Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO Bioethics Seminar Report
Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO

Seminar on the Establishment of a National Bioethics Committee
Capital Plaza Hotel, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
Thursday 28th February and Friday 1st March 2013.

Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO in collaboration with UNESCO Montevideo who provided the funding, hosted a seminar bringing together international expertise in bioethics, governmental officials, professionals in the fields of health, the environment and agriculture and NGO representatives. The Education Minister and President of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO, Dr. the Honourable Tim Gopeesingh, welcomed participants at the opening of the workshop which was held at the Capital Plaza Hotel, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on Thursday 28th February and Friday 1st March 2013.

The objective of the seminar was to promote and support the establishment of a National Bioethics Committee in Trinidad and Tobago which would, through networking with other National Bioethics committees provide oversight and guidance for bioethical issues, with assistance available from UNESCO as an international clearing house for ethical issues. Ethics committees are regarded by UNESCO as one of the most important intermediary bodies for the implementation of their normative instruments adopted by Member States.

The National Commission for UNESCO established a core Bioethics Team, co-opting key experts from The University of the West Indies, the Ministry of Health and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), to plan the seminar and to propose a committee to establish the National Infrastructure in Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology. In pursuing its objectives, it is envisaged that the Committee would:

1. sensitize communities to the importance of and necessity for a national system of bioethics and ethics of science and technology by convening and coordinating meetings, consultations and workshops with relevant local organizations as required.
2. describe and assess the arrangement for ethics and bioethics currently in place in Trinidad and Tobago and the gaps, if any, there in and consult with and/ or coopt such additional expertise or members as may be required for the exercise.
3. complete to the National Commission an interim report by April 2013 and draft a note to Cabinet for the establishment of a National Bioethics Committee by June 2013.
Day 1. Thursday 28th February 2013

Opening Ceremony

Dr. Kris Rampersad, Chair of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO, chaired the opening ceremony at which The Honourable Minister of Education and President of the National Commission for UNESCO, Dr. Tim Gopeesingh gave the feature address. Other distinguished speakers were Dr. Susana Vidal, UNESCO Montevideo, Professor Genoveva Keyeux, University of Colombia and Professor Harald Schmidt, University of Pennsylvania.

From left to right; Prof. Genoveva Keyeux, Prof. Harald Schmidt, Hon. Minister Dr. Tim Goopeesingh, Dr. Susana Vidal, Dr. Kris Rampersad

Day one consisted of the introduction to the Seminar. Participants introduced themselves and their expectations on what they wanted to see as an outcome of the Seminar. Day one of the seminar focused on the Perspective on National Bioethics Committees.

Following the introduction of participants, Day 1 of the seminar focused on presentations by the following participants:

- Professor Genoveva Keyeux - University of Colombia
- Professor Harald Schmidt - University of Pennsylvania
- Dr. Susana Vidal - UNESCO Specialist, Montevideo, Uruguay
- Dr. Donald Simeon - Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA)
- Mrs. Marcia Riley - Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO
**Presentation: Prof. Keyeux.** Professor Keyeux’s presentation dealt with a Comparative Study of the experiences of countries National Bioethics Committee in Latin America in the establishment of their National Bioethics Committees.

Professor Keyeux outlined the various bioethics commissions and committees at the national level in Latin America.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>National Council for Bioethics and Human Rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>National Committee for Bioethics of Bolivia</td>
<td>2000, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>National Council for Bioethics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>National Commission for Bioethics</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>Cuba National Committee for Bioethics</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Dominican Republic | • National Commission for Bioethics  
                      | • Dominica Consultative Council for Bioethics for UNESCO           |          |
|                  | • National Council for Health Bioethics                               |          |
| Ecuador          | National Committee for Health Bioethics                               |          |
| El Salvador      | National Commission for Bioethics of El Salvador                      | 2009     |
| Haiti            | National Commission for Bioethics                                     | 1999     |
| Jamaica          | Memorandum of Understanding                                           |          |
| Mexico           | National Commission for Bioethics                                     |          |
| Venezuela        | National Commission for Bioethics and Biosecurity in Health          | 2010     |

According to Professor Keyeux, the purpose of Bioethics Commissions and Committees is to address and safeguard health, human rights and the environment. The scope focuses on either a normative or consultative, or mixed method. Professor Keyeux focused on four (4) countries during her presentation: Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico.

Professor Keyeux outlined the country’s Administrative Structure. Each country Administrative Structured is different.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Governmental Dependency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>National Council for Bioethics and Human</td>
<td>Secretariat for Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Governmental Dependency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>National Bioethics Council Bill</td>
<td>Presidency of the Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>National Bioethics Committee for Health</td>
<td>Health Ministry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Argentina Decree P.E.N 426/1998 focused on Article 1: Created under the Ministry of Health and Social (Affairs/Services), the purpose of the National Bioethics Commission will be:

- To advise the executive power and official bodies through the sanitary authority on specific issues on medical ethics and bioethics.
- To advise with the purpose to guarantee the right to health and full respect for the human rights of individuals, specially, when individuals involved in biomedical research.

Argentina National Ethics Committee for Science and Technology was created in April 2001. The Committee is dependent on the Secretariat for Science, Technology and Productive Innovation – today it is The Ministry for Science, Technology and Productive Innovation.

Professor Keyeux noted that on October 12th 2004, Argentina’s Secretariat for Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice, Security and Human Rights enacted the Board of Ethics and Human Rights for Biomedical Research. Reform from 2011 elevated it to National Council for Bioethics and Human Rights.

**The Administrative Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Administrative Structure</th>
<th>Supported by</th>
<th>Consultative or Advisory Support from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Justice and Human Rights; Ministry of Health; Secretariat for Science, Technology and Innovation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Commission Executive Secretariat</td>
<td>Other bodies from the state and research centers.</td>
<td>Researchers and scholars in science, technology and ethics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professor Keyeux further discussed the purpose, principles, membership of the committees of the focus countries.

### Purpose:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Administrative Structure</th>
<th>Supported by</th>
<th>Consultative or Advisory Support from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Council President Executive Secretary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Occasional counselors for precise and specific issues. Their recommendations are non-binding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Council Executive Director Administrative Units</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personalities from the civil or medical society (without vote)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Other Responsibilities</th>
<th>Advice to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Accomplish the principle stated in the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights from UNESCO, promoting the respect for human dignity. Administrative and/or legislative actions in the field of bioethics and human rights.</td>
<td>Further the establishment of independent, pluridisciplinary and pluralist ethics committees and a network of committees of bioethics and Human Rights, dissemination programs about bioethics; issues education and training in bioethics, issues declarations, technical opinions, and guidelines for evaluation, reports and recommendations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Advisory Commission</td>
<td>Prepare studies and proceedings about ethical conflicts in the field of health, that are relevant to the preservation of human life, the relationship of man and environment, and he access to progress and advancements of medical, biology and health.</td>
<td>All powers of the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Other Responsibilities</td>
<td>Advice to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Establish general guidelines on bioethics for the bodies of the National Health System.</td>
<td>Present to the competent authority recommendation, projects of law and regulations regarding bioethics issues or dilemmas in health. Provide standards of quality for Medical Ethics Committees and the committees of ethics in research on human subjects; advice these bodies on organizational, administrative and operative aspects.</td>
<td>Health related authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>National consultative body (and normative) about bioethics issues.</td>
<td>Establish public policies related to bioethics. Act as consultative body on bioethics issues. Procure observance of bioethics criteria at the intersectorial level in issues related to health to connection to food, water, environment and education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Principles:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Scope of its Objects</th>
<th>Consideration for its Deliberation</th>
<th>Other Aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Promote the development of a national system for ethics and human rights for biomedical research, advise public and private organism on the subject, issue repost about research evaluations, develop capabilities in ethics and human rights for biomedical research.</td>
<td>Biomedical research stands up for the defense and promotion of human rights, in particular the rights to life, to psycho-physical integrity, to health, identity and liberty of the persons. Human rights constitute the indispensable reference frame for a bioethics of biomedical research.</td>
<td>Duty to confidentiality: to members shall respect confidentially regarding the deliberations in closed sessions, the documents classified as conflicted and the information gathered from the committee that has been considered confidential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Ethical issues to health practice, scientific and technical progress in</td>
<td>Respect human rights and human dignity and ethics, religious and cultural</td>
<td>States explicitly possible impediments of its members, due to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Scope of its Objects</td>
<td>Consideration for its Deliberation</td>
<td>Other Aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Advising the National Health System and other state bodies in the definition of a bioethical perspective, plurinational and intercultural, for the good living (Buen Vivir, Sumak Kawsay)</td>
<td>Recognizes the right of the population to live in a healthy and ecologically equilibrated environment that will guarantee the sustainability and good living, Sumak Jawsay.</td>
<td>Members must sign a oath of no interest of economical, political, religious or any other sort, and no direct or indirect relationship with the sponsors of a researchers themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Bioethics enlightenment, multidisciplinary and multisectorial deliberation about health. Ethical rules about health care, investigation and teaching.</td>
<td>Mexico in its makeup is a plural society where freedom of thought, expression and action exist. The constitution indicates and preserves individual and social guaranties. The National Bioethics Committee will take steps in a reflexive, plural, autonomous, rational, secular and respectful way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Membership:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of Members</th>
<th>Appointed by</th>
<th>Proposed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Not defined</td>
<td>Secretariat for Human Rights</td>
<td>Composition: Organizations from the national state, National Commission for UNESCO, Independent experts, organizations from the civil society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>21 members and 21 substitute (vice and vote)</td>
<td>President of the Republic</td>
<td>Short lists of 3 candidates presented by institutions; philosophy and human sciences (3), exact and earth sciences (3), organizations from the civil society (6) and bioethics (3). The President of the Republic appoints 3 personalities in bioethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>9 members</td>
<td>Health Minister</td>
<td>Two (2) representative of the Health Minister, one lawyer, one scientist, diverse professionals, members of civil society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>6 counselors and 1 president</td>
<td>Health Secretary</td>
<td>Counselors may appoint their own substitutes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Qualities of the members</th>
<th>Particular Criteria</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Outstanding personalities in the field of bioethics, social and human sciences, philosophy, theology, law, biomedical professionals, with pluralist point of views and criteria. No institutional representation</td>
<td>Gender equity</td>
<td>4 years, renew 1 time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Personal merit, experience in the subject and contributions to the field of bioethics.</td>
<td>Gender equity</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Qualities of the members</td>
<td>Particular Criteria</td>
<td>Period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 years; may be re-elected, but the president</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Management:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Salaries</th>
<th>Meeting Periodicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Members: honorary position</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Ministry of Health allocates operative and administrative budget</td>
<td>Every two months; extraordinary sessions in cases of urgency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>President: paid Counselors: honorary position (they are civil servants) Budget; Health Secretariat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Presenter: Prof. Schmidt**

Professor Harald Schmidt gave his presentation on National Bioethics Commissions in Europe.

