

The Miami Ethics Review

A project of the University of Miami Bioethics Society

Volume 1, Number 1 • Spring 1996

A letter from Dr. Ken Goodman

This newsletter represents the latest in a series of programs, projects and activities by the

University of Miami Bioethics Society.

These efforts range from the educational (an exciting visiting speaker seminar series) to the entertaining (a natty T-shirt fund raising initiative).

Throughout, society members have stimulated, provoked, probed, learned — and had a lot of fun.

To be sure, it is “fun” at the intellectual cutting edge, where one savors ideas, relishes debate, delights in points well put or honor well kept. The topics are not cheerful (they range from death and mutation to suffering and pain). All told, though, society members have devoted their time and energies to a domain that cuts a broad swath through philosophy, medicine, nursing, law, religion, psychology, public health, biology, social work, business administration, communication, international studies, political science, and on and on.

What a newsletter can do is identify the thread that runs through these domains — and spool it out in the service of news, education and other enrichments. A newsletter can also create a community of

disparate folk with some common interest (in this case bioethics and related fields). That means that

readers of this newsletter should hail from many corners of the intellectual globe: students in philosophy, biology, law, nursing, religion, etc., etc.

should meet in these pages. When people meet they share ideas, learn, disagree, agree, get excited, get angry,

think...all of which sounds a lot like what college should be! So you should enjoy this newsletter, and support it. The Bioethics Society thrives because interested and interesting people have joined forces in a distinctive and important enterprise. This newsletter is the latest evidence of this — evidence you should use to justify pitching in, showing up and, most important, thinking it over.

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4th annual clinical ethics conference a success

by Cindy Edwards

The University of Miami's James L. Knight Center once again played host to the University of Miami Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy's annual ethics conference on Friday and Saturday, March 8th and 9th. In its fourth year, the conference's theme for 1996 was *Clinical Ethics: Debates, Decisions, Solutions*. According to Chairman, Dr. Kenneth Goodman (Director, UM Forum for Bioethics and Philosophy), this year's turnout was by far the largest ever at the conference.

Over 160 professionals from the southwest attended the two day conference. Presenters included UM faculty along with other members of South Florida's medical community.

After a morning of panel and roundtable discussions on Friday, attendees participated in their choice of afternoon sessions which focused on topics such as decision making in bioethics and business and organizational ethics in health care to the ethical legal and social issues concerning domestic violence.

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COURSES IN BIOETHICS

FALL 1996

EPH 521

Ethical Issues in Epidemiology

W: 1:30 - 4:00

PHI 330

Ethics (in Philosophy)

T R: 10:50 - 12:05

T R: 12:15 - 1:30

REL 360

Religion and Bioethics

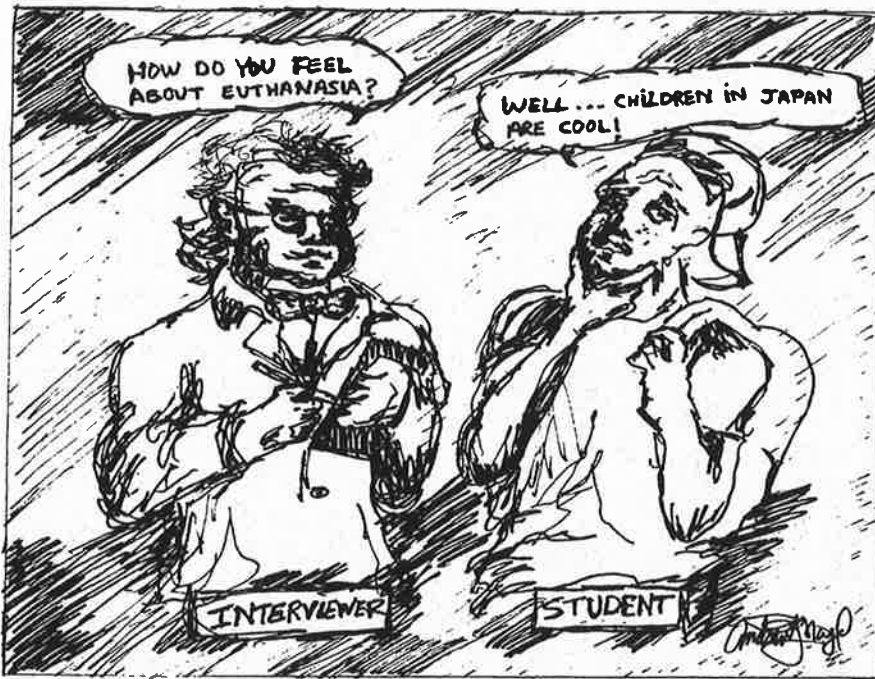
T R: 9:25 - 10:40

SUMMER SESSION I & II

PHI 330

Ethics (in Philosophy)

MTWRF: 1:15 - 2:40



A case for bioethics education

The Miami Ethics Review Founded 1996

The purpose of *The Miami Ethics Review* is to serve as a forum for information and opinion on bioethics and its related fields in order to stimulate interest among students and faculty at the University of Miami.

