

## PILL's Global Ethics Learning Hub Takes an Important Step to Promote Bioethics Education and Training in Pakistan

The Global Ethics Learning Hub (GELH) group at Pakistan Institute of Living and Learning (PILL) organised a scoping event 'Developing a Bioethics Curriculum' at the National Centre for Research on Suicide Prevention, Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2023. The event was a collaborative initiative with National Centre for Research on Suicide Prevention, University College London (UCL), Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust, University of Manchester (UoM), University of Toronto (UoT), and Manchester Global Foundation (MGF). Participants included members of academia from medicine, public health, psychological sciences, gender studies, and public policy.

Dr Rakhshi Memon; GELH Chair; Research Fellow, Science Technology Engineering and Public Policy (STeAPP) at UCL; University Director MGF; and Senior Research Fellow at PILL, welcomed students, early career researchers, and representatives from Pakistan Armed Forces, National Defence University, Foundation University, Hometown Community Foundation (Pakistan Chapter), and National University of Modern Languages. The primary objective of the event was to conduct a needs assessment to lay the groundwork for a Bioethics master's program, which is culturally relevant for the context of Pakistan.

GELH's vision is to set up an infrastructure of ethical good practice which is harmonious and responsive to the cultural norms and values of Pakistan and serves as a vehicle of cascading learning internally within PILL as well as externally in Pakistan and globally. GELH'S membership is dedicated to upholding the principles of ethical integrity and good governance in research activities. At the scoping event, several critical topics on bioethics were addressed. Experts delved into the responsibilities of research ethics committees, emphasizing their role in safeguarding participant welfare and ensuring ethical research practices. The discussions revolved around ethical guidelines for collecting data, focusing on transparency, participant safety, and the potential of culturally relevant training curriculum programs in Pakistan.

Prof. Mowadat H. Rana, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, delivered a compelling talk on the importance of an inclusive research ethics model. Through the perspective of the innovative Honeybee/Theory of Change hybrid Research Model, he highlighted the challenges and opportunities to develop holistic participant centred guidelines for ethically relevant bioethics research. Chief Psychologist, PRP Dte, HSD, SPD, Col Dr Syed Sajjad Hussain, talked about tackling ethical issues at the root of the problem. He affirmed that the fundamentals of the ethics conceptual framework are key to upholding the highest standards of ethical research practices. Prof. Sarah Edwards, Professor of Bioethics, STeAPP at UCL, shared her insight on the significant role of bioethics in the study of global health. She discussed cultural differences and the importance of having these critical conversations as researchers, in order to identify common ground as the basis of cross-cultural collaboration.

Dr. Aneela Maqsood, Associate Professor of Behavioral Sciences at FJWU, shed light on the institutional perspective of ethical considerations in data collection. She emphasized respecting participants' autonomy, informed consent, confidentiality, dignity and privacy. In addition, PILL Assistant Director Ethics and Governance, Ms. Muqaddas Asif and PILL Assistant Director Research and Dissemination, Mr. Ameer B Khoso provided an overview of the inception of GELH, emphasizing its mission to promote ethical research practices and

good governance. They shared insights into the core principles and activities of GELH and its role in supporting researchers and institutions in sustaining ethical standards in research.

Former State Minister of Health, Dr. Zafar Mirza who also joined the event remotely, offered concluding remarks while highlighting the pressing need and immense potential for a collaborative Bioethics curriculum in Pakistan. The event encouraged knowledge exchange and opportunities for collaboration among researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Participants shared best practices, experiences, and challenges related to ethical research conduct.

Dr. Rakhshi Memon expressed her appreciation for the active participation and insightful discussions during the event. She reiterated GELH's commitment to providing guidance, support, and education to researchers, promoting ethical integrity, and preserving the highest standards of bioethics. The afternoon concluded with participants completing a needs assessment survey which will guide the development of a Bioethics curriculum for the research capacity building of students and early career researchers in the field.