Professor Schmidt outlined the background and establishment of bioethics committees in France, England & Germany:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Establishment</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Work Initiation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
According to Professor Schmidt, the CCNE mission is to give advice on ethical and societal problems from advances in knowledge in biology, medicine and healthcare.

Nuffield Council scope is to:

1. To identify and define ethical questions raised by recent advances in biology and medical research in order to respond to, and to anticipate, public concern.
2. To make arrangements for examining and reporting on such questions with a view to promoting public understanding and discussion; this may lead, where needed, to the formulation of new guidelines by the appropriate regulatory or other body.
3. In the light of the outcome of its work, to publish reports and to make representations, as the Council may judge appropriate.

Deutscher Ethikrat Council examines ethical, societal, scientific, medical and legal issues arising from research and other developments, particularly in the context of the life sciences as applied to humans. Its task include, centrally:

1. To inform the public and to stimulate debate, bringing together the different societal groups.
2. To produce position statements and recommendations for political action and lawmaking.
3. To make with other National Councils and similar bodies at the state and international level.

Professor Schmidt noted that each year, the council carries out at least one public event regarding ethical issues raised by the life sciences. In addition, it may hold further such meetings, consultations and public meetings.

He outlined the membership and key operational features of each country’s committee.

**Membership:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Appointment, terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCNE/ France</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Chair: Presidential appointment, 2 years, renewable (no limits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Members: 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 religious/philosophical leaders: Presidential appointment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19 ethics expertise: nomination by Ministries, Parliament (including 2 politicians).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15 sciences/research members/representatives: nomination via academies, universities, associations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCOB/ England</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Chair: appointed by Nuffield Foundation (3 year term, 1x renewable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8-18)</td>
<td>Members: call; externally chaired membership committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Appointment, terms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Council: 3 year terms, 1x renewable. Working party: 9-18 months Personal membership, not as representative.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NER/DER/ Germany</td>
<td>26 ½ nominated by parliament (must not be M/P) ½ nominated by government (must not be M/G) 4 year term, 1x renewable Chair: elected by members in secret ballot (1x renewable) Personal membership, not as representative.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Operational Features:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimated</th>
<th>Publication (per year)</th>
<th>Secretariat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCNE/ France</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>118 (4)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCOB/ England</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>23 (1) Reports (17), Discussion Papers (6)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NER/DER/ Germany</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>36 (2.7) Position Statements (19) Documentations (12) Studies(5 – commissioned)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public Meetings:**

- **CCNE**: Neither committee nor working/sub group meetings are public.
- **NER/DER**: The Council meetings are to be open to the public; the Council may also hold closed meetings and inform the public of the results of such meetings.
- **NCOB**: neither Council nor Working Party meetings are public.

**Consensus:**

- **CCNE**: 50% quorum to adopt an Opinion. Dissent: minority view.
- **NER/DER**: Minority views OK
- **NCOB**: Reports need full Council consensus. If possible: avoid majority/minority report.

Terms of reference, membership and modes of operation vary. The variations are:

- Reflections of society’s governance structure: need to fit to succeed.
- Results of different goals: work towards structure backwards.
- Often implications for legitimacy and efficacy of committee work
Presentation: Prof. Keyeux

Professor Genoveva Keyeux gave her presentation on the National Bioethics Committees in Latin America: the Case of Colombia.

Professor Keyeux outlined the following chronology in establishing the National Council:

- 1975 Ethics Committee (St. John of Good Hospital)
- 1985 Colombian Institute for Studies in Bioethics (Academy of Medicine)
- 1993 National Center for Bioethics CENALBE (private, PU)
- 2001 Inter-Sectorial Committee for Bioethics
- 2010 National Council for Bioethics.

Professor Keyeux talked about the Decree 1101/2001 President of the Republic Inter-Sectoral Committee on Bioethics. The characteristic of the decree involves:

- Consultative and advisory body for the national government.
- Consideration: Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, Helsinki Declaration.

The Purpose involves:

- Study, analyse, advise and formulate public policies for human protection, in issues related to the human genome, human cloning, organ transplant and IVF.
- Propose a normative frame for the establishment of an Advisory Council for Bioethics.

The Problems:

- For the institutional delegates (5), one more bureaucratic load among their duties.
- Personal appointments have perverse effects, can be biased (Pocket Commission of the Executive)
- Lack of independence, liberty, own criteria and impartiality
- Lack of socialization – publication, debates and forum.
- The Colombia government never considered the value of the work done by the Commission (report on the sprays over illicit farming areas).

Problems affecting the various legislative attempts for the creation of a Council, Committee or National Commission of Bioethics are:

- Lack of political will of the national government.
- Project/s with very personal or particular objectives and interests.
- Lack of consensus among the bioethical community (personalities, academia, churches, ideological and political tendencies)
Professor Keyeux stated that in the Bill 320 of 2008 creating a National Bioethics Council; the 2007 - 2008 Project was already in process in the congress of the Republic (passed two debates in the House of Representatives, first debate in the Senate). Proposing Senators were sensitized and open to improve it with a support group: academia, UNESCO (Latin America Network Bioethics), authorities and representative political personalities.

UNESCO Workshop April 2009:

- Bioethics Networks – National University – Forest University
- There is wide call for national bioethics sectors (universities, public institutions, churches, diverse social and political sectors).
- Members of the former Intersectional? Committee on Bioethics.

The achievements of the workshop were:

- Rich and open discussion of the project of law, with participation of the proposing Senator and the Speaker for the last debate in the Congress of the Republic.
- All sectors had the opportunity to express their expectancies and interests in the conformation of a National Bioethics Committee.
- A consensus was attained for an alternative project of law.
- The project was written down and submitted to the proposing Senator.

The Debate of the workshop:

- Autonomy and independence from the authorities of the State.
- Plural and representative composition: effective mechanism for multicultural, multiethnic and regional participation.
- Own agenda suggest by the society and members, besides giving advice when requested by the authorities.
- Mechanism of selection of the member’s independent from the executive.
- Need for specialized sub-committees, which autonomy for establishing activities.
- Coherence between duties, composition and availability of resources.
- Importance of having a conceptual referent, declaration of principles and values.
- Need of communication of the results (debates, publications, etc.), education and sensitization of the public and of the authorities (teaching, workshops and mass media)

Legitimacy through:

- Internal coherence, systematic work, in accordance with the present time.
- Defense of human rights.
• Acknowledge of the context of the problems: human and natural biodiversity, social and territorial exclusion, humanitarian catastrophe (displacement, armed conflict and drug traffic)
• Participation of the civil society.

Act 1374 of 2010 creation of National Bioethics Council

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intersectional Committee for Bioethics</th>
<th>National Council for Bioethics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial Decree</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory and consultative</td>
<td>Not only advisory, but decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency: Minister of Health</td>
<td>Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Health, Colciencias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bioethics Principles</td>
<td>Broad concept of bioethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human rights considered as basic reference frame for bioethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 members:</td>
<td>Stipends from Colciencias: presidential objection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 from ministry of Health, Justice &amp; Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Designated permanent Advisors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the Project to the Law

|----------------|------------|
| Definitions about bioethics, ethics, moral, personality, nature and properties of the human person and principlism system. | a) Prevailing, indivisibility and inviolability of human rights and fundamental guaranties, according to political constitution and international treaties.  
b) Values of human dignity and respect for the ethnic, religious, gender and cultural pluralism  
c) Eradicate poverty and marginalization, reduce social and regional inequalities.  
d) Promote the good for everyone without prejudice about origin, race, sex, gender, color, faith, age or other forms of discrimination  
e) Attention to the right to a equilibrated environment |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependency; Executive Secretariat of the President. Appointment of members from short lists presented by 12 pre-selected institution. Period of 4 years, coincident with the President</td>
<td>Ministry of Health, Ministry for the Environment and Colciencias. 15 members selected from the short lists, call for short lists and period non-coincident with Presidency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of the CNB will be professionals and researchers in the field of sciences, social and human sciences and experts in bioethics</td>
<td>Members of the CNB will be professionals and researchers in the fields of sciences, social and human sciences, experts in bioethics (1/3) and members of the civil society representing different fields of thought and morality and cultural diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop ethical discussions about science and technology, according to the requests from the National Government.</td>
<td>Concepts and advise for the regulation of the different aspects of bioethics that arise from the progress of science and technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise the National Government, in particular the Ministry of Health on bioethical issues of health</td>
<td>Call, according to the needs of the interested, member civil society or form other sectors, with acknowledge erudition on the subject, to represent the ethnic, cultural, religious and gender diversity, or specific communities</td>
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</table>

**Regulation of the Law 1374/ 2010:**

- Support group continues its work towards the regulation of the law and the starting of the CNB
- Two problems at the beginning of the process of regulation:
  - Searching for allocation of the necessary budget for the functioning of the council.
  - Search of agreement between the responsible institutions of the council about several points of the internal agenda.
- November 2012 UNESCO workshop
  - Bioethics Network – National University – University Forest.
  - Discussion of the article of the project for regulation of the law. Participants: Colciencias, Ministry of Health, Ministry for the Environment, Ex Ambassador of Colombia before UNESCO.
- October and November 2011
  - Workshop National University of Colombia – Bogota
  - Workshop University of Antioquia – Medellin
• Present problems in the steps for the regulation:
  - Search for the allocation of the budget necessary for the functioning of the council.
  - Transformation of the legal nature of responsibility authorities with deep administrative reorganization – sensitization of the importance of the National Bioethics Committee.
  - Adjustment to the Constitution.

