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| **12th Punjab Bioethics Group Meeting**  Shalamar Medical & Dental College, Lahore  Friday, December 9th 2022 |

# **Call to order**

The 12th meeting of **Punjab Bioethics Group** was held virtually at **Shalamar Medical & Dental College, Lahore** on Friday, December 9th 2022. The meeting was moderated by Dr. Sarosh Saleem and lasted two hours; & was attended by the following professionals from various institutes of Pakistan.

**Attendees included:**

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| Dr. Annum Ishtiaq Dr. Fareeha Farooq |
| Dr. Areeba Fatima, Dr. Noor I Kiran Naeem |
| Dr. Asifa Bhutto Dr. Shakeel Sheikh |
| Dr. Faheem, Dr. Naila Nizami, |
| Dr. Farkhanda Ghafoor Dr. Nuzhat Malik |
| Dr. Naseem Sallahudin Dr. Prem Kumar |
| Dr. Sarosh Saleem Dr. Mumtaz Lakhani |
| Dr. Shakeel Ahmed Dr. Farah Naz |
| Dr. Sharmeen Dr. Afifa Ehsan |
| Faiza Ahmed Farhat Saleem |
| Fatima Khalid Irfan Ahmed |
| Hadiqa Jaleel Hadi Faheem, |
| Kiran, Wajiha Aijaz |
| Maria Arshad Faheem Khan, |
| Marium Mehtab |
| Muniba, Sundas Iftikhar |
| Nasim Tariq Naeem Zafar |
| Nazish Khalid Lubna Riaz |
| Prof. Adeela Shahid Dr Unaisa Kazi |
| Sabrina Anum Azhar |
| Sania Murad Dr. Gul Afshan |
| Shazia Rasul Jafeera Arif |
| Sidra Saira |
| Ziarukh Jah Muhammad Shahid Saeed |

# **call to order**

Two cases were discussed. The participants engaged in the discussion with enthusiasm.

# **old business**

**Dr. Sharmeen, Indus hospital Manawan-Follow up on incest/abortion case**

Dr. Sharmeen reports that the patient is doing well psychologically and physically. She shared that we invited Dr. Naeem from “PEHCHAAN” to conduct a session on handling such situations and how to proceed. Advocate Ms. Anam told us how to request the court to direct authorities to impose protection for the victims. She said that she would like PBG members to help her take this forward. Participants agreed and Dr. Sarosh suggested that this should be implemented in all institutions. She also suggested that the initiative of a child protection policy should be implemented in every institute with a pediatrics department. And health care providers would also be trained to clinically identify and openly discuss such issues. Dr. Mumtaz appreciated the follow-up on the case and she volunteered that she wanted to contribute to the litigation, which is really necessary. Dr. Sarosh shared another case that was presented in an earlier PBG meeting by Dr. Noor-i- Kiran where she tackled the same case during her private clinical practice. Everyone agreed that mutual efforts to deal with such situations are required

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Dr. Iqra Aziz, SMDC- “Not all wounds are visible – Advocating for medical students and trainees”**

Dr Iqra shared empirical data of a qualitative study on mental health issues, and the challenges faced by medical students during COVID. She shared that she would like to take this initiative via the PBG platform, as she believes this platform is robust and competitive enough in this regard to need some practical steps. According to the study, students' lives were drastically affected during COVID due to disturbing experiences and other emotional, social, and economic issues. A significant number of students face academic and financial challenges. Society views these issues as less critical, and students avoid seeking help and disclosing their mental health problems. Social stigma prevents these things from being discussed and can often be viewed as an attention-seeking act since they are not perceived as true illnesses. Dr. Sarosh asked all about the changes they felt since the COVID pandemic. Dr. Sundus said that our culture is insensitive to such issues. Medical peers, although aware of all the facts, are not facilitating their PGs and colleagues to get trained and learn how to cope with it. Dr. Mumtaz recommended that each student be assigned a mentor to help them learn all these things and Ms. Naseem Rafiq concurred. Dr. Abeera shared her opinion that even if medical counselors counsel the students and provide them with support, the students still face the same issues when they return to their professors, so professors should also get trained. In Dr. Nuzhat's view, trainees and residents are too engrossed in theoretical studies and are too anxious to achieve high marks in exams. As a result, they rarely participate in other activities. They often view such activities as secondary. She shared that her institute “Indus” started a session “Dil ki batein” after one of the trainees suffered through a terrible loss of her loved ones which disturbed her emotionally so she took this initiative. In addition to appreciating the initiative, Dr. Sarosh encouraged other institutes to adopt the idea and all efforts must be made sustainable. Participants shared how western culture is so welcoming to a student's emotional state. If the student is suffering through a hard time he/she is allowed to leave the class. In addition, she pointed out that, as healthcare providers or educators when we discuss such traumatic experiences, even while teaching, we should be more sensitive. We should provide trigger warnings before addressing such topics.

Dr. Iqra gave some recommendations and suggested stigma-free mental health disorder services and training of service providers. Furthermore, she encouraged everyone to conduct research on this subject, which will provide an effective solution. Dr. Sarosh added that these facilities should be available in all medical institutes and for all students, faculties, and health care providers. She also encouraged others to take concrete steps and to take practical steps to resolve this issue. She thanked Ms Nasim for highlighting the challenges faced by nursing and allied healthcare providers and students and insisted that a conscious inclusion of all healthcare providers/students is necessary.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

* A subgroup of PBG including Dr. Sharmeen, Dr. Mumtaz, Dr. Noor I Kiran, and Advocate Anum will pursue the issues of abortion (in cases of incest or sexual abuse) in the law and clinical practice.
* Another subgroup including Dr. Iqra Aziz, Dr. Nuzhar Irfan Malik, and others will deliberate on developing awareness and resources for the well-being of students (medical, nursing, allied & other), and all healthcare providers.

**Suggestions:**

Participants were encouraged to bring ethical issues to the discussion table without any hesitation.

**Announcement:**

Bioethics Department, SMDC is offering a one-year Post-graduate Diploma in Healthcare Ethics & Professionalism. Flyer for the induction of the third batch is out. The course is approved by University of Health Sciences (UHS). Application Deadline is 15th Feb 2023. For details, please visit: <https://smdc.edu.pk/admissions-dhep/>

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned by the moderator Dr. Sarosh Saleem with thanks to all attendees for their support and encouragement. The date and timing of the next meeting will be held on 17th Feb 2023 at 9:30 am (online).

**Minutes recorded by:**

***Sadia Rehman Rao***