



B.S.E.C.

BIOETHICS SOCIETY OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN

CELEBRATING

20
Years

2006 - 2026

Promoting Bioethics
in the Caribbean -
Twenty and Counting.....

Bioethics Caribe Newsletter

ANNIVERSARY NEWSLETTER
SPECIAL EDITION 2026



www.bioethicscaribe.com

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| | Page |
|--|-------------|
| Letter from the Editor | 3 |
| Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean (BSEC) Executive Committee | 4 |
| BSEC Twenty Good Years and Counting... | 5 |
| Tenure of the Founding President, Dr. Derrick Aarons, 2006 - 2010 | 6 |
| 20-Years of BSEC: Reflections from its 2nd President | 8 |
| A Journey in Bioethics: Reflection and Commitment | 10 |
| Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean – A Positive Force Majeure | 11 |
| My Tenure as President (2021–2023) | 12 |
| BSEC’s Immediate Past President | 14 |
| Reflecting through the Past 20 Years | 15 |
| Tribute to the BSEC in its 20th Anniversary | 21 |
| Global Environmental Change and the Value of Resilience for Caribbean Countries | 23 |
| Building Clinical Ethics Capacity in Caribbean Healthcare Systems: A Regional Opportunity for Education, Support, and Professional Development | 25 |
| Bioethics Society of English-Speaking Caribbean Newsletter: A Thematic Lens | 26 |

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LETTER *from* THE EDITOR



Dear Colleagues, Members, and Friends,

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to explore the latest edition of the Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean (BSEC) Newsletter. This edition “Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....” is indeed a special edition since it commemorates the 20th anniversary of BSEC. Looking back over the years, illustrates not only how far BSEC has come but also provides impetus to navigate for future bioethical challenges in the Caribbean with resilience and humility.

Over the past 20 years, BSEC has not only empowered individuals but also communities, healthcare and education systems in the Caribbean through its newsletters, workshops and annual forums. These activities were a result of evidence-based research, brainstorming and culturally grounded discourse and publications under the distinguished leadership of our past and current Presidents namely:

- 2006 - 2010 Dr. Derrick Aarons (Founding President)
- 2010 - 2014 Prof. Cheryl Macpherson
- 2014 - 2015 Ms. Gillian Mignott
- 2016 - 2020 Prof. Hari Seetharaman
- 2021 - 2023 Dr. Shereen Cox
- 2023 - 2025 Dr. Anthony Frankson
- 2025 - present Prof. Donald Simeon

“Promoting
Bioethics in the
Caribbean - Twenty
and Counting.....”

As the saying goes “Behind every success story is a strong support system”. Each leader has been supported by the Executive committee consisting of a Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Regional Representatives, Website Coordinator and Immediate Past President and of course all our members.

The current Executive Committee includes Prof. Donald Simeon, President; Prof. Mike Campbell, Vice President; Dr. Andrea Kanneh, Treasurer; Ms. Donna McKinnon, Honorary Secretary and Regional Representative (South); Dr. Latelle Barton, Regional Representative (North); Dr. Shereen Cox, Regional Representative (West); Dr. Kandamaran Krishnamurthy, Regional Representative (North-East); Prof. Liris Benjamin, Regional Representative (South-East); Dr. Kelly-Ann Gordon, Website Coordinator; Dr. Anthony Frankson, Immediate Past President.

Read on and reflect with each of our past and current Presidents as they engrave the experiences that have brought BSEC hitherto, promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean.

Warm regards,

Prof. Liris Benjamin, MBBS, MPH, PgDip, PhD
Editor

Dr. Derrick Aarons, MD, PhD
Co-Editor

Prof. Donald Simeon, PhD
Co-Editor

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

BIOETHICS SOCIETY OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN (BSEC) EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Professor Donald T. Simeon
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Ms. Donna McKinnon
Honorary Secretary (Ag) and Regional
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Dr. Andrea Kanneh
Treasurer



Dr. Shereen Cox
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Dr. Kandamaran Krishnamurthy
Regional Representative (North-East)

Prof. Liris Benjamin
Regional Representative (South-East)



Dr. Kelly-Ann Gordon
Website Coordinator



Dr. Tony (MAC) Frankson
Immediate Past President

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

BSEC TWENTY GOOD YEARS AND COUNTING...



