Three and a half years ago, I accepted an invitation to start a bioethics research institute at the University of St. Michael’s College that would offer guidance to Canadians facing ethical questions in health care. Since opening in November 2001, the CCBI has sought to “promote and protect the dignity of the human person” by creating structures to support regular discussion and collaboration among Catholic bioethicists, educators, health care, pastoral care, and family care givers.

In this service to the church and to the world, the CCBI has been inspired by the exhortation in 1 Peter 3:15: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience….”

During the past three years, the community of scholars and care givers associated with the CCBI has grappled with some of the most contentious ethical issues of our day, such as human embryonic stem cell research, predictive testing in clinical genetics, and artificial nutrition and hydration or tube-feeding. The CCBI has tried also to address issues that are not often discussed in the media, such as the care of the frail elderly, and the impact of globalization on health care.

The research collaborations have borne fruit in publications and presentations by the CCBI. As we look to the future, there are many signs of hope. Dr. Moira McQueen, a theologian with a background in law, will continue the mission of the CCBI. I hope that you will support her in her efforts as you have supported me.

I wish to express my gratitude to Cardinal Ambrozic and the Board of CCBI for their guidance and encouragement during the past three years. My thanks go also to the Advisory Committee and to the staff of the CCBI, as well as to many supporters across Canada who have given their time and prayers to make the CCBI a reality. May the Lord bless and keep you.

William F. Sullivan, MD CCFP PhD
Welcome from the new CCBI Director

Greetings everyone! My name is Moira McQueen, and I am delighted to have been appointed the incoming Director of the CCBI. I’m sure it will be a challenge to guide the Institute in its next phase, and I am looking forward to meeting and working with all of you who support it in so many different ways.

I have a doctorate in Christian ethics (moral theology) from the University of St. Michael’s College, where I will continue to teach courses in the Faculty of Theology. I have been involved in various areas of bioethics all of my adult life, based on the conviction that Christians have an important and necessary role to play in shaping a society that will respect the life and dignity of every human being from conception until death. The CCBI has been extremely active in fostering this vision under Dr. Bill Sullivan, and I plan to continue this approach.

Please feel free to contact me with any of your questions, concerns, or suggestions that would help the CCBI to further its mission of research and education that will be of service to our Catholic communities and society at large.

Moira McQueen PhD

Board Member Receives Bioethics Award

Barry Brown, Professor Emeritus of the Department of Philosophy, St. Michael’s College, and CCBI Board Member, has received the 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Human Research Protection. The award, given by the Health Improvement Institute of Bethesda, Maryland, recognizes Dr. Brown’s outstanding contribution as a professional ethicist.

Thanks to our Volunteers!

The attentive eye and good grammar sense of Dr. Danny Monsour are indispensable for ensuring the quality of the CCBI’s publications. With her talent for organization, Rose Maggisano has helped the CCBI to keep in touch with its supporters.

Dr. Sullivan granted Papal Cross

On June 1, 2004, Dr. Sullivan was granted the Cross pro Ecclesia et Pontifice (for the Church and the Pope) for his outstanding work on behalf of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute. The Cross pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, is bestowed by Popes as a significant honour for service to the Church.
Colloquia Series

The focus of the CCBI research programme in 2003-2004 was care of the frail elderly. The CCBI held colloquia one Saturday a month, to review and discuss several aspects of this increasingly important issue in bioethics. The participants in the colloquia collectively covered the fields of business, molecular genetics, neuroscience, geriatrics, family medicine, neurology, cardiology, radiology, palliative care, nursing, clinical ethics, social work, pastoral care, philosophy, and theology.

Many thanks to those who made presentations and those who participated in the discussions:

Fr. Robert Allore; Kate Arthur; Una Blenkinsop; Joseph Boyle; Barry Brown; Irene Campbell-Taylor; Luigi Castagna; Julia Cataudella; Fr. Joseph Chandrakanthan; Eoin Connolly; Christine Cserti; Barrie de Veber; Rory Fisher; Calista Francis; Ken Fung; Diane Godkin; Erin Harris; John Heng; Fr. James Huth; Jo-Anne Jackson-Thorne; Margaret Ann Jacobs; Christine Jamieson; Maureen Kelly; Jaro Kotalik; Renata Leong; Sr. Rosemary MacDonald; Hazel Markwell; Fabiano Micoli; Barb Mildon; William Molloy; Juan Carlos Monge; Patricia Murphy; Anna Muto; Fr. Robert O’Brien; Fr. Kevin O’Rourke; Elizabeth Podnieks; Sr. Mary Rowell; Alex Schadenberg; Wedigo Graf von Schweinitz; John Shea; Rosanne Sogan; William Sullivan; Konrad Szymanski; Richard Theivendra; Todd Thibeau; Fr. Guy Trudel; Michael Vertin; Sr. Bernadette Ward; Mary Jane Yaeger; Catherine Yu; Marisa Zorzitto.