The Miami Ethics Review encourages its readers to express their comments and opinions on bioethics at this university and in the community at large. Written comments can be put in the Bioethics Society Mailbox in Room 209 of the University Center, or the reader may wish to communicate through e-mail at the following address:

bkirmse@students.miami.edu

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"Conference", from page 1

Saturday's topics focused on managing clinical futility. The Health Council of South Florida presented their survey on regional futility. The group included findings on the history of futility care, hospital and nursing home guidelines (similarities and differences within each hospital and home) and types of treatment. Based on their survey, the council determined there is a "certain amount of confusion that exists with medical futility." Dr. Robert Walker followed the HCSF's presentation with his own response to whether or not institutions should have futility policies. Dr. Walker focused on the physicians role in determining these issues, and cited past newsworthy cases, such as Karen Quinlan, in his report. He gave his ideas on how to approach the delicate subject of futility and its conflicts with patients and their family members, and answered questions raised by the audience. Roundtable discussions allowed

a continuing of the discussion on futility. Attendees at the conference were given a chance to voice their opinions regarding medical futility with a small group of their peers.

The final event of the conference gave a group of four panelists the chance to answer questions on futility as an institutional problem. The panelists included practicing physicians and members of various South Florida medical boards. The panelists were given a few moments to make a statement on their thoughts of futility and then answered questions from the audience.

While worlds can't be changed from one weekend of panels and roundtables, this year's conference was a step in the right direction. Members of the medical community can take with them thoughts shared with others and hopefully use those discussions to try and rid the medical community of the "confusions that exist with medical futility."

*an interview with
Dr. Nick Carter
by Brian Kirmse*

ETHICS AND ENVIRONMENT

Dr. Nick Carter is an instructor in the Department of Biology as well as a student at the School of Law. Dr. Carter holds four Ph.D.'s in Photography and Cinema, Zoology, Arts Education, and Communications. His interests in ethics range from biomedical ethics to environmental ethics. Dr. Carter sits on various ethics committees in the area. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Dr. Carter:

Can you tell me something about environmental ethics? I know it's a relatively new field, but what sort of topics have been developed to this point?

It encompasses everything from formulating environmental laws and social policy to "deep ecology", which is the philosophical approach to conservation. "deep ecology" deals with saving a species, not for the environment, the economy, or for financial reasons, but simply for the rights of the species. It encompasses those people that are debating the moral aspects of exterminating a species or destroying the ecosystem. Environmental ethics also deals with questions like "Do we save the spotted owl or do we keep the loggers in business?" People's jobs or the survival of a species.

Do you see any relation between environmental ethics and biomedical ethics?

Well, not so much biomedical ethics, but I do see medical implications in environmental ethics. A lot of people are concerning themselves with things like as we chop down

rainforests, we are getting into places we've really never been and the result is a bunch of nasty viruses that we've never been exposed to before, like ebola.

There are also medical implications that involve ethics when you talk about going into the rainforests and interviewing and interacting with indigenous people there. By doing so you can potentially infect them with your diseases.

What topic(s) in environmental Ethics do you find most interesting?

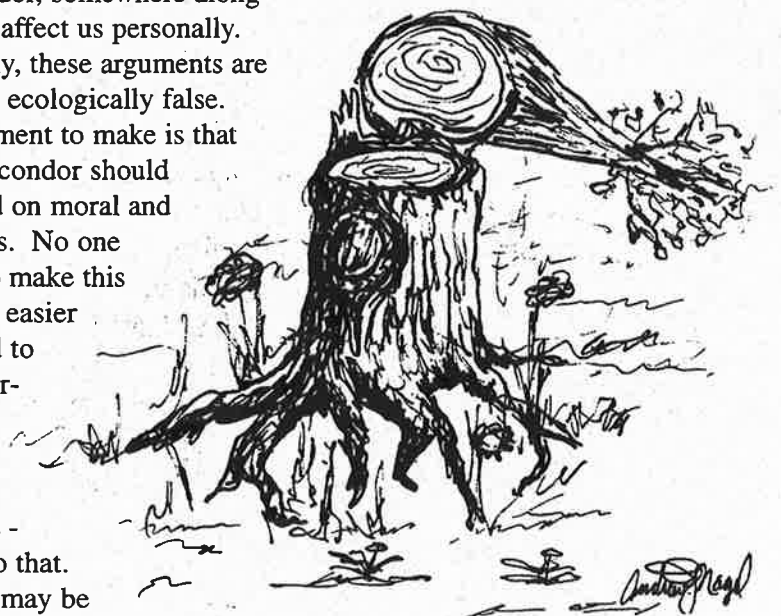
I like the social implication stuff, the "why should we save the species?" What are the considerations behind saving a species? We tend to put monetary constraints on a lot of our arguments, instead of looking at the situations from an ethics point of view. Why should I save the California Condor? A typical answer might be, if we don't save the California condor, somewhere along the line it will affect us personally.