**Presenter: Dr. Vidal**

Dr. Susana Vidal presented on Jamaica National Bioethics Committee Experience.

Dr. Vidal stated that the National Bioethics Committee of Jamaica (NBCJ) was established in September 2008 with the appointment of the first members to the Committee being ratified by the Minister of Information, Culture, Youth and Sports in Jamaica, the Honorable Olivia Grange following a change in Governance that year.

The establishment followed the work of a Preparatory Committee which was convened in June 2007 under the previous government. It was the support of the Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO, the then Minister of Education and Youth the Honorable Maxine Henry-Wilson and UNESCO.

Although the National Bioethics Committee has been establish through the efforts of UNESCO and the Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO which is an agency of government ministry, the NBCJ preparatory/ steering committee was careful in creating an operational plan which enables the committee to function independently.

According to the Constitution and its rules of procedure, the NBCJ is to be “an independent advisory body that shall determine its own work agenda” and “persons appointed to the committee shall not act a representatives of specific interest groups but contribute, based on their individual expertise and experiences”. Further, “persons elected or appointed to a position in the Parliament are ineligible for appointment to the Committee during their tenure in such a position and for two years thereafter”.

The Committee receives no government funding and seeks funds independently to cover its works agenda being careful to maintain its independent stance. To date the Committee as received funding from the UNESCO Participation Fund, Government agencies, Private Sector Foundations and individual companies. When approaching any sector for funding assistance, care is taken to minimize possible conflicts of interest. For example, branded products are not accepted not the use of company facilities, etc.
The members of the committee were appointed by Minister Grande on the recommendation of the Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO, with advice from the Preparatory Committee and in relation to the fields of knowledge, organizations and institutions determined by the preparatory committee. A list of 22 fields ranging from the Humanities to Information Technology and including such as school teachers, the environment, health care, law, human rights groups and civil society was established and attempts made to identify persons to serve who would be representative of these groups, preferably being able to represent more than one of the groups.

The first committee consisted of 15 members, the minimum allowed by the consideration and this was expanded with the additional of 5 at the time of reappointment in 2011 by the Honorable Lisa Hanna, Minister of Youth and Culture. Of note: the reappointment was delayed due to another change of government but the same principles of ratification by the new minister, following nomination by the Commission on the advice of the current members was followed. It is fairly safe to say therefore that we have enjoyed bipartisan support to date. The appointment as a member is for three years with eligibility for reappointment. The chairperson cannot be reappointed for more than two consecutive terms. Other members of the committee cannot be appointed for more than three consecutive terms. In order to maintain continuity and to foster mentoring of new appointees, the constitution requires a rotating resignation pattern so that at any time not more than approximately 50% of the members are new to the committee. Although members were ratified in 2008 the committee was officially launched in 2009. Since its launch in 2009, the committee has undertaken several public events in an attempt to inform the public of its existence and mandate as well as sending representatives to several regional and international conferences, usually making a presentation on its development and work to date.

From 2011 the committee has received two of the three training courses offered by UNESCO. UNESCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Bioethics Committee in 2010. In May 2013 the third training will take place with the participation of three international experts, including in the agenda the issues identified by the members of the committee. Currently the committee, in association with Pan America Health organization (PAHO) and the Ministry of Health, is leading a national consultation on the need to develop legislation and regulations for the protection and use health information.

**Presenter: Dr. Simeon**

Dr. Donald T. Simeon presented on Bioethics in Trinidad and Tobago: Past and Present.

Dr. Simeon outlined the past initiatives led by the following organizations:

- Ministry of Health
- Caribbean Health Research Council
• University of the West Indies
• Bioethics Society of the English Speaking Caribbean (BSEC)
• UNESCO – Trinidad and Tobago National Commission

The Ministry of Health

• Medical Ethics Committees
  ➢ Oversight of medical practitioners i.e. clinical practice
  ➢ Present in all hospitals
  ➢ Regional Health Authorities (RHA) – system in place for health centres
  ➢ Medical Board

• Research Ethics Committees
  ➢ Current Ministry of Health committee functional since 2006.
  ➢ Registered in US with Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) Certification since 2010 (office of Human Research Protection)
  ➢ Functioned on ad hoc basis to this. For example, committee for HIV vaccine trial in 1990’s
  ➢ RHA Act – cover Research Ethics Committee (REC) in RHAs

Caribbean Health Research Council

• Mandate to promote and strengthen bioethics:
  ➢ 2000 in collaboration with PAHO, a three day workshop on Ethics in Healthcare and Research:
    • Ethics of healthcare and public health, models of clinical ethics committees.
    • Decision making in ethics
    • Ethical issues in human research, model of RECs
    • D Pico, L Mc Dougal – proposal for training program in research ethics (unfortunately, it was not funded)
  ➢ 2001 – Workshop on Ethics in Human Subject Research
    • Follow – up forum for discussion of ways to promote and advance bioethical practices.
  ➢ 2004 – In collaboration with PAHO, Health Canada
    • For persons who sit on Ethics Committees
    • Facilitate the establishment of REC’s.
    • Sought assistance from CCS to develop supporting legislation
  ➢ 2005 – Workshop for persons who sit on Ethics Committee.
  ➢ 2007 – In collaboration with Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
    • Research ethics training using video – conferencing
2011 – University of the Southern Caribbean.
  • Facilitate the establishment of their REC

University of the West Indies

• Faculty of Medical Sciences
  ➢ Medical Ethics – training for students – preclinical and clinical years.
  ➢ Research Ethics:
    • Oversight committees for human subject research; issues related to jurisdiction and research in other facilities/faculties. For example, community based research.
    • Animal research - through the Vet school.

Bioethics Society of the English Speaking Caribbean (BSEC)

• 3rd Annual BSEC Forum:
  ➢ Bioethical Standards: People and the Environment
  ➢ With Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Caribbean Health Research Council (CHRC), University of the West Indies, UNESCO.

• On World Environment Day – June 5 2006
  Focus on bioethical issues related to the environment:
  ➢ Featured lecturers from international, regional and local experts.
  ➢ Presentations through the submission of abstracts
  ➢ Participants: professionals, students and the public.

UNESCO – Trinidad and Tobago National Commission

• 2006 – Regional Conference on Bioethics:
  ➢ In collaboration with National Institution of Higher Education, Research and Technology (NIHERST) and UNESCO (Mexico)
  ➢ To present the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights.
  ➢ To promote the UNESCO bioethics program
  ➢ To support the initiative of Trinidad and Tobago towards the establishment of a National Bioethics Committee

• National Bioethics Committee
  ➢ Progress towards its establishment in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Current Situation with Research Ethic Committees (REC)

• Initiative in collaboration with the Ministry of Health to:
  ➢ Restructure its REC
- Synchronize the work of the various RECs.

- Survey conducted in 2012 (C. Ruiz, A Yearwood)
  - Questionnaire sent to university, research institution, Regional Health Authorities
  - Existing committees (6)
  - Health Sector – Ministry of Health, 3 of the Regional Health Authorities
  - Universities – University of the West Indies (Faculty of Medical Science), University of Southern Caribbean, other university such as University of Trinidad and Tobago.

Survey Results

- All committees have written objectives and terms of reference
- 3 of the 6 standard operating procedures.
- Numbers of members: 7-16
  - Serve both in individual and official capacities
  - Most members had no formal training.
- Number proposals reviewed/mo: 3-20
- Monitoring of research absent – resources, appropriate approach?

Challenges

- Medical ethics
  - Emerging issues
  - Organ transplant (legislation)
  - Fertility clinics, vaccinations, etc.
  - Stigma and discrimination by health workers e.g. HIV

- Research Ethics
  - Lack of consistency regarding existing RECs, term of references, standards operating procedures, etc.
  - Urgent need for action
  - To also address their jurisdiction (overlap, gaps)
  - Issue regarding social sciences
  - Use of medical model, ethics creep, etc.