A research meeting was held in conjunction with the Joint conference of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (ASBH) and the Canadian Bioethics Society (CBS) in Montréal on October 23.

Annual Lecture

Fr. Kevin O’Rourke, O.P. of the Neiswanger Institute of Ethics and Public Policy, Loyola University, Chicago, delivered the Third Annual Connie Heng Memorial Lecture in Bioethics on November 14. The topic was artificial nutrition and hydration. Dr. Rory Fisher, a geriatrician, Dr. Luigi Castagna, a neurologist, and Fr. Tom Lynch, a moral theologian, initiated a lively discussion after the lecture.

Quodlibet 2004: CCBI’s Think Tank

The CCBI brought together thirty experts from various fields from June 14-17, 2004, to identify and discuss some issues concerning artificial nutrition and hydration (ANH) for the frail elderly. The aim was to be of service to those who are grappling with decisions or policies about ANH. An important context for this colloquium was the speech made by Pope John Paul II to participants in an international congress on ‘Life-Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State’ in Rome on March 20, 2004. In his speech, the Pope presented some general moral considerations and addressed a particular medical condition called persistent ‘vegetative’ state or post-coma unresponsiveness. The participants in the Toronto colloquium discussed the significance and implications of the papal speech for intervening in medical conditions affecting the elderly in which ANH is most commonly used. Such conditions include stroke, Alzheimer disease, Parkinson disease, and cancers of the head and neck. From these discussions, participants agreed to issue a statement entitled, “Reflections on Artificial Nutrition and Hydration.” This statement is posted on the CCBI website, and will be published in the Winter 2004 edition of The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly, with an introductory essay by William Sullivan and John Heng.

“The Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute has accomplished a great deal in its recent think tank that focused on the Papal speech. We are all in your debt, in particular for bringing together prominent Catholic bioethicists who have differing views on this issue, for conducting the session so well so that they all left as friends, and for achieving the agreed upon statement. Many, many thanks for all of that.”

Dr. Bernadette Tobin, Plunkett Centre for Bioethics, Sydney, Australia
Education

Dr. William Sullivan travels to Rome

Dr. William Sullivan was invited to speak about adolescents and health education at the “Prospects of Personalism in Bioethics” conference held in Rome in June. The conference was sponsored by the International Federation of Bioethics Centers and Institutes of Personalist Inspiration (FIBIP).

For additional information, contact the CCBI.

Calgary Presentations

Dr. William Sullivan and Professor John Heng were invited to give a presentation on spiritual assessment, ethics, and end-of-life care at a conference in May 2004, that was co-sponsored by the Diocese of Calgary and the Calgary Catholic Doctors’ Guild. They also presented a paper at the University of Calgary Faculty of Medicine’s North American Multidisciplinary Conference on Spirituality and Health.

Educators visit CCBI

Michael Stebbins of Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington, and Christine Jamieson of Concordia University, Montréal, visited the CCBI in August. Both were in Toronto to give papers at the second International Lonergan Workshop. Dr. Stebbins spoke about embryonic stem cell research and Dr. Jamieson spoke, in part, about society’s attitudes towards death and dying.

Upcoming Events

September 10, 2004
The Second Annual Summer Social Event will be held at the Royal Canadian Yacht Club. Organized by the Canadian Association of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and the St. Joseph Moscati Toronto Catholic Doctors’ Guild, the net proceeds will be donated to the CCBI. There is still time to purchase tickets. Please call Jo-Anne Jackson-Thorne at 416-926-2335.

October 1, 2004
Centre for Clinical Ethics (St. Michael’s Hospital; St. Joseph’s Health Centre; Providence Centre)
Affirming an Ethic of Care: Care of the Caregiver
(Call 416-530-6750 for further information)

October 15 - 16, 2004
Association of Christian Therapists’ Symposium
Spiritual Issues in Mental Health

November 5, 2004
CCBI 4th Connie Heng Memorial Lecture in Bioethics
Most Reverend Ronald P. Fabbro, Bishop of London
The Ethics of Using Embryonic Stem Cells

November 13, 2004
St. Joseph Moscati Toronto Catholic Doctors’ Guild
Annual Lecture and Mass

The national associations of the Order of Malta have agreed to fund a secretariat that will guide the process of establishing an international association of Catholic bioethicists and maintain this association after it has been established. The idea for such an association emerged from an international colloquium held in Toronto in 2003, which was co-sponsored by the CCBI and the Canadian Association of the Order of Malta. Théodore Arcand, president of the Canadian Association, will act as the founding Chair of the Board of Directors of this new organization. Dr. William Sullivan has accepted the invitation, conveyed by the Grand Hospitaller of the Order of Malta, to be the founding director. It is hoped that the new association will be a source of support and service to all Catholic bioethicists.