

Ebate- The Ethical Debate

Ebate- the ethical debate was an event organised by the student wing members of GSMC- MUHS- UNESCO Bioethics Unit on 16th Sept 2016 as a part of World Bioethics Day celebrations.

A total of 12 teams (each team comprising of two students) from M.B.B.S., Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy participated with great enthusiasm and fervour taking a stand on ethical dilemmas in the medical world.

Our Dean and Director, **Dr. Avinash Supe** graced the occasion by his presence and an encouraging speech to the participants and the student audience.

Dr. Santosh Salagre, Head of Bioethics Unit at Seth GSMC and KEM Hospital, Mumbai gave a brief presentation on bioethics, past activities at KEM and the future plans of the unit.

For the ebate we invited the following judges,

1. Dr. Sandhya Kamat – Professor, Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics at Seth G.S. Medical College and KEM Hospital, Mumbai.
2. Ms. Veena Johari - Legal expert and Bioethicist.

3. Dr. Anuradha Kanhere – Professor and Head of Biochemistry, T.N.M.C. and B.Y.L. Nair Hospital, Mumbai.

The hall was filled by approximately 100 students from medical school, nursing school, physiotherapy and occupational therapy along with 10 faculties from different disciplines.

The following were the topics for debate in the elimination and in the final rounds,

Elimination Round

1. Prisoners in research.
2. Be it resolved that -Should Medical Termination of Pregnancy be practiced after 20 weeks.
3. Free health care for all in India.
4. Should doctors be out of the purview of Consumer Protection Act?
5. Frivolous patenting of life saving drugs - should it be banned.
6. Is obesity tax a Panacea against chronic disease.

Final Round Topics

1. Be it resolved that - Moving towards compulsory organ donation -a move in the right direction.

2. Be it resolved that - Should medical Marijuana be permitted.

The debate started with arguing on 'prisoners in clinical trials' where both teams valiantly defended their stands stating that on one hand it would lead to rapid scientific progress while on the other it will be a violation of the prisoners autonomy, emotions and human rights. The judges opined that it will indeed be an insurgency on the prisoners' vulnerability, emphasizing on their choice to decide. This was followed by raising the issue of 'legalizing medical termination of pregnancy beyond the stipulated 20 weeks-in India' which brought forth a humanitarian approach on one side, stating parents should be given more time after 20 weeks where the abnormalities are detected to decide the course without emotional conflicts, while playing on the emotional issue of the fact of ending a child's life on the other-side. The judges emphasized on the legalities of the matter and freedom of choice of the mother and parents in the matter.

The argument on 'free healthcare for all' reiterated the following biological values of non-maleficence, beneficence, non-discrimination and autonomy but with it may compromise the quality of care and may

prove deficient in catering to the poor. The dilemma of 'including doctors under consumer protection act' equated doctors with shopkeepers on one side while stating that it may force them to act ethically on the other. The judges compelled by both side's arguments stated there was already a law in place holding doctors responsible for any negligence. The issue of 'frivolous patenting of life saving drugs' brought to the fore the debate of its ill effect on developing countries i.e. their difficulty in obtaining the drugs if they are patented due to higher costs, while on the other hand if they are banned then it will be a disregard to the efforts put in by the researchers. The judges however felt that with a proper set of rules in place a number of complications can be simply avoided. The elimination rounds ended with a debate on 'whether obesity tax is a panacea against chronic diseases' where one side voiced that taxing food products was taking away the focus away from exercising and consuming healthy diet, while the other side said that the revenue obtained might be used to create awareness of the same.

The finals saw the teams debating on 'legalization of medical marijuana' and 'making organ donation compulsory- a move in the right direction'. The teams argued that to avoid the ill effects of marijuana we can go for alternative medicines which have lesser

dependency and ill effects. The teams in favour of the medical marijuana stated the various benefits of marijuana (analgesic, ant-emetic), the cheaper cost of this drug to promote its medical use. The final debate team vocalised that making organ donation a compulsion is taking away the right to autonomy as against if it were made compulsory, the ever increasing demands of the kidney, liver and other organs would get solved and benefit mankind.

In the end after a mind boggling discussion the judges declared **Ms Poorva Dige** and **Ms Vaishnavi Hazare** as winners and **Mr Preet Shah** and **Mr. Sushmit Ashya** as runner-ups. **Mr. _____** received the best speaker award.

The arguments put forward by all the teams certainly challenged the ethical beliefs of all present, compelling them to put their thinking hats on but stressing upon the motto of the ebate-

‘Raise your arguments not your voice.’
