

Bringing Mental Health Ethics into the Mainstream

The history of mental health care is scattered with the remnants of many experiences by consumers and family members that have proven to be dissatisfying and ethically questionable. Whether this has come about as a result of the desire to understand human psychology, to advance the scientific study of the human brain, to undertake experiments on human subjects or to diminish the pain and suffering of the mentally ill is not important. As we reflect back it is clear that some of these experiences were bold but naïve science, some were societal initiatives in response to socioeconomic woes and some were enlightened attempts to save the poor, the disowned, the disenfranchised, the impoverished and the socially disadvantaged. What is crucial, however, is whether we take advantage of the shortcomings of the past to ensure that mental health care, treatment, education and research of the present and future embrace approaches that are steeped in sound ethical principles and values

The first issue of the Journal of Ethics in Mental Health (JEMH) shone a light on the role of ethics as it is understood and practiced in various parts of the world. Building on the success of the Journal's inaugural conference, you were introduced to mental health ethics from theoretical, conceptual and legal perspectives and you were made aware of how practitioners approach ethical issues on a daily basis in different clinical settings. This was a good start. But there are many other mental health ethical issues to explore and numerous perspectives yet to be heard from all corners of the globe. This was only the beginning and JEMH's commitment is to bring these to you for your consideration, reflection and comment. By doing so, we are convinced that the Journal will increasingly contribute value to mental health practice, to mental health research and to educational and training environments.

After the publication of the first issue of our Journal, we received numerous satisfying comments and reviews. For example, we heard statements such as: "fabulous issue"; "articles very well chosen"; "JEMH fills an important niche"; "quite impressive"; "I am pleased that you wish to provide a forum for consumers to voice concerns"; "great to see...refreshing, enjoyable and informative"; and more. Most important, the dialogues and debates of ethical issues in mental health have begun and the exchange of ideas has been most encouraging. So, please do not hesitate to contribute by offering your views or submitting an article.

We are pleased to announce that the guest editor for the November 2007 issue of JEMH will be Walter Glannon PhD, Canada Research Chair in Medical and Ethical Theory, at the University of Calgary, Canada. The theme of the issue will be neurodiversity. To quote Dr. Glannon, "The neurological and mental traits that regulate our thought and behaviour fall along a spectrum that extends from "normal" to "pathological." Yet many people have a constellation of both normal and pathological mental traits. Some even have traits associated with exceptional intellectual or artistic ability despite being diagnosed with a mental disorder. These cases raise ethical questions about which neurological and psychiatric conditions should be diagnosed as mental disorders or pathologies, and whether it is in one's best interests to be treated for these conditions. Recognition of neurodiversity may also have ethical implications in reducing the stigma attached to mental illness."

I trust you will enjoy the current edition of the Journal as we present new perspectives in ethics and mental health.

Ron Ballantyne MSW MBA
 Managing Editor
 e-mail: BallantyneRon@rogers.com