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HMS Center for Bioethics celebrates opening

By STEPHANIE DUTCHEN

September 12, 2014

As medicine, biotechnology and health care policy continue to evolve at a staggering pace, how can clinicians most effectively and compassionately navigate the moral, ethical and social issues involved in patient care?

In May 2014, the Division of Medical Ethics at Harvard Medical School [was transformed into the Center for Bioethics](#) to raise visibility, build community and deepen discussion of these kinds of bioethics topics across Harvard University and HMS affiliates.

On Sept. 4, the center celebrated with a reception and series of presentations in the Waterhouse Room in Gordon Hall.

"I have a great personal and deep regard for the field of bioethics and the critical role it plays in medicine, research, public policy and philosophy," Jeffrey S. Flier, dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Harvard University, said at the event.

"My idea is that five to 10 years from now, this center will be viewed as the preeminent program contributing to the educational, clinical and academic aspects of this burgeoning field. I have no doubt it will be recognized not only locally but nationally and internationally," he said.

"We are building upon a solid foundation that's been in place for more than 25 years. This is the next iteration," said [Robert Truog](#), director of the Center for Bioethics and the HMS Frances Glessner Lee Professor of Medical Ethics, Anaesthesia and Pediatrics at Boston Children's Hospital.

"I've known that we've been part of a big community for a long time," Truog added. "I feel like I've grown up with a lot of the attendees here today. It's a little bit like having a birthday party where all your friends suddenly show up."

Among those attendees were former Division of Medical Ethics directors Dan Brock and Allan Brandt.

"This is a great moment for the development of research and teaching in



Robert Truog. Image: Igor Shraybman

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ethics at HMS," said [Brandt](#), who is now the Amalie Moses Kass Professor of the History of Medicine. "I'm thrilled to see the evolution of the center, and I think Bob will be a great leader of a program that will touch everything, including the hospitals and the Quad."

"We're delighted to be here," said [Christine Mitchell](#), executive director of the center.

"We want to raise up a generation of leaders in bioethics," she continued. "We want to engage locally, to strengthen and support the ethics activities across the University and at the affiliated teaching hospitals and institutions. We also want to engage nationally and internationally in the public domain to help people understand what ethical issues they'll be facing, from end-of-life care, to genomics, to all the new brain science questions that are arriving, to issues related to big data."



Mitchell, left, with Nancy Tarbell, HMS dean for academic and clinical affairs. Image: Igor Shraybman

"One of the areas we hope to grow into is ethical issues in the neurosciences, called neuroethics," Truog agreed. "I think this is going to be one of the really exciting areas in the next 10 years."

Center leaders also said they look forward to deeper connections with medical education at HMS. That includes helping revise the Program in Medical Education curriculum so that it weaves medical ethics and professionalism training through all four years.

"The creation of the center has already given new energy to ways to link our hospital-based faculty to the student curriculum and make the teaching even more relevant and at the cutting edge of emerging ethical issues," said [Edward Hunder](#), associate director of the center, professor in residence of Global Health and Social Medicine and incoming dean for medical education at HMS.

"It's a synergistic moment for the curriculum and for the center," he said.

Comments

Comments

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- sharon kleefiel...** This is an important effort, to connect bioethics to medical education, providing students time to consider the values of their profession and the complexities in patient care as research moves forward. I look forward to participating in this effort.
15 Sep 2014 12:36 pm

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