

THE WORLD CONGRESS OF BIOETHICS

Health for all in an Unequal World: What is the Role of Bioethics?

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The fourteenth world congress on bioethics, envisaged for 5-7 December 2018 in Bangalore in India, will have as its subject: 'Health for all in an Unequal World: the Obligations of Global Bioethics'. This congress will be held at the St. John's National Academy of the Health Sciences in Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. Bengaluru is known as a leading city in information technology and is seen as the Silicon Valley of India.

The world congress on bioethics, organised by the International Bioethics Association (IAB), was held for the first time in 1992 (in Amsterdam) to facilitate contacts and the exchange of information amongst those who study bioethics in various parts of the world; to organise and promote international conferences on bioethics; to encourage the development of research and the teaching of bioethics; and to assure the value of free, open and informed discussion of these questions and issues. The objective remains that of pursuing these objectives by creating opportunities and spaces for bioethicists, so that they meet each other, connect with each other, and exchange ideas, in particular during the two-yearly world congresses.

In the year 2018 we are celebrating the seventieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations which laid the bases for the highest standards of health possible. In addition, this year marks the fortieth anniversary of the Declaration of Alma Mata which established a utopian goal for the whole of humanity with its promise of 'health for all' by the year 2000. More recently, the Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) launched an appeal for *universal coverage for health*, calling attention to the problems of fairness and research in health-care systems.

The subject of this year's world congress seeks to strengthen bioethics in the context of health for all, providing a relevant and critical platform for the progress of analyses in bioethics, as well as political strategies, programmes, and directions at a regional and global level. It is hoped that this subject will facilitate inter-sectorial and multidisciplinary discussion on ethics and health derived from various philosophical traditions, approaches and perspectives.

The five sub-subjects are the following: taking rights and ethics to the centre in the approach of 'health for all'; thinking anew about the limits of bioethics in the context of 'health for all'; the challenges for bioethics in an unequal world; the implications of gender and sexuality in bioethics; and the obligations of bioethics in the face of marginalisation and vulnerability.

Despite important advances in research and health, hitherto we have still not been able to achieve fair health-care systems. Global bioethics must address health-care inequality in a world that is interconnected but profoundly unfair and unjust. We are witnessing the rapid and 'powerful' emergence of the private sector of 'health-care companies', on the one hand, and conditions of health that require urgent investments in research, on the other. At the same time, we can observe increasing inequalities in the state of health of the populations of the planet, an increase in conflicts, episodes linked to natural disasters, and adverse economic situations, which directly influence the purchasing power of ordinary people.

Inequality in access to health care remains a thorny problem throughout the world. In this context, bioethicists must learn to strengthen study in the field of research as 'justice' and 'solidarity' in order to have a better future, with guarantees for the health of everyone!