Unfortunately, these arguments are biologically or ecologically false. The hard argument to make is that the California condor should be saved based on moral and ethical grounds. No one really wants to make this argument. It's easier to say we need to save the rainforest because there might be a cure for cancer in there - people listen to that. Truth is, there may be a cure for some of our

most horrible diseases somewhere in the rainforest. Chances are, though, a chemical engineer can find it faster in his lab behind his computer.

Lately, I've been jumping up and down trying to get people to stop making the economic argument. Environmentalists are very good at rhetoric. A lot of this is the only thing they can do because of the policies our society has. It's easy to knock on Grandma's door and say if you don't give me \$10 to save the everglades it's going to be developed and dry up which is going to raise your water bill in the near future.

I tend to think that the answer is in educating people and showing them the value of things. If you can take a picture or make a film that demonstrates to people the intrinsic value of the everglades, the rainforest or the California condor then they begin to say "Maybe that is worth saving."



Med student sees bioethics as important in education

by Cindy Edwards

First year medical student, Nick Sama, took time out of his busy schedule to give his thoughts on medical school, bioethics and the future outlook of medicine. I asked Sama what the transition from undergraduate study at the University of Florida to medical school at the University of Miami was like for him. He replied, "Fantastic. It was what I expected. My undergraduate education prepared me very well."

When questioned about his interests in medical school, and what he was focusing on, Sama quickly replied, "I would suggest not focus-

ing on one thing when you get in...there's so many opportunities, that if you focus on something you think you might like, you close your mind on something you might like better. Keep an open mind."

Currently he has not chosen his field of study. That usually happens in your third year of medical school. His future looks as if it will include working with surgery or trauma, but he is quick to state, "I'm leaving my options open. I like everything."

Given the competition in medical school (some 16,000 spots for over 50,000 applications), you would expect each individual trying to outdo the next. Sama does not feel this exists at UM. Instead it's the opposite, where "between faculty and classmates, we each try to help each other as much as we can. We all want to be doctors, so we help each other." It's not the cut-throat world that is portrayed to exist at medical schools.

This type of attitude makes Sama

the perfect choice as the Ethics Representative for his class. When he arrived at UM, he wanted to get involved and represent his class. The only position he liked, and felt he could represent his class in was the ethics position.

This is where Sama's first interest in bioethics arose. "I thought it would be really fun to help educate other people." It was also this position that first introduced Sama to faculty such as Dr. Goodman and Dr. Sapp, who spend a great deal of their time dealing with bioethics. Through Sama's interactions with Goodman and Sapp, students at the medical campus have taken interest in creating a bioethics society. While it has not happened yet, it's in the process of being put together.

With his efforts being put into representing his class and putting together a bioethics organization, Sama's interest in patients and their education of medicine comes as no surprise. As he puts it, "I'm the biggest advocate for patient education. I'm just as interested in knowing what's wrong with me when I see my doctor. Education is going to start at a younger age. It's going to take a long time."

With approaches such as this, patient education might have a bright future. Sama also stated, "I love seeing patients. I loved doing lab research and I appreciate it, but my preference is just to go out and see patients."

Sama passes on this advice to students interested in a future in medicine: "First, you need to get good grades. Second you need to do well on the MCAT. And third, you have to really want to be a doctor for the right reasons. If you really want to go to medical school for the right reasons, no matter how difficult it is, you're going to enjoy it."

Obviously, Nick Sama is enjoying it.

BIOETHICS SOCIETY FALL 1996

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY:

Ethics Conference: "Cultural Differences and Ethics"

Ethics Rounds at Jackson Memorial Hospital

Field Trips to Hospice and Camillus House

The Miami Ethics Review

Roundtable Discussions

E.R. viewing every Thursday Night

Guest Speakers

Interorganizational Programming

Debates

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Bioethics Society, send e-mail to bkirmse@students.miami.edu

1996 BIOETHICS SOCIETY OFFICERS:

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