- Other sectors:
  - Agriculture - policies regarding GMFs, pesticide pollution, antibiotics abuse, growth enhances, horse meat
  - Environment - no progress since 2009 Bioethics Forum (needs champion)
  - Science and technology:
    - Nothing in place for research oversight
    - Drive towards research for health
  - Animal rights – oversight body.
Way Forward

- National Bioethics Committee
  - Capacity development
  - Policies/oversight for non health sector
- PAHO Bioethics Program – need to seize opportunity (2012 initiative)
- Research Ethics Committees
  - Revamped REC at Ministry of Health
  - Standards operating procedures public health data (M&E, surveillance, QA)
  - Coordination of all existing – minimal standards
- Other partners – Caribbean Public Health Agency, CITI, etc.

Presenter: Mrs. Marcia Riley

Mrs. Marcia Riley’s presentation was the proposal for a National Bioethics Committee in Trinidad and Tobago.

According to Mrs. Riley, her presentation is the result of countless exchanges, discussion and debate among members of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO – past and present – as well as with scientists/experts in the natural and human sciences, relevant agencies, institutions and interested persons, on how to proceed with the establishment of a National Bioethics Committee in Trinidad and Tobago. Mrs. Riley expressed a debt of gratitude to the former Chairman of the National Commission, Mr. Hart Edwards whose leadership and dogged determination enable the Commission to generate a document for review.

A debt of gratitude is also owed to Professor Bartholomew for his sterling work during the period 2000 - 2005 when he sat on the International Bioethics Committee. The then Director General of UNESCO Koichiro Matsurrs wrote Professor Bartholomew in June 2003 saying:

“I wish to thank you and to commend you, in particular, for the work achieved in such a short time to draw up the preliminary draft of the international declaration on human genetic data

Professor Courtney Bartholomew (Latin America/ Caribbean Conference on Bioethics, Cuba, September 2004);

“there is precious little knowledge of and as a consequence, little interest in the field of bioethics... such an interest can also be fostered by the establishment of a National
Bioethics Committee in my own Trinidad and Tobago in coordination with UNESCO, and which, inter alia will carry out ethical reflection; not only for special groups but also for the public at large”.

Mrs. Riley outlined that her presentation is structured into three basic parts. Part 1 gives the context in which the work begun and the justification. Part 2 – the current status and capabilities, actions taken to date and benefits to be derived from the establishment of a National Bioethics Infrastructure led by the National Committee, and Part 3 looks at the need for technical assistance in relation to understanding the role of UNESCO in this regard.

The International Bioethics Committee of UNESCO (ICB) was established in 1993. During the period 2000 – 2005, Trinidad and Tobago having served on this International Committee began through the National Commission’s Science Sector and Executive Committees to advance the process for the establishment of a National Bioethics Structure and a framework for the Ethics of Science and Technology. In 2006, the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO in collaboration with the Mexico Office of UNESCO hosted a Regional Conference on Bioethics. A key outcome of the conference was the commitment to establish a National Bioethics Committee in Trinidad and Tobago; further strengthening the thrust towards developing and installing a National Bioethics Committee.

Mrs. Riley elaborated on the following questions: Why a Bioethics Committee and what will the National Bioethics Committee do?

According to Mrs. Riley, Bioethics committees are essentially the platforms to balance the good of science, human rights and particularly the rights of the child and the public interest. Bioethics committees are usually multidisciplinary in nature and members employ a variety of approaches to work towards the resolution of bioethics issues and problems, especially moral and bioethical dilemmas. They investigate and report on the ethical, legal and social issues surrounding research in Medical, Social and Natural Sciences. In Trinidad and Tobago there is a growing appreciation for the positive as well as negative engagement of children and youth with science and technology and the need for guidelines to enable this engagement to allow the society to benefit fully now and in the future.

Taking into consideration that a national policy for science, technology and society is required to support the millennium development goals, and that capacity building in both ethics and bioethics is necessary support for achieving this, it is anticipated that the National Bioethics Committee will:

- Actively gather information and views from the local and international communities, and after careful deliberation, provide guidelines and make recommendations to ethical/review committees of relevance institutions or of the sector.
• Address the ethical dimension of research impacting on humans, animals, plants and the environment, including research in areas such as medicine, education, and agriculture and the question of dissemination of research results.
• Build public awareness on related issues as part of the move towards a better society, knowledge-based economy and high quality of life.
• Develop a framework of ethics and bioethics rules and procedures.
• Devise a strategy plan and infrastructure, consistent with the guidelines flowing from the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights adopted by the UNESCO in 2005 with consideration for the Universal Declaration on the Rights of the Child.
• Create the agenda, set priorities within, monitor, evaluate and coordinate local action impinging on the area (research, policy, practice), monitor international developments, highlight issues, facilitate the development of capacity, and promote public information and awareness.
• Define and drive implementation of a national agenda on ethics and bioethics and the ethics of research in science and technology.
• Lay the groundwork of a national infrastructure for bioethics and ethics of science and technology which will provide an appropriate framework for the ethical analysis of issues pertaining to research, human health and welfare and the environment.
• Demonstrate a commitment to respecting human rights, acknowledge the dignity of citizens and sustaining public awareness through educational programmes in bioethics.
• Enable Trinidad and Tobago to participating, influence and benefit from international discussion and decision-making in this arena.

In evaluating the current status and capabilities we considered infrastructure; research and some issues that need to be addressed urgently to strengthen the bioethics in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Riley elaborated on the current status and capabilities.

Infrastructure: locally, such institutional infrastructure as exists to address ethics and bioethics issues is to be found in the Ministry of Health and its Regional Health Authorities, in the Faculty of Medical Sciences and in some other areas of science research at the University of the West Indies. Although there is thrust by Research and Health institutions to establish Institutional Review Boards and Health Care Ethics Committees, there remains the need for the establishment of a National Body on Ethics and Bioethics which will not only have oversight of the various Institutional Research Ethics Committees, but also have on-going responsibilities for capacity building and public education on ethics and bioethics.

Research: currently, research projects undertaken in Trinidad and Tobago, proceed either without ethical clearance, or with ethical approval by Reviews Boards of local or foreign institutions only. Programmes and projects such as the establishment of fertility clinics, the passing of an Organ Donation Bill, and projects which have an impact on communities, would all benefit from
ethical oversight. In addition, development that has far reaching consequences for the society in biotechnology (stem cell research, genetically modified foods, paternity tests and in-vitro fertilization) and nanotechnology make it crucially important that research and planned action in these areas be subject to ethical scrutiny and consideration.

Generally, the lack of traditions and legislation infrastructure needed to protect countries like Trinidad and Tobago, hampers their position to secure their interests especially in relation to research being done by researchers from the developed world, the exploitation of their flora and fauna, and the whole area of social, environmental and human rights considerations, as outlined in the 2005 Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights.

The research needs an ethical oversight in many areas, e.g. Stem cell research, genetically modified food, paternity tests, in-vitro fertilization and nanotechnology.

Legislation is involved in research. Some issues that urgently need to be addressed are:

- The current lack of an appropriate legislative and institutional framework, of institutional capacity and rules, of systemic oversight and often, of awareness – a situation which opens developing societies such as ours to significant exploitation.
- The need to develop and institutionalize a national capability to assess the ethical implications and likely impact of major unfolding development in science and technology and their introduction into the society.
- To be able to share in the relevant international networks of information in this area and to utilize these and the developing national capability to underpin the national effort.

Actions to date:

The Trinidad and Tobago National Commission has met with several individuals and agencies and this Seminar is expected to advance these actions by bringing the Country closer to the creation of a national ethics and bioethics infrastructure, the first steps of which is the establishment of a National Bioethics Committee: Early proposals envisage a two step process whereby these tasks would be done by a Bioethics Infrastructure Committee, whose work would be alignment with present concerns of the emerging global society for the development of common perspectives on ethical behavior. Then at the end of its life, the infrastructure committee would hand over to a National Ethics Committee; National Committee for Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology or any other as agreed upon to be institutional centerpiece.

The terms of reference of the committee are designed to be consistent with the guidelines flowing from the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights adopted by the UNESCO in 2005 and as such require the committee to:
• Define a national agenda on bioethics and ethics of science and technology, set priorities within it and create an effectively functioning national infrastructure in bioethics and ethics of science and technology and facilitate the development of required capacity.
• Recommend an appropriate framework of ethics and bioethics for science, technology, human rights and research activity in Trinidad and Tobago, together with a feasible and cost effective strategy and a plan for establishing the institutional structure to deliver it.
• Monitor, evaluate and coordinate local action (research, policy, practice) impinging on the area as well as monitor international developments, highlight issues and promote public information and awareness for Trinidad and Tobago.
• Advisory to policy makers, law makers and institutions as well as members of the health professions and experts in the life science, and ensure proper ventilation of the full spectrum of local views and issues relating to Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology in a manner that enables Trinidad and Tobago to participate in, influence and benefit from international discussion and decision-making in this arena.
• Ensure appropriate access to required technical assistance; source available technical support from UNESCO (training, etc.) and, in collaboration with interested parties, develop a plan of action covering delivery, absorption and counter parting of such assistance.
• Submit, for the approval of Cabinet, a consensus set of recommendations for the promotion, development and maintenance of a strong and vigorous ethics and bioethics environment in Trinidad and Tobago.

The benefits:

• An agreed strategy and plan
• Promotion of the implementation of approved institutional infrastructure
• The creation of an adequate minimum base of trained capacity
• Promotion of institutional capacity building
• Greatly enhance public awareness of bioethics and the ethics of science and technology
• Oversight of the formation of ethics committee
• Ground rules and guiding principles for these committees
• Enhancement of education in bioethics and the ethics of science and technology
• Acquisition and appropriate use of new knowledge in science and technology, including that direct to improving health and the delivery of health care.
• Identification of bioethics issues that require policy and legislation e.g. importation of GM foods; establishment of human fertility clinics (eggs/ sperm, organ donation and storage)
• Improved protection of the interests of patients in research trails
• Provision of expertise and representation of different viewpoints concerning ethical issues in biology, medicine and life sciences and in the introduction of new technologies, treatments and food.
• Advocacy for the promotion of improved patient care.

