

ACTIVITIES REPORT

Joint meeting with the Forum for Public Governance on the doctor–patient relationship, Nehru Centre, Mumbai, June 22, 2003

The speakers from the Forum for Medical Ethics Society (FMES) at this meeting included Sanjay Nagral and Sunil Pandya.

Gender and medical education, Thiruvananthapuram, July 24–25, 2003

A two-day workshop was held at the Achutha Menon Centre of the Sri Chitra Tirunal Institute at Thiruvananthapuram to discuss papers that critically reviewed medical textbooks on various disciplines from the gender perspective. Sanjay Nagral presented a paper that critically reviewed surgical textbooks.

Workshop on health care ethics at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, August 9–10, 2003

The Forum for Medical Ethics Society organised a two-day workshop for students of health and hospital administration. The issues discussed included dual loyalty, medicolegal aspects of health care provision, ethical issues in organ transplantation, the constitution and functioning of ethics committees, ethical issues in drug promotion and ethical issues facing the public health system. This was followed by group sessions to discuss case studies. The speakers included Amar Jesani, Sanjay Nagral, Monica Sakhrani, Nobhojit Roy, Sunil Pandya, Neha Madhiwalla and Sandhya Srinivasan.

Second symposium and workshop on ethical issues in health research in developing countries, organised by the Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan, August 14–18, 2003

Amar Jesani made two presentations in the symposium, one on research in developing countries: who

sets priorities and how, and the other on ethics in social science research in developing countries. The journal *Issues in Medical Ethics* was introduced to over 200 participants and some sample copies were distributed. Dr Jesani also facilitated some of the workshops and participated in the panel discussion.

National seminar on drug promotion: practices, policy and recommendations, YMCA, Mumbai Central, September 6, 2003

This meeting was convened to discuss the findings of the FMES study on drug promotion practices. Representatives and experts from WHO-SEARO, WHO-India, the state drug control authorities, the pharmaceutical industry, the medical fraternity and other national and international organisations concerned with drug promotion attended the seminar. Nobhojit Roy presented the findings of the study. A discussion was held on policy recommendations based on findings of the study. Medical students from all over India participated in the discussion.

Meeting on all-India drug action, YMCA, Mumbai Central, September 7, 2003

This meeting was organised to rejuvenate drug action on several issues, discuss the organisational aspects and have the participants pledge commitments. It was also hoped that this would foster a new generation of drug advocates to take up issues related to a new drug. Participants included members of FMES, research institutions, and organisations working on health and drug policy.

Annual general body meeting of the FMES, YMCA, Mumbai Central, September 7, 2003

Among the issues discussed at this meeting was the need to raise funds for the activities of the Society and increase the journal's subscription base.

Students in waiting?

The cover picture shows medical college applicants and their parents resting after a demonstration outside St George's Hospital, Mumbai. The sharp hike in fees for those applying under the government quota for private medical colleges, implementing a Supreme Court judgment, has led to protests, boycotts and cases in the High Court and Supreme Court. In October 2002, a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court ruled against having different fees for 'free' and 'payment' seats in professional colleges in India. Annual fees collected by private medical colleges in Maharashtra alone would have gone up from Rs 21 crore to Rs 60.8 crore as all students would have to pay Rs 3.80 lakh annually. In Maharashtra, admissions were halted following protests and hectic political lobbying. Alternative formulas have been proposed by the government and private medical colleges with varying quotas for 'merit', 'backward class' and 'management', for which the fees range from Rs 15,000 to Rs 7.5 lakh depending on the formula. On September 25, the Supreme Court rejected the government's formula but directed that admission be completed according to MCI's schedule. The MCI deadline for admissions is September 30.