
28th Punjab Bioethics Group Meeting

SHALAMAR MEDICAL & DENTAL COLLEGE, LAHORE

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 05, 2025

CALL TO ORDER:

The 28th meeting of the **Punjab Bioethics Group** was held online on Friday, 5th September 2025, moderated by Ms. Amna Farooq. The meeting lasted for two hours and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved by the members. The meeting involved discussion of two cases and was attended by professionals from various institutes in Pakistan.

ATTENDEES INCLUDED:

Dr. Sarosh Saleem, Ms. Ayesha Liaqat, Dr. Raja Sajjad Asghar, Dr. Jamshed Akhtar, Dr. Abdul Razaque Sheikh, Ms. Nadia Saleem, Ms. Gulnaz Ahmad, Ms. Humera Yasin Butt, Ms. Mehtab Sikandar Khan, Ali, Ms. Areeba Ilyas, Dr. Faiza Ahmed, Dr. Asma Akhtar, Ms. Fozia Ali, Dr. Annum Ishtiaq, Dr. Marzia, Dr. Sadia, Dr. Mumtaz Lakhani, Dr. Nasim Tariq, Ms. Naima Zamir, Dr. Zahid Bashir, Dr. Saira Fatima, Dr. Ali Zafar, Dr. Fareeha Farooq, Mr. Raees Taqvi, Ms. Wajiha Aijaz, Ms. Amna Farooq.

AGENDA:

1. Dr. Jamshed Akhtar, Professor and Head of Department of Pediatric Surgery, Karachi discussed “**Refusal of DNA Test in Paternity Suit**”.
2. Dr. Annum Ishtiaq, Consultant Family Medicine & Palliative Medicine, Karachi, discussed “**Where is the Bioethics Literature from Pakistan?**”

DISCUSSION & SUGGESTIONS:

Case 1: Dr. Jamshed in his presentation discussed a Lahore High Court case where a petitioner sought a DNA test to establish paternity after long non-cohabitation. Despite the mother’s consent, all courts rejected the plea, emphasizing that DNA testing in civil matters cannot proceed without consent.

The presentation further explained the contrast between Natural Law, which upholds moral and ethical values, and Positive Law, based on legal authority and statutes. It was noted that the verdict aimed to protect human dignity, women’s honour, and family sanctity under Article 128 of the

Qanun-e-Shahadat Order, 1984. Comparative examples were discussed in meeting from Europe and the U.S that highlighted variations in handling paternity testing, showing differing balances between truth and morality.

The discussion focused on should the court allow a DNA test to determine paternity when both parents have given consent and what are the ethical and legal implications of DNA tests. Members discussed that DNA testing, though scientifically accurate, can cause psychological harm and social stigma for the child. The ruling by Supreme Court precedents prioritized the child's dignity, emotional well-being, and best interest over biological proof. It was also suggested that privacy and dignity of all individuals involved should be carefully preserved throughout the legal process.

Case 2: Dr. Annum's presentation titled "*Where is the Bioethics Literature from Pakistan?*" highlighted the lack of non-Western representation in global bioethics, which remains dominated by the Global North. Based on Jin and Hakkarinen's analysis of 800 top-cited articles, 96% originated from developed countries, while 80% of low- and middle-income countries, including Pakistan, had no contribution. The study reviewed research from 2010–2022 using "Pakmedinet" and categorized articles by ethical domain and evidence level.

Findings showed that most bioethics papers from Pakistan were short reports or editorials focused on ethical education, with little advancement in curriculum development. The presentation stressed that testimonial and hermeneutical injustices limit the inclusion of local ethical perspectives in global discussions. Members pointed towards overall lack of representation from low- and middle-income countries and dependence on Western frameworks.

RECOMMENDATION:

Case 1: The conclusion emphasized that in paternity cases, protecting human dignity and the child's best interest must take precedence over scientific proof. It was agreed that DNA testing should only be considered with full consent and within ethical and legal boundaries. The discussion concluded that privacy, moral values, and family sanctity should guide judicial decisions in such sensitive matters.

Case 2: The conclusion highlighted the urgent need to increase local representation in bioethics literature and reduce dependence on Western frameworks and perspectives. It was agreed that strengthening ethics departments and improving journal accreditation are the right steps for progress. Members emphasized promoting local research and creating journal sections dedicated to bioethics to encourage indigenous contributions.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned by the moderator Dr. Sarosh Saleem with thanks to all attendees for their support, encouragement, and valuable contributions. The next meeting is scheduled for November 07th, 2025, at 09:30 AM.

Minutes Recorded by

Ms. Huda Behzad