Professor Donald T. Simeon

President, Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean (BSEC)

I am honoured to be the President of the Bioethics Society of the English-speaking Caribbean (BSEC) on the 20th Anniversary of its launch. The early days were characterised by an excitement generated by the realisation that a group of Caribbean professionals had embarked on a journey charting the future of bioethics in the Region.

We must all be grateful to Dr Derrick Aarons who convened a Steering Committee in February 2006 to plan the establishment of the Society. The subsequent milestones were significant including the launch of the Society on May 19 2006, followed immediately by the election of its first Executive and the finalization of the BSEC Constitution, establishment of the website, and the opening of our bank account. I was impressed by the deep commitment of the members of the Executive as they used their positions and expertise to give the Society a solid start towards achieving its goals.

I was very fortunate to have been elected to the Founding BSEC Executive, serving as Treasurer. It has also been an honour to be a member of BSEC Executive Committees for most of its first 20 years – serving as Treasurer and a Regional Representative until my election as President in 2025.

Our signature event has always been the Annual BSEC Forum at which members and other interested persons exchange ideas and discuss bioethics-related issues of significance to the Caribbean. The First BSEC Forum was held in 2007 in Jamaica as a satellite meeting of the then Caribbean Health Research Council’s (CHRC’s) Annual Conference. Notably, until the pandemic in 2020, the venue of the Forum rotated throughout the Caribbean introducing, engaging and enlightening persons to timely and relevant bioethical issues. The face-to-face interactions and camaraderie among BSEC members were invaluable and were responsible largely to the growth and longevity of the Society. I participated in and enjoyed each of them even though my most memorable was the one that was held in Guyana in 2010. Thanks to Ms Merle Mendonca and other colleagues we had an epic time with the highlight being the tour to Santa Mission, an unspoilt Arawak village. The boat ride down the creek was as scenic as it was peaceful. The Forum that was held in Dominica the following year comes a close second. Indeed, I still cherish my gift – a wood carving of their national bird, the Sisserou Parrot. It holds pride of place on a mantelpiece in my home office.

I have made many life-long friends through BSEC’s Forums and look forward to making many more in the future. As a colleague once said, “BSEC is more than a Society, it is a family”. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have not had a face-to-face Forum, but I am pleased that the current Executive intends to change that in 2026 with the use of a hybrid format. We look forward to a return to the invaluable human interactions.

I congratulate all the persons to made contributions towards BSEC being able to provide in all bioethics matters in the Caribbean over the last 20 years. I must also highlight and thank the members of all the BSEC Executives from 2006 to 2026. You have worked tirelessly and the Caribbean is better off ethically because of your service. Notably, the energy with which we started 20 years ago is still very much present in the current Executive. It is also significant that with new members, we also have new ideas and approaches to address the priority bioethical issues in the Region.

Importantly, the Society is well placed to continue for the next 20 years and beyond, growing from strength to strength. We have stood the test of time, and our priorities have also evolved as we now look forward to continuing our work addressing the bioethical challenges of the future such as those related to the exponential rise in the scope and use of AI, which have been impacting our lives, in ways that we don’t even realize...

“Happy 20th Anniversary to the BSEC Community!”

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”



TENURE OF THE FOUNDING PRESIDENT, DR. DERRICK AARONS, 2006 - 2010

Dr. Derrick Aarons

Founding President, BSEC 2006-2010

The Bioethics Society of the English-speaking Caribbean (BSEC), after months of discussions and the formulation of the BSEC Constitution by a steering committee, was launched at the 2nd Caribbean Research Ethics Conference of the UWI, Jamaica, on May 19, 2006. The inaugural Executive consisted of President: Dr. Derrick Aarons, Vice-President Prof. Cheryl Macpherson, Secretary Prof. Ralph Robinson, Treasurer Prof. Donald Simeon, and five Regional Representatives: Dr. Eileen Boxill, Dr. Anthony Mullings, Dr. Anthony Frankson, Ms. Merle Mendonca, and Dr. Paul Ricketts. There were also 44 founding members at the beginning of the Society.