Mrs. Riley further discussed the Technical Assistance.

UNESCO Medium Term Strategy (2008-2014) commits to enhancing national capacities for regulating, reviewing and addressing ethical issues related to science and technology, in particular in the context of capacity-building action regarding science policies and the development of national research systems, concentrating support on the establishment and reinforcement of national bodies and mechanisms, such as the National Bioethics Committees.

Assistance is also available for formulating recommendations and for the elaboration of national policies and guidelines giving special attention at regional and national levels to sharing experience, knowledge and know how, supporting advocacy, stimulating an open democratic debate and ethics education, especially for young scientists, professionals and trainers.

UNESCO also commits through the Ethics Education Programme to creating ‘networks of experts in ethics teaching, developing resources documentation, contributing to existing teaching programmes, and developing model programmes and quality assessment criteria.

UNESCO has supported the formulation of National Bioethics Committee in Jamaica where the Bioethics Committee has a link to its National Commission for UNESCO (which spearheaded the preparatory work) and reports to Parliament through the Minister of Information and Culture.

In Cuba, there is Bioethics Commission also closely linked to the National Commission for UNESCO and both coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Brazil recently completed a long process of consultation and planning which has resulted in a law passed by their congress creating an Advisory Bioethics Commission to the President.

For Trinidad and Tobago, there are several Ministries can have legitimate interest in Bioethics and the Ethics of Science and Technology and taking responsibility for it, mostly in relation to their own sectoral interest and priorities e.g. Education, Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (STTE), Health, Planning Housing and the Environment, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs and Social Development. The Minister with the responsibility for UNESCO matters views the National Commission as best placed to continue to drive the process at this point, in close collaboration with these various Ministries and agencies, some of which are already members of the National Commission for UNESCO.

This approach will ensure that the interest of the relevant sectors are carefully considered and that there is ready access to the available technical assistance of UNESCO given that
organization’s commitment to capacity building in the field of bioethics and the ethics of science and technology.

Trinidad and Tobago expects that the Technical Assistance it receives from UNESCO will assist in the development of appropriate national infrastructure for bioethics and the ethics of science and technology, for the establishment and institutional development of a National Bioethics system led by a National Committee for Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology and for implementation.

The next step:

The National Commission will therefore in collaboration with interested parties, develop a plan of action and source, particularly from UNESCO, required advisory services and technical support (training etc.), based on a consensus set of recommendations on the way forward and seek Cabinet approval.

The National Commission has set a deadline of June 2013 for the establishment of the National Bioethics Committee which once establish will provide advice to policy makers, law makers and institutions as well as members of the health professions and experts in the life sciences who are expected to participate in and benefit from the work of a National Bioethics Committee.

The National Commission for UNESCO will continue to take the lead in the development of this National initiative in Bioethics and the ethics of science and technology and so lay infrastructure for an appropriate institutional framework to underpin the initiative.

Mrs. Riley thanked the members of the National Commission and its Secretariat for their unstinting support and especially the members of the Science Sector Committee and Dr. Grace Sirju-Charran (Chair, Nat. Com. Bioethics Sub-Committee) for her unflagging commitment to this work and Dr. Vashti Singh (Chair, Social and Human Science) for her deep concern for addressing the social issues facing our country.

In closing, Mrs. Riley express some reflections on the Myth of Care which offers as Reich 1993 puts it “very different implications for ethics in general and bioethics in particular in particular”. The power of ancient myths and the care of souls traditions is linked with modern psychology which;” teachers us that those who are cared for from birth, developed the nurturing power to care for self and others”. It raises the fundamental question of ethics: How shall I live? In the words of existentialist philosopher Kierkegaard, “As soon as I have to act, interest and concern is laid upon me, because I take responsibility on myself”. It is imperative that a National Bioethics Committee at this 50 year junction in our nation’s life is built on CARE, “for, without care or concern, action would not be possible” Stack 1969.
Presenter: Dr. Susana Vidal UNESCO Assisting Bioethics Committee Project.

Dr. Vidal outlined UNESCO and Bioethics Historical Relations. UNESCO was the first organization in the UN system and formal work in bioethics began in:

- 1993 - Bioethics Programme and International Bioethics Committee (IBC)
- 1998 - Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC)
- 2013 - Celebrating of the 20th anniversary

The Normative Background:

- 1997 – The Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (adopted by acclamation on 11th November 1997)
- 2003 – International Declaration on Human Genetic Data

2002 Bioethics was designated a priority for UNESCO with the following objectives:

- To consolidate UNESCO’s position as a leading player in the field of Bioethics at a global level.
- To reinforce its normative action by defining a common ethical framework for Bioethics and its relation with Human Rights.
- To further develop and strengthen its function as an advisor and mediator bioethics with regard to member states.
- To promote the creating and strengthening of national capacities through the establishment of networks and regional information and documentation centers.

2005 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights, there are three programmes that are contributing to its diffusion:

1. Global Ethics Observatory (GEO)
2. Bioethics Teaching Programme
3. Assisting Bioethics Committees Project

Background in Latin American and the Caribbean region:

- Social and Human Sciences Sector – Mexico office
- 2000 La Habana Cuba: to promote the creation of a Latin America and the Caribbean Bioethics Network: “Redbioetica” (Bioethics Network)
March 2002, Mexico: identify potential members among specialists and universities to take part in the first steps of the network.

November, (World Bioethics Congress, IAB) Brasilia, there was a technical meeting with different specialists that were identified and were interested in working in the network.

May 2003, Cancun and Mexico: creation of a Bioethics Regional Network of UNESCO (Latin America and the Caribbean Bioethics Network)

Principal Activities of the Latin America and the Caribbean UNESCO Bioethics Programme Regional Bioethics Network – Bioethics Network UNESCO:

2003 - 2013: meeting in the following countries; Mexico, Panama, Cuba, Dominica Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, El Salvador, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil.


The three (3) open meeting of the PEPB are:

1. Publication: 6 books published by Bioethics Network and the Regional Programme, by Latin America authors and one Latin America Dictionary in Bioethics (UNESCO/ Unibiblos)
2. Redbioetica website: www.rebioeticaunesco.org
3. The Network has support the organization of several national congresses.

2007 – 2013: four Redbioetica Congresses (San Pablo, Cordoba, Colombia and Brasilia)

Assisting member states in the creation and training of National Bioethics Committees

The main lines of assistant are:

1. Promotion of Bioethics teaching in Lain America and the Caribbean
     There are two courses:
     1. Research Ethics
     2. Clinical and Social Bioethics.
   - Books published on line.
   - Organization of Regional Meetings.

2. Promotion of ethics principles and sensitizing the civil society:
   - Promoting public information and debate:
Global Ethics Observatory (GEOB): The GEOB is a system of databases with world coverage in bioethics and other areas of applied ethics, experts, institution. www.geob@unesco.org

- Redbioetica website: www.redbioeticaunesco.org
- Redbioetica Journal (three languages): http://revista.redbioeticaunesco.org

3. Support the creation and education of National Bioethics Committees and Research Ethics Committees.
   - To cooperate in the creation of National Bioethics Committees.
   - To support, give advice and training for the creation of Bioethics Committee Networks.
   - To strengthen the capacities of member states involved.
   - To promote the creation of National System of ethics evaluation in biomedical research.

UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights – 2005, Article 19 – Ethics Committees: independent, multidisciplinary and pluralist ethics committees should be established promoted and support at the appropriate level in order to:

   - Assess the relevant ethical, legal, scientific and social issues related to research projects involving human beings.
   - Provide advice on ethical problems in clinical settings
   - Assess scientific and technology development, formulate recommendation and contribution to the preparation of guidelines on issues within the scope of this Declaration.
   - Foster debate, education and public awareness of and engagement in bioethics.

Principles in support of the creation and education of the National Bioethics Committee are:

   - A public and democratic involvement with a wide participation of all sector and general public; government, specialized institutions, universities, teaching centers, other sectors and the civil society
   - Pluralist and interdisciplinary participation
   - Participation of people who have direct interest; i.e. professionals, scientists and researchers, ethicists, lawyers, community member and people that represent different areas of knowledge, different moralities, etc.
   - Building independence (government, power, economic and other sectoral interests)
Working Areas:

- Universal Declaration Bioethics and Human Rights (UDBHR)
- Clinical Ethics
- Ethics and Biotechnologies

UDBHR: Article 1 Scope: This Declaration addresses ethical issues related to medical, life science and associated technologies as applied to human beings, taking into account their social, legal and environmental dimensions.

Functions and competences:

- Consultant:
  - Legislative Advisory
  - Advisory to Ministries
  - Advisory to other organizations
- Education

Competences:

- Ethical problems:
  - Identifies and diagnoses
  - Systematizes
  - Deliberates and argues
  - Advices on how to act

Decisions making process at different levels:

- Policy
- Debate and public awareness
- Education
- Networks

Public policies – advice governmental bodies

Mediator – implementation of the international standards.

Dependence on:

- Presidential
- Parliamentarians
- Independents
- NGOs
- UNESCO
Denomination:

- National: influence in the whole country
- Bioethics: wide
- Committee, Commission, Council, consultative body, consultative committee, etc.

