

Sempozyum Tanıtımı Conference Review

Mapping Out an Islamic Bioethics: An Intensive Workshop (1-3 August 2014)

Bioethics is a multidisciplinary field study that is concerned with the application of moral principles in the conduct and development of biomedical technologies and health policy. Due to rapid advances in science and technology, fundamental questions about human life and wide-ranging ethical issues have been raised in bioethical discussions on topics, such as euthanasia, abortion, human cloning, genetic, organ transplant, brain death, etc. Islamic bioethics, as a recently emerging field, inquiries into these issues from a multicultural and theological perspective. One of the main aims of Islamic bioethics is to collaborate with international medical and scientific organizations to evaluate developments in the field of bioethics, and to apply the principles of Islamic jurisprudence to support informed decision making in Muslim communities.

A 3-day workshop entitled “Mapping out an Islamic Bioethics” was hosted by the Initiative on Islam and Medicine (IIM) within the Program on Medicine and Religion and the Maclean Center for Clinical Medical Ethics at the University of Chicago, and co-sponsored by the American Islamic College. The workshop is the first event of its kind organized by IIM, and will continue every summer with seminars on topics of special interest in Islamic bioethics. The workshop addressed the broad structure of Islamic ethical thinking, with an in-depth introduction to the field, giving conceptual literacy in Islamic bioethics. A diverse cohort of doctors, nurses, policy-makers, hospital

chaplains, academic researchers, bioethicists and Islamic scholars came together to understand the general framework of Islamic bioethics and to grapple with some of the most important bioethical issues of concern to Muslims today. The workshop revolved around plenary lectures on key concepts in Islamic jurisprudence and included information about the development of fatwas (legal opinions) and the implementation of health policy on the actual experiences of Muslims in Iran and Oman. The discussions sessions that followed each plenary lecture allowed participants to ask questions and engage in rich conversation.

Conceptual clarity is important for ensuring that all stakeholders define and interpret terms in Islamic bioethics in the same way. Unfortunately, there is no clarity about what is “Islamic” in bioethical issues. For this reason, after a lively and informative opening session, Dr. Aasim Padela, Director of the Initiative on Islam and Medicine, began the workshop by explaining the actors and materials of Islamic bioethics, and describing the diversity of disciplinary experts and the literature produced on Islamic bioethics. After identifying major sources and repositories for Islamic bioethics, Dr. Padela switched from practical knowledge to theoretical knowledge in his second presentation. To provide conceptual clarity he asked some important questions, such as what makes something Islamic? What should be Islamic? What are the major sources of Islamic morality and how do they relate to an Islamic bioethics discourse? According to Dr. Padela, source and signification are two important elements for Islamic discourse. Another of the key points he made during his lecture was a distinction between Islamic bioethics and Muslim bioethics. Speaking in the afternoon, Dr. Daniel Sulmasy, Director of the Program on Medicine and Religion, gave an overview medical ethics methodology. Dr. Sulmasy emphasized the variations of empirical and theoretical methods in medical ethics. At the end of the day, Dr. Padela and Dr. Faisal Qazi explained some case studies to emphasize Islamic ethical obligations and the Islamic perspective on brain death.

The second day of the workshop provided the audience with a close examination of the Islamic tradition, which is necessary to understand Islamic bioethics, its doctrinal considerations and epistemology. Understanding the epistemology allows us to comprehend and rebuild the Islamic perspective, precepts, concepts and normative ethics in modern times. For this reason epistemology was the main focus of two presentations entitled “Islamic Ethics from Fiqh to Tasawwuf” by Issam Eido, and “The Tools of Islamic Ethical-legal Tradition (usul)” by Jawad Anwar Qureshi. According to Issam Eido Islamic, bioethics covers a range from “fiqh” to “tasawwuf”, meaning that

both the body and the heart's actions should be considered in medicine. Mohammed Amin Kholwadia also focused on epistemology and introduced in his presentation the Maturidi, one Islamic theology school. After the epistemology framework of normative ethics in Islamic law was covered, Elham Mireshgi and Ahmed Khitamy offered perspectives on the actual experiences of "Islamic" bioethics in Muslim societies. According to Elham Mireshgi, the example of paid organ donation in Iran demonstrate policy-oriented fatwas can assume an "abstract depersonalized subject, which can greatly influence the outcome of jurisprudential decrees." Ahmed Khitamy offered a historical perspective on the origins and development of bioethics in Oman, and the role of the National Committee for Bioethics in the development and implementation of health policy.

The last day of the workshop started with "A Foot in Both Worlds: Navigating between a Muslim Healing Ethos and Conventional Clinical Ethics" by Katherine Klima. She contrasted conventional concepts of clinical ethics withdrawing on her experience as a nurse-midwife. Dr. Padela gave the final presentation of workshop entitled "Researching and Reading Islamic Bioethics: Approaches and Limitations". In his lecture, Dr. Padela offered a conceptual review of Islamic bioethics discourse and described the criteria that make virtue ethics in Islam "Islamic". To deal with emerging issues in Islamic bioethics, fundamental concepts and guiding principles of Islamic jurisprudence should first be defined. These concepts and principles must be applied to the most critical bioethical issues facing Muslims.

This workshop provided conceptual literacy and the methodological tools to enable health care professionals, academics, and scholars to understand the doctrinal considerations of Islamic bioethics and engage in moral reasoning about clinical ethics cases. The workshop content included key concepts and a critical analysis of some Islamic bioethics issues. The diversity of the issues covered in workshop discussions increased awareness of concerns specific to Islamic bioethics and moving forward will enrich the discourse between interested stakeholders.

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