With our Society's Mission to increase knowledge and understanding by fostering deliberations about bioethical issues across the Caribbean, I proposed three (3) objectives:

1. A facilitating function that would see us adding new members to our Society, facilitating dialogue about bioethical issues, and facilitating the setting up of research ethics committees to serve the territories within the Caribbean;
2. An advocacy function that would see us advocating the formulation of ethical policies in health care and research in countries across the Caribbean; and
3. Moulding a form of “Think-tank” from our membership to provide opinions on bioethical matters.

The First Year:

We had a number of activities during the first year, including public relations efforts to get our name and mission known across the Caribbean. A press release written by Virgen Advertising in Jamaica was also published in Trinidad & Tobago and the Turks & Caicos Islands, an article “A Bioethics Society at last: Caribbean body to spearhead information on often controversial issues” was published and resulted in a number of radio interviews, and written profiles on the Society were published in the Caribbean Health Research Council Newsletter, the Medical Alumni of the University of the West Indies Newsletter, and the Casebook of the Medical Protection Society of the United Kingdom – Caribbean Section.

Our membership had increased to 67 members when we hosted BSEC's 1st Forum ‘Bioethics for the Caribbean’, which was held in Montego Bay, Jamaica on May 5, 2007. Topics addressed were ‘Health Policy and Justice in health care’ by Dr. Daniel Piedra Herrera of Cuba, ‘Teaching Bioethics’ by Dr. Ken Goodman of the University of Miami, ‘An Overview of Professionalism’ by Vice-President Prof. Cheryl Macpherson, and ‘Clinical Bioethics’ by President Dr. Derrick Aarons. Prof. Donald Simeon then led a panel discussion of the 4 speakers on ‘Research Ethics.’ and the proceedings of the Forum was printed in BSEC's 1st Newsletter, Bioethics Caribe, which had Vice-President Prof. Cheryl Macpherson as its Editor.

Our Executive subsequently worked on ‘The template for establishing “Research Ethics Committees in Caribbean countries.”’ It was distributed to Chief Medical Officers of countries across the Caribbean with guidelines for the contents of research proposals. In furtherance of our Mission Statement, I was able to get BSEC listed at the European Commission's SINAPSE (which lists world-wide resources to provide better use of expertise in policy-making), and our website then provided a number of ‘links of interest’ related to bioethics.

Subsequent years:

Our next Forum was hosted in Grenada by Prof. Cheryl Macpherson on Oct. 11, 2008. It was entitled “Bioethics and Patient Care” and attracted many visitors and superb speakers. Nearly 100 members of Grenada's Ministry of Health and St. George's University faculty and students attended. A generous donation from the U.S. Office of Human Research Protections facilitated the attendance of eight speakers from overseas, and St. George's University provided accommodation and refreshments.

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

Planning then proceeded for our next Forum to be hosted in Trinidad & Tobago in 2009, chaired by Prof. Simeon and Dr. Grace Sirju-Charran, under the theme “Ethics and the Environment.” Also, I also wrote four quarterly communications for the year to update BSEC members and inform of ‘things to come.’ Executive meetings continued to be held bi-monthly as well as the on-going presentations at conferences, workshops, and meetings.

Our 3rd Forum, “Bioethical Standards: People and the Environment” was hosted on June 5-6, 2009, and was held at the UWI’s St. Augustine campus in Trinidad. Several students were among the presenters attesting to the regional concern about the environment and the growing regional value of bioethics. Presentations also were made by representatives of UNESCO from Latin America with subsequent discussions regarding establishing National Bioethics Committees in the Caribbean. It was a tremendous success especially in content, organization, and knowledge exchange.

By our 4th year, our membership had reached over 100 persons in 12 different countries, and we had achieved outstanding accolades in all 3 objectives that I had put forward! Our members had taken part in the formation of and service on Research Ethics Committees, we had promoted research and publication of ethics-based information, we had hosted four annual Bioethics Forums, and we had published three Bioethics Newsletters! We had developed several regional and international links with agencies and organizations that work in Bioethics, including the Bioethics Unit of Miami, the Bioethics Unit of the Pan American Health Organization, Redbioetica UNESCO, and the European Commission SINAPSE.