The National Bioethics Committee Objectives (wide perspective of Bioethics):

- To evaluate the impact on life and human health, (animal and environmental) of new technologies and biomedical research (publication, recommendations, opinions, etc.)
- To advice governments, parliaments and ministries on different ethical topics related to research, development and the application of scientific knowledge.
- To publish recommendations on bioethical issues that may have influence on the normative activity and promote the awareness and participation of civil society (promoting public debate).
- To function as forum of debate with regard to bioethical issues of national relevance, focusing on both general and specific issues.
- To function as a model of public deliberation (debate, education and public consensus)
- To provide advice on issues related to basic education in bioethics.
- To spread and promote the implementation of the principles of the UNESCO Universal Declaration Bioethics and Human Rights.

Dr. Vidal outlined the National Bioethics in Latin America and the Caribbean:

- There are 8 countries with National Bioethics Committee: Bolivia, Cuba, El Salvador, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Dominican Republic and Venezuela. After the year 2000 – Cuba (1997).
- 10 Countries with another type of committee or commissions: Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Chile, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay, Paraguay and Panama. There are Research Ethics Commission Science and Technology and others.
- 9 countries with committees being created: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela. With or without promoter commission.
- 13 countries without National Bioethics Committee: Antigua, Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Saints Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Honduras.
The National Bioethics Committees: Latin America and the Caribbean, there are strong dynamism in the region. There are a lot of different initiatives, very few National Bioethics Committees and different types of model among them.

**UNESCO Assisting Bioethics Committees Project – ABC project**

The objectives of the project are:

- To reinforce the bioethics infrastructure in member states through facilitating the establishment of NBCs (with a wider mandate than research ethics committees),
- And, once they are established, to assist in enhancing the functioning of these committees.

There are three steps in capacity building:

1. Data collection and identification of existing committees. To obtain accurate information concerning the state of the art of ethics committees in the country concerned. It is necessary to build a “diagnosis” of the ethics infrastructure.
2. Provision of practical information:
   - Guide No. 1: establishing Bioethics Committees
   - Guide No. 2: Bioethics Committees at work: Procedures and Policies
   - Guide No. 3: Educating Bioethics Committees
3. Technical support: with expert teams. There are 2 task forces of experts have been set up:
   - One English speaking and one French speaking
   - In the region we are working with experts from Redbioetica.

The project is organized around three phases:

1. To provide practical recommendation in order to establish National Bioethics Committees
2. To support National Bioethics Committees, once established, in developing appropriate working methods and operational procedures.
3. To improve the functioning of bioethics committees through evaluation, training and networking.

The characteristics:

- Interdisciplinary: with the participation of the people who have direct interests.
- Pluralistic; not just interdisciplinary but regarding the axiology diversity and different spiritual families and with the participation of different groups which represent corporative and political interests.
• Independent: without undue influence or conflict of interests.
• Transcultural: taking into account the cultural diversity to able to make a comparative study of the bioethics contents and the creation of alternative disciplinary models.
• Deliberative: deliberation as methodology for a peaceful solution of conflicts through argumentative discussion and potential method for the civil order.
• Global: globalization represents a great challenge for bioethics; to develop a universal ethics in front of the scientific and technological age, but at the same time in front of poverty and inequality that is devastating in out part of the world.

National Bioethics Committees build global macro-ethics which can guide and conduct a biological revolution, while at the same time pays attention to the local problems in a world ruled by justice and equity.
Discussions of Participants

Chairperson, Dr. Kris Rampersad said that she was enlightened by the presentations. She highlighted her concerns and challenges pertaining to establishment of a National Bioethics Committee in Trinidad and Tobago. Dr. Rampersad noted that the challenges for the local environment need to be identified in addition to identifying the shape/form the committee should take. The National Bioethics Committee needs a vision.

Mr. Noel Braithwaite presented the following questions to the participants: Where do we go from here? What is the next step at the end of the Seminar?

Mrs. Maureen Manchouck stated that other issues need to be dealt with. Not only dealing with issues from a health perspective but from biodiversity, environmental, cultural, agriculture and other perspectives as well. Mrs. Manchouck proposed the following questions: How do we see ourselves - as a national committee or as a council? Is the committee short term or long term? She expressed that the terms; committee, commission and council are different. Following further discussion, Mrs. Manchouck noted that the scope should be started with first. The committee should start looking at the areas of interest. Mrs. Manchouck further outlined other concerns such as; should the committee be an advisory committee, dealing with policy issues? Oversight in areas outside of medical research? Should the committee be responsible for anything else? These are some of the areas that we are trying to focus on.

Mr. Edward Hart suggested that a mandate should be set to establish a committee. The mandate can be June, 2013. Mr. Hart asked the following question: What is the plan of action?
Mrs. Manchouck expressed her concern on what can we realistically achieve by June. She stated that we need to begin to set up or put in place something that would allow us to articulate a plan of action.

Dr. Grace Sirju-Charran noted that one of the difficulties is that of bringing together all of the stakeholders whose support for the establishment of the committee is essential. In addition, a public education programme is needed to address individual’s lack of awareness of the importance of bioethics for T&T. Dr. Sirju-Charran presented the following question: Are we going to use the existing draft or create a new one?

Professor Genoveva Keyeux declared that the priority under consideration is the scope. What is the scope of the National Bioethics Committee? According to Professor Keyeux, the challenges are related to the scope. You don’t have to bother with who is going to be on the committee but what are the qualifications of the persons. People, who are pluralistic, independent and have different disciplines; would allow the discussion to be very broad. There should be individuals who can conduct research. Professor Keyeux expressed her views that the general public is unaware of terms - bioethics and the ethical issues of science.

Dr. Andrea Yearwood noted that the objectives for the committee should be declared. There is the need for further planning and funding for a national consultation. Are we asking Cabinet for mandate to do the further work to help us develop the draft?

There is the need for public awareness outlined by Ms. Terry Ince.

According to Professor Harald Schmidt, there is a communication problem. Individuals are unaware of the term bioethics; for example, the queries that resulted from the invitation to participate in this Seminar from the Animal Rights organization. There was a lack of knowledge about the term bioethics and how bioethics is associated with their organization.

According to Mrs. Marcia Riley, the core issues should be clear. Following further discussion, Mrs. Riley stated that the information presented is not a draft but a draft cabinet note. The information presented in the note is the process of thinking. The ideas presented are fed into the cabinet note. The objectives of presenting the information of the cabinet note is to gain further expertise and evaluation, in terms of what else can be presented in the draft cabinet note.
Day 2. Friday 1st March 2013

Day 2 of the seminar focus on the Integrating efforts: National Vision.

Presentations were made by Dr. Akenath Misir (Ministry of Health), Professor Shivananda Nayak (University of the West Indies), Dr. Puran Bridgemohan (The University of Trinidad and Tobago), Dr. Vashti Singh (University of Trinidad and Tobago), Ms. Nadia Nanan (The Environmental Management Authority), Mr. Adrian McCarthy (Ministry of Health, Chemistry, Food and Drug Division), Dr. Noel Braithwaite (University of South Caribbean) and Dr. Grace Sirju-Charran (Bioethics Society of the English Speaking Caribbean)

Day 2 of the seminar started with a quiet reflection lead by Dr. Vashti Singh

(Prayer of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO)

“Oh great spirit of the universe, the heavens, the earth and all living creatures. You have made no two flowers, no two blades of grass and no two children exactly alike. It is your plan that there would be a variety in nature and in human beings, each with different talents and abilities. You have placed on the earth people of different ethnicity, different nations and different religious. Teach us to appreciate, understand and value these differences. May we never be prejudice against anyone because of ethnicity, nationality or faith. Inspire us to be just, helpful and friendly to all. We offer this pray in thanks giving”

Presenter: Dr. Akenath Misir

Dr. Misir shared the following information with the participants:

Trinidad and Tobago wished to thank PAHO for preparing the important concept paper on Bioethics: Towards the Integration of Ethics in Health. In the current scenario he finds it timely and relevant.

Bioethics through its widest application seeks to elucidate the ethical problems that may arise in public health, health care and health research, and from this perspective it is critical that PAHO member countries collectively affirm their resolve to integrate this all spheres of pursuits in health.

Recently countries are witnessing the manipulation of medical research; payment of large out of court settlements for misfeasance, iminical pricing practices directed to client marketing, especially to impressionable and vulnerable, childhood and adolescent populations. This is compounded by the proliferation and diversification of suppliers and services, with questionable
curative claims and exploitation of naïve and unsuspecting persons whose ability to seek judicial redress is hampered.

Our knowledge and implementation of bioethics in research is fairly advanced and should be facilitated to continue with heightened vigilance. However, in public health and health care, a lot more needs to be done through training and the systematic integration of bioethical principles into all sphere of health care including health promotion and its subset of social marketing.

The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, has been giving special attention to the area of professionalism and ethics and are currently working on an initiative to fully integrate these areas into the medical curricula. This project sought to (i) determine the status and laws governing the conduct of biomedical research in Trinidad and Tobago and (ii) collaborate with other keys ethics researchers and create a database of laws governing the conduct of biomedical research within the Caribbean region.

Government and state agencies need to look at the legislative framework to support bioethics in its entire spectrum. As such, the Ministry of Health is currently reviewing the terms of reference for its bioethics committee. It is therefore recommended that this new Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) undertakes part of its mandate the wide adoption of bioethics.

**Presenter: Prof. Shivananda Nayak**

Professor Nayak from The University of the West Indies – Faculty of Medical Sciences Ethics Committee gave a presentation on the University of the West Indies Ethics Committee.

