeavored to sensitize Muslim cultures around the World to the issues that are controversial in medical research and practice. But it has taken much longer to define the scope of biomedical ethics as a separate field of inquiry in Muslim societies where juridical deliberations based on religious sources has dominated the discourse on bioethics. Today, more than ever, there is a need to engage medical professionals, healthcare providers, government policy-makers as well as social workers to the plight of ordinary people's health needs and the dangers that confront them with the introduction of

biotechnology and its proven and unproven claims about the well-being of the most vulnerable in human societies: the sick. Several attempts have been initiated to standardize areas of inquiry in bioethics in Iran, one of the leading countries that is not only a provider of healthcare at a large scale in the Middle East, but it is also the goal-setter of Muslim cultures with its enormous cultural/religious resources in problem resolution that affects medical research and practice. A number of universities in Iran have introduced program in bioethics and some major universities have established centers of bioethics that conduct research and provide valuable information on the moral-religious issues that arise in the healthcare institutions in Iran. A major breakthrough is the effort to establish educational programs to train teachers of bioethics and even set up graduate programs to encourage students to consider a degree in bioethics. Shahid Behishti University of Medical Sciences has been a leader in instituting Fellowship Program in Bioethics to fill in this critical gap in medical education in Iran to train future professors of bioethics by taking into consideration both the secular and religious biomedical ethics that pertain to specifically Iranian healthcare culture and institutions.

Although Iran has a glorious history in both traditional and modern medicine, but the lack of special magazine in the realm of medical ethics is explicitly felt.

The Journal of Medical Ethics is a step towards this overall goal of providing an intelligent platform to voice moral concerns in the area of medical research and practice. The articles in this first issue of the journal reflect the academic goal of the editorial board to make sure that high quality articles written by national and international scholars on the issues relevant to Muslim as

well as non-Muslim societies become accessible to all interested in pursuing a major question in this connection: “What is new in Islamic or secular bioethics?” We encourage our readers to participate in this academic effort by contributing articles and notes on issues that are of interest to all working in the field of patient-care in public or private healthcare institutions.

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