Our 4th Forum, entitled “An Ethical Pathway to Universal Access to Health: The Role of Rights, Citizens, and Science” was hosted by Ms. Merle Mendonca and held in Georgetown, Guyana, May 27-28, 2010. It generated a remarkable level of involvement of Guyanese health professionals and academia. At the time, Guyana had 24 members within BSEC, and they formed a sub-committee to examine various bioethical issues which were of concern to Guyana. At the end of the Forum, a new BSEC Executive was formed, as the previous one had served the maximum time of 4 years as stated in the BSEC Constitution.



Founding BSEC Executive Committee
 Front Row, Left to Right: Derrick Aarons (President), Cheryl Macpherson (Vice-President), Donald Simeon (Treasurer)
 Back Row: Anthony Frankson (Regional Representative - North), Paul Ricketts (Regional Representative - South-east), Eileen Boxill (Regional Representative - West), Ralph Robinson (Secretary)

BSEC’s Mission
 “Increasing knowledge and understanding by fostering deliberations about bioethical issues across the Caribbean”



“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”



20-YEARS OF BSEC: REFLECTIONS FROM ITS 2ND PRESIDENT

Professor Cheryl C. Macpherson

Past President, BSEC 2010-2014

It was 2006 when I received an invitation to join a steering committee to establish a Caribbean bioethics society. Research ethics was then of growing regional and international interest and I was unclear as to whether this invitation was most due to my regional research ethics work or my long-term life within - and affection for – the Caribbean region and its people. In any case, I felt privileged and included to learn that others valued what I might bring to this endeavor. Three recollections stand out among the many between this invitation and BSEC’s first Forum, in Montego Bay: i) my uncertainty that a Caribbean bioethics society was really viable; ii) feelings of imposter syndrome for my limited bioethics expertise and for not having Caribbean heritage; and iii) the warmth and respect with which I was greeted and accepted by literally everyone involved in the steering committee and Forum – features that have sustained BSEC and its subsequent growth.

Complementing this welcome to the BSEC community was the opportunity to serve BSEC and its inaugural president, Derrick Aarons, in the role of vice president. At the time, this gave me the responsibility of editing and publishing BSEC’s newsletter. With guidance and support from founding members – most memorably from Merle Mendonca, a human rights advocate who strongly supported BSEC, and Grace Sirju-Charran whose accomplished career included pioneering championship for women in science - we managed to publish BSEC’s first newsletter, *Bioethics Caribe*, in June 2007. Its content was contributed by speakers at the first Forum who set aside the time-consuming task of putting their presentations into text. Merle and Grace should be recognized for their early engagement and contributions, with Grace continuing to contribute even now after so many years. Their work was central to the longevity of BSEC and *Bioethics Caribe*.

By 2009, BSEC had broadened in size and scope. Its third Forum, hosted at UWI St Augustine, focused on ‘People and the Environment’, attracting many more presentations and participants than previously. *Bioethics Caribe* that year included articles presented at or about the Forum, and others, including ‘Bioethics and You - Why Should You Care?’ in which Derrick Aarons directly addressed sensitive topics of HIV, homosexuality, poverty, and corruption. He argued that we should care about bioethics because it promotes dialog that helps to achieve a “safe, ecofriendly and well-maintained environment” in which everyone can enjoy a good quality of life. This courageous perspective seems to have been a guiding force for BSEC and its leadership.

In 2010, after nearly twenty years of living in the region, I was humbled to be elected as BSEC’s second president. My goals as president were to increase bioethics dialog and collaboration with regional stakeholders with a view to enhancing BSEC’s regional visibility, credibility, and influence. Making such dialog possible was the emerging reliance on information technology that facilitated an Executive meeting in 2010 when BSEC and its executive members lacked funding to travel to meet face-to-face. Today it seems quaint to read the 2010 headline ‘Landmark BSEC Executive Meeting by Skype!’ The digital age (for all the societal and ethical challenges it poses) enabled the dialog that sustained (and sustains) BSEC, its growth, and its regional activities and engagement. That year was also significant because Past President Derrick Aarons was elected to a 2-year post on the Executive Council of UNESCO’s RedBioetica. In this capacity, he cemented relationships that facilitate Caribbean input into dialog among Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America, broadening the influence of English-speaking Caribbean countries. That input continues with the membership of another past President, Shereen Cox, whose infectious enthusiasm contributed to BSEC’s founding and early years of its newsletter, and whose dedication to BSEC persists alongside her many international commitments within the field of bioethics.