According to Professor Nayak, the Dean of Faculty of Medical Sciences nominates the chairman of the committee. The Dean and the Chair with the approval of the faculty board select the members of the committee. The size of the committee is 16 members and 1 secretary. The individuals of the committee are medical, nursing, pharmacy, veterinary, Regional Health Authority staff, retired teachers and medical education professionals with 3-4 years of experience. The number of research projects and proposal applications received/month: 20 - 30.

The terms of reference:

- To consider general issues arising within the faculty which involve considerations of an ethical nature.
- To prepare guidelines in relation to ethical issues which may arise from teaching and research activities within the faculty.
- To be available for consultation on such ethical issues by individual members of staff or students of the faculty.
- To be available for consultation on such ethical issues by individual members of staff or student of the faculty.
• To consider, and in appropriate cases, approve specific representations and research protocols submitted to it members of staff and students of the faculty, or representatives of certain external bodies working in collaboration with members of the faculty.
• To report on the exercise of the committee’s functions and make recommendations to the Dean as deemed appropriate on matters relating to policy and strategy related to ethics.

The Operational Procedure:

What proposal do we reviewed?

• Consider proposals for research from all schools in the faculty for any project proposing to use human participants, animal subjects, or involving issues requiring ethical advice.
• The committee is guided by the following international recognized declarations and standards namely:
• All applications are to be submitted to the chairman or secretary.

The Committee will review:

• Procedures involving any risk to a participant’s health (for example intrusive or invasive physiological or psychological procedures.
• Surveys and questionnaires, the nature of which might be offensive, distressing or deeply personal for the particular target group.
• Proposal which involve financial payments or payments in kind to participants of the research.
• Proposals wishing to use undergraduate or postgraduate students as participants.
• Proposal involving special populations such as pregnant women, children, persons with diminished mental capacity, prisoners, non-English speaking subjects, embryos, fetuses or abort uses.
• Proposal which investigate existing working or professional practices at the faculty or university.
• Procedures involving risk or procedures to animal subjects
• Procedures involving the security and confidentially of sensitive patient information, access to data, organs or other bodily material or patients from either the public or private health institutions’.
• Foetal material and IVF involving patients.
• Access to data, organs or other bodily material of deceased persons from either the public or private health institutions.
Procedures for processing application:

- The Faculty of Medical Sciences Ethics Committee meets every month throughout the academic year, to review applications from staff and students to ensure adherence to ethical standards and protocols. In cases where urgent approval is required and the committee in unable to convene, the application will be sent “round robin” to the chairman and two (2) other members of the committee.
- Recommendation of the committee will be recorded by the Committee Secretary, and sent to the chairman for vetting responses to applicants.
- In cases where proposals are sent “round robin”, comments from the committee members would be sent to the committee secretary. Following review of comments and recommendations by the chairman, the relevant response will be sent to the applicant.
- In the event that any member expresses a serious concern about a particular research proposal, and the principal investigator has not been able to address that concern to the satisfaction of relevant committee member, an extraordinary meeting of the committee may be convened to attempt to resolve outstanding issues.

Challenges:

- Review of applications submitted by other facilities of the University of the West Indies.
- Approval of research project by Regional Health Authorities, after Faculty of Medical Sciences Committee approval.
- Large number of application every month.

Way forward:

- Revise (if required) application forms every two (2) years to meet the internal standards.
- Started reviewing applications from other faculties after they involve a member from Faculty of Medical Sciences as one of the investigator (recommendation by John Hopkins).
- Training students.
Dr. Puran Bridgemohan of The University of Trinidad and Tobago gave his presentation on Policy on Ethics in Research at UTT.

According to Dr. Bridgemohan, University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) is concerned with protecting:

- Human Rights and dignity
- Health and safety
- Privacy of human research subjects
- Integrity of the environment
- Welfare of animals research subjects
- Integrity of the environment
- Rights and academic freedom of researchers
- Reputation of the university as a centre for excellence in research.
- Responsibilities
- Rules and regulations
- Honesty and integrity
- Collaboration research
- The duty to acknowledge sources of funding
- Data
- Disputes between co-researchers
- Disciplinary action and grievance
- Research with human subjects
- Animal research
- Levels ethics reviews

The bio-ethical implications in research are:

- Human subjects (particularly children and vulnerable adults)
- Human data or human material
- Animal experiments
- Health and safety implications
- Political, social, or religious sensitive

Concern:

- Compromise the university’s position as public funded body
Policy for Code of Bioethics in Research:

- Ethical conduct of research
- Legitimate requirement of funders and collaborators
- Applicable to all researchers
- Approval of the Board of Governors
- Compliance with the principle investigation or another named person

*Research involving Human Subjects.* Policy and Procedures for the ethical conduct of Non-clinical Research involving:

- Human subjects
- Consent from participations
- Experimental subject’s rights
- Request for permission to use a individual’s Private Health Information
- Policy and procedures for the ethical conduct of medical/ clinical
- Research involving human subjects

*Research involving animal subjects.* Animal Care Committee Guidelines for the use of animals in teaching and research:

- Housing and husbandry
- Ante-mortem Specimen Collection
- Test substance delivery
- Surgical procedures
- Antibody production
- Stress studies
- Tumor induction and management
- Field research and wild caught animals

Manual on ethics in research, policy and procedures:

**Presenter: Dr. Vashti Singh**

Dr. Vashti Singh teaches Sociology of Education and Practicum Courses to students pursuing the Bachelor of Education Degree in the Centre for Education Programmes at The University of Trinidad and Tobago. The following provides a summary of the presentation by Dr. Vashti Singh.
First and Foremost, teaching is revered as the cradle of all professions. Professional teacher education therefore has a major responsibility towards the present status of education in bioethics in Trinidad and Tobago. The Centre for Education Programmes at The University of Trinidad and Tobago recognises the profound significance of its role in the university's endeavour to advance research ethics and bioethics.

*Ethics Applied to Teaching and Research*

The Bachelor of Education Degree offers prospective teachers multi-disciplinary engagement with Ethics Across the Curriculum in course areas such as: Foundations of Education, Social Studies, Science and Technology, Action Research in Teacher Education and Practicum Teacher Training.

For the academic year (2012-2013), Dr. Singh teaches Foundations of Education, Social Structure and Social Processes, Action Research and Practicum Courses. Bioethical issues emerge from diverse areas such as: philosophy, health care, protection of the environment, new technological advancement, communities at risk and the role of the media which deserves special attention. In sociology, for example, the study of "family as an institution" includes health care and ongoing bioethical debates. Student-teachers have indicated that the media has a critical role in observing ethical principles when reporting information about bioethics. This requires social responsibility which is a necessary factor in preventing social stigma and discrimination. Action Research speaks to the development of the Teacher Researcher. The course includes a guide to ethics in research, ethical challenges, objectivity and subjectivity in qualitative methodology, values deemed imperative for collaboration, trust, transparency and accountability to the public. The Bachelor of Education Programme has applications to both the theory and practice of education. Ethics is infused into classroom practice and the broader philosophical principles that guide a teacher's daily life for rational judgement in the field.

*The Significance of Outreach/Community Service*

The University of Trinidad and Tobago has observed three major cornerstones embedded into its mission for sustainable development as follows:

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Research and Development
3. Community Service

In collaboration with other Centres of The University of Trinidad and Tobago, the Centre for Education Programmes has an integral role in outreach/community service, not only to disseminate information about research ethics and bioethics but to educate, empower and embrace citizens in the decision-making process for the greater public good.
Presenter: Ms. Nanan

Ms. Nadia Nanan made a presentation on The Environmental Management Authority (EMA)

The Establishment of the EMA:

• Environmental Management Act 1995/ 2000
• Environmental Management Act Chapter 35:05
• National Environmental Policy 1998/2006
• Protect conservation, enhancement and wise use of the environment of Trinidad and Tobago

The role of the EMA is to promote:

• Environmentally responsible behavior
• Development and enforcement of environmental legislation
• Encourage of voluntary compliance
• The use of economic and other incentives

EMA’s strategic objectives:

• Clean air
• Clean water
• Health ecosystem
• Less noise
• Improve waste management

EMA Act subsidiary rules:

• Noise Pollution Control Rules, 2000
• Certificate of Environmental Clearance Rules, 2001
• Environmental Sensitive Species Rules, 2001
• Environmental Sensitive Areas Rules, 2001
• Water Pollution Rules 2001 as amended by Water Pollution amendment rules, 2006
• Air Pollution Rules
• Water Rules
Ecosystem Services

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The EMA’s Vision is to lead Trinidad and Tobago in attaining and managing environmentally healthy and sustainable communities and ecosystems.

Presenter: Mr. McCarthy

Mr. Adrian McCarthy presented on: The Relevance of Bioethics to the Ministry of Health Chemistry/ Food and Drug Division.

The Chemistry/ Food and Drugs Division is a regulatory and standards setting Division for food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, pesticides and toxic chemicals. The Chemistry/ Food and Drugs Division (CFDD) is responsible for the administration of Food and Drugs Act and Regulations, and the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act and Regulations.

The CFDD monitors all aspects of importation, manufacture, storage, distribution, sale, fraud and deception in labelling and advertising, and disposal of products to ensure compliance with the provision of the Food and Drugs Act and Regulations to safeguard and promote the public’s health.

The CFDD monitors and regulates the importation, manufacture, transportation, storage, distribution, sale and disposal of products to ensure compliance with the Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Act and Regulations to safeguard public health.

