

EDITORIAL:

BIOETHICS AT THE INTERSECTION OF A COMPLEX NEW REALITY

Assist. Prof. MARIA ALUAŞ PhD

Bioethics is a broadly interdisciplinary field of inquiry concerning the application of the biomedical sciences to health and life, at the intersection of several disciplines, such as medicine, biology, ethics, philosophy, theology and law. But even sociology, psychology, or psychoanalysis are also involved.

In 1970, the American oncologist Van Rensselaer Potter, in the article entitled *Bioethics, the science of survival*, resumed a year later, in his book, *Bioethics: bridge to the future*, ascertained an extraordinary development of the scientific knowledge, especially those of biology, on the one hand, and on the other, a delay of the theoretical thinking necessary for the use of these ones, thus proposing a new science – the science of survival – based on the alliance between biological knowledge („bio”) and the one of the human values („ethics”). The domain of bioethics, according to Potter, had to include all the relative dimensions to the survival of the human species and the planet, like: the control of the population, peace, poverty, ecology, animal life, the welfare of the humanity etc.

According to N. Lenoir and B. Mathieu, „bioethics refers to the rules of behavior which a society establishes for itself in order to face the difficulties or the dilemmas born out of the progress of life’s sciences”¹. The Oviedo Convention of the Council of Europe named *The Convention Regarding Human Rights and Biomedicine* (4th of April 1997), offers bioethics a definition, associating with it the human rights: „the protection of human rights and the

¹ N. Lenoir, B. Mathieu, *Les normes internationales de la bioethique*, PUF, coll. „Que sais-je?”, no. 3356, 1998.

dignity of the human being against the new applications of biology and medicine”².

At present, Bioethics topics concern medical and research activities who use the elements of the human body. For example: organs swab, tissue, bone marrow; medical assistance to procreation, referring to egg and sperm donation; the embryo and embryonic cells research; and the detection of genetic diseases.

As stakes, Bioethics wants to answer in a better way to the issues of scientific and technical progress, concerning our society(s) values and to ensure respect for human dignity and protection for the most vulnerables from all forms of exploitation.

This issue of our publication gives you a brief overview of how bioethical reflexion in the medical research area, including even some analyses of cases in the Eastern Europe countries. Also, papers present medical or technological advances that have influenced current debate, and mention of particularly significant bioethics writings in the area. From history of medicine end research methodology to animal protection and welfare, studies involve ethical issues in drug prescribing practices, ethical approaches in research practice, ethical aspects of using biospecimens in research, ethical issues in research, but also the meanings of the concept of person and two papers on Roma populations issues in some countries in Eastern Europe.

The characteristic of the current issue is the following one: the most of part of authors are involved in the Fogarty International Program in Research Ethics Education in the Balkans and Black Sea Countries, a program for researchers in the Balkans and Black Sea countries, financed by the US government. The project combines the resources of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (New Yourk, US) and regional institutions to advance the development of research ethics and infrastructure in South-Eastern Europe. The educational program is for clinicians, biomedical researchers, and other professionals from the region. The syllabus of the program is designed to develop expertise in research ethics. During classes and modules, students are involved in debates, cases analyse, discussion and interaction on topics

² *The Convention Regarding Human Rights and Biomedicine* (4th of April 1997), <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/164.htm>, last accessed 25th April 2013.

like: history of research ethics and critical assessment of codes; methods of research; responsible conduct of research; the ethics of science; introduction to the ethics of medicine; basic concepts in research ethics; populations and regulations in research ethics; the ethics of international and public health research; teaching research ethics; the organization and conduct of an institutional review board.

Topics are new and interesting for students in Eastern Europe countries, because they did not followed a very systematic program in biomedical ethics, in research ethics, or medical ethics. Being involved for over 2 years in this program they could learn, understand, assess, communicate and share their opinions, solutions and propositions of this new and challenging area of research.