The CFDD is responsible for ensuring acceptable quality, purity and safety of food, drugs, cosmetics and medical devices. The CFDD is responsible for ensuring acceptable quality and the safe use of pesticides and toxic chemicals. The CFDD laboratories carry out tests on samples of products. They analyzed for compliance with the respective standards.
The Advisory Committees

The Minister of Health may establish in the interest and for the protection of public health:

1. A Food Advisory Committee to assist and advise him with respect to food standards, labeling and other matters connected with the manufacture and distribution of food.
2. A Drug Advisory Committee to assist and advise him with respect to:
   • Drug standards, schedules of drugs, conditions of sales of drugs
   • Cosmetic standards, labelling of cosmetics.

The committees shall be representative of lay and professional interests and shall comprise persons as by reason of their knowledge, interest and experience are considered suitable for appointment. International Standards and Protocols used in Trinidad and Tobago come from:

- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- Codex Alimentarius (subsidiary body of the WHO/FAO)

Two objectives:
1. To protect consumers by ensuring food safety
2. To promote fair trade practices so as to facilitate international trade of food

- International Treaties (Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety) - Obligated to develop and implement a biosafety policy and legislation.

Bioethics vs. Science

1. Genetically Modified (GM) Foods. These are foods in which the genetic materials have been altered in a way that does not occur naturally. Cartagena Protocol (Biosafety Policy) and GMS foods currently available have passed risk assessments and are not likely to pose risks to human health (WHO).
2. Vaccines. The WHO recommends the use of vaccines for HVP.
3. Veterinary Drugs used as growth promoters. The risk assessments done by Codex have indicated that the drugs are safe to use at the recommended levels.

Presenter: Dr. Noel Braithwaite

Dr. Noel Braithwaite presentation: Bioethics at the University of Southern Caribbean (USC)

The USC operates on principle of good ethical practices. It’s a young university since it gained university status in 2006 after the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the University of the West Indies, though it is the oldest tertiary in the country (formerly known as Caribbean Union College).
Ethics Applied to Research Agenda.

The university is committed to research. The challenge is to engage a predominantly teaching faculty into embracing research. Capacity building is key to transition into a research driven institution. The Caribbean Health Research Council (CHRC) under Dr. Donald Simeon has been instrumental building research capacity and in establishing the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the Research Ethics Committee (REC). All persons appointed to the REC/IRB were trained by CHRC. Research now done by faculty and staff, as well as graduate and undergraduate students is reviewed by the IRB/REC. The chair of the IRB/REC has also expedited responsibilities to speed up the review process and to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. We are not as fortunate as University of the West Indies which receives over 20 applications per month to review, but we are getting there.

Relevance of the National Bioethics Commission

- Establishing and maintain national standards and quality
- Policies regarding training and capacity building
- Advocacy and education
- Coordination of national research in keeping with national research policies.

Presenter: Dr. Grace Sirju-Charran

Dr. Grace Sirju-Charran made a presentation on the Bioethics Society of the English Speaking Caribbean (BSEC)

The history

- “Brain child” of Dr. Derrick Aarons (Consultant Bioethicist, Jamaica). Formally established in May 2006 in the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. There are founding members from several Caribbean states. Patron: Honorable Sir George Alleyne. Website: http://bioethicscaribe.org.

Regions represented:

- North - Bahamas, Bermuda, Turks and Caicos and British and US Virgin Islands
- West - Belize, Cayman Islands and Jamaica
- Northeast - Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis
- Southeast - Barbados, Dominica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent
- South - Grenada, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.
Mission:

- To increase knowledge and understanding of bioethics through promoting and fostering deliberation across the English speaking Caribbean, as well as, through international collaboration, thereby making a significant contribution to the overall development and implementation of bioethics in human and animal healthcare, research and policy making.

Constitution Objectives:

- Facilitate Dialogue on Bioethics issues
- Promote advocacy in formulating ethical policies for Health Care and Research
- Establish a Think – Tank for discussing issues
- Promote research and publication on bioethics.

Strategies:

- Networking with Regional and International Institution e.g. PAHO, Redbioethica – UNESCO, University of Miami, SINAPSE (Europe)
- Annual forum
- Newsletters (Bioethics Caribe)
- Honorary Members

BSEC events:

- 6th Annual Bioethics Forum: November 2012, University of the West Indies, Barbados: Palliative Care and Management
- 5th Annual Bioethics Forum: November 10th 2012, Ross University, Dominica: Ethics, Equity and Stigma
- 4th Annual Bioethics Forum: May 27th 2010, University of Guyana, Turkeyen: An Ethical Pathway to Universal Access to Health - the Role of Rights, Citizens and Science
- 3rd Annual Bioethics Forum: June 5th 2009, Trinidad and Tobago: Bioethics Standard – People and the Environment
- 2nd Annual Bioethics Forum: October 11th 2008, St. George’s University, Grenada – Pain Management

Accomplishments:

- Annual Newsletter – Bioethics Caribbean
- Caribbean Template for establishment of Research Ethics Committees
• Members Ms. Cheryl Brown elected to UNESCO’s International Bioethics Committee
• 5 of the 14 members of Jamaica National Bioethics Committee are BSEC members

WORKING GROUPS

The participants broke up into two working groups to focus on:

1. Terms of Reference – scope, functions and competencies
2. Membership issues (who could be a member? Full vs. Part time: type of participation remuneration/ honorarium)
3. Legislation requirements – dependence, name

• Group 1 TOR – Dr. Akenath Misir, Dr. Noel Braithwaite, Dr. Donald Simeon, Dr. Grace Sirju-Charran and Ms. Nadia Nanan

• Group 2 Membership and Legislation – Dr. Vashti Singh, Dr. Avril Siung-Chang, Dr. Puran Bridegmohan, Mr. Iqubal Hydal, Ms. Marcia Riley, Mr. Hart Edwards, Mrs. Maureen Manchouck Ms. Terry Ince

Group 1. TOR - Scope, Functions and Competencies

The presentation was based on the T&T National Commission for UNESCO National Bioethics Commission Draft proposal/DCN in scope, functions and competencies.

Group 1 noted that development of the Scope should be a consultative process, and would address the ethical issues that arise from biology, biotechnology, medicine, healthcare, the environment and culture. There will be a national clearing house for all bioethical issues and related committees.

Functions of the National Bioethics Committee:

• Inform the public on ethical issues
• Provide advice on bioethical issues
• Produce position statements and recommendations for policy and law making
• Conduct monitoring and evaluation
• Collaborate with international, regional, local and other related organizations
• Stimulate debate on topical ethical issues
• Identify and defining ethical concerns
• Create a database of all research projects which have been assessed
• Facilitate capacity building/ training
• Coordinate work of all existing ethics committees

Competencies:

• Scientists
• Bioethicists (animal, human rights)
• Lawyers
• Philosophers
• Religious leaders
• Civil society
• Healthcare professionals

The group noted that there should be at least one representative from Tobago.

Secretariat:

• Researchers (at least 2)
• Administrative staff e.g. secretary

Outputs the Committee will be required to provide:

• Recommendations
• Opinions
• Reports
• Workshops/ training
• Bioethics database

Group 2: Membership Issues, Legislation and Mandate

Although there is no globally accepted definition for bioethics, the group suggests the use of the following - “bioethics refers to the systematic, pluralistic and interdisciplinary study and resolution of ethical issues by medicine, life and social sciences as applied to human beings and their relationship with the biosphere, including issues related to the availability and accessibility of scientific and technological developments and their applications” (according to the scope).

The National Bioethics Committee will serve the national community and its needs.

Membership:
Members should be determined by the needs of society and the terms of reference of the committee (capacity building, identifying gaps, develop guiding principles, coordination, harmonizing, setting quality/ standards, public awareness) and competencies or fields of knowledge required that should include a good knowledge of the social/ geographic/ cultural environments of Trinidad and Tobago. A membership of perhaps 12, representing the following disciplines:

- Philosophy - universities, societies
- Theology - universities
- Health Sciences (human and animal) - universities, Ministry of Health, associations
- Life Sciences - universities, associations, academy of sciences
- Education - universities, Ministry of Education, TEST, MST
- NIHERST, COSTAATT
- Civil society - as current needs required – NGOs, CBOs
- Environment (earth sciences & agriculture) - universities, EMA, Ministry of Environment, Environmental NGO’s, IMA
- Social and human sciences - universities
- Bioethics/ ethics - universities, professional bodies, BSEC, ethics committees, experts
- Legal - law association, universities
- Religious perspectives

A system for recruiting the membership of the National Bioethics Committee could be made through open call, nomination by professional bodies, institutions, civil societies, with representation that should also cover gender, age, ethnicity, etc.

Nomination of the Chair by members of the Committee.

Tenure and rotation of membership that is staggered: three years, up to two (2) terms.

Sub-committee/ temporary committees (plural composition): nominated/ established by the National Bioethics Committee/ Council.

Secretariat: full time and supported secretariat. The committee/ council will require administrative assistance and funding.

Mandate/ Legislation – need for legal guidance re: name – commission, council, committee. Ensure the words “national” and “bioethics”.

Initially the commission/ council/ committee should be established through a decision of Cabinet on the recommendation of the President of the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO.
Subsequently, consideration should be made to having the commission/ council/ committee existence formalized through an Act of Parliament.
Conclusion

The outcome of the two (2) day Seminar, based on the presentations and discussions among the participants, was a consensus on the scope of work, the terms of reference and membership of the National Bioethics Committee.

The information emanating from the Seminar would be used to develop a Draft Cabinet Note for the establishment of a National Bioethics Committee.