20 YEARS

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

During my terms as president, again with a view to broadening and expanding regional bioethics dialog, we collaboratively updated BSEC’s website and attempted (somewhat successfully) to increase and enrich interaction among members through a blog about current issues impacting their institutions or countries. We established a BSEC Secretariat coordinated, pretty much single-handedly, by Kamille Williams for many years. The secretariat was supported by St George’s University’s (SGU) Bioethics Department until SGU dissolved the department in 2016. Kamille’s commitment was evident when, as a volunteer, she maintained the secretariat for several years longer. BSEC continues to nurture ongoing dialog about the need for and development of national ethics committees, and Past President Derrick Aarons continues his efforts to advance public education and dialog about bioethics through different avenues.

What began as a handful of individuals committed to advancing Caribbean bioethics is now a vibrant society that continues to grow and blossom as it welcomes new members, elects new representatives and leaders, and engages the public and international stakeholders in bioethics dialog. The BSEC annual Forum and Bioethics Caribe are well established and self-sustaining – even with limited external funding and entirely voluntary hosting and organizing of its conferences. BSEC is a leader in proving that this can still be done without commercial contracts typically used by larger international societies. Its fora continue to serve as a resource for and place of reflective bioethics discourse among regional professionals interested in bioethics, some who have obtained master’s degrees in bioethics through the Caribbean Research Ethics Education initiative (CREEi). CREEi began around 2014 with Sean Phillipot who initially envisioned and led CREEi, and opted to support both BSEC and early CREEi graduates by paying the fees for their first year of BSEC membership. At that time, I led the English-speaking arm of the program, and went on to lead the entire program in 2020. Combined, CREEi educated several dozen English-speaking Caribbean research ethicists, many of whom became and remain BSEC members and BSEC leaders. CREEi graduates serve regionally within their institutions as REC leaders and members, design and deliver research ethics education, conduct research in research ethics, and some bring their bioethics expertise to policymaking in their countries and institutions. All of this strengthens BSEC and helps to define Caribbean bioethics. BSEC and Caribbean bioethics continue to offer informal opportunities for career development and regional networking and influence. In one of CREEi’s final activities, it brought together graduates as speakers, panelists, and discussants at a CREEi conference in November 2025 about the future of Caribbean bioethics. Throughout the conference, it became clear that the region has a vibrancy, enthusiasm, and diversity of ideas about what Caribbean bioethics can and should be - boding well for BSEC’s future!

Reflecting and writing about my time as BSEC’s 2nd President has brought back happy memories of those I worked most closely with. I do not wish to slight the many others who worked alongside us, or came before or after. I’m grateful for the opportunity to contribute to and enjoy existing within the BSEC community and, in closing, want to acknowledge all of BSEC’s founders and members for their interest in and goal of learning about and participating in regional bioethics discourse - and BSEC.



BSEC’s 3rd Annual Business Meeting (11 October 2008)
 Front Left: Donald Simeon, Derrick Aarons, Cheryl Macpherson, Ralph Robinson
 Back Left: Eileen Boxill, Jacqueline Shafe, Paul Ricketts, Shereen Dawkins,
 Peta-Ann Baker, Merle Mendonca, Grace Sirju-Charran

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”



A JOURNEY IN BIOETHICS: REFLECTION AND COMMITMENT

Ms. Gillian Mignott

Past President, BSEC 2014-2015

My journey into bioethics began with my involvement in the Jamaican National Bioethics Committee and ultimately as a member of the Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean. I am forever grateful to Dr. Derick Aarons, Dr. Anthony Mullings, and Dr. Shereen Dawkins Cox, whose encouragement and mentorship were instrumental in guiding my entry into the Society and shaping my early development in the field.

My interest in bioethics was solidified following the completion of graduate studies in Biotechnical Law and Ethics at the University of Sheffield. This academic experience provided a strong foundation for understanding the complex ethical issues at the intersection of healthcare, law, and society, and it inspired me to contribute to bioethical discourse.

Serving as President of the Society was both an unexpected honour and a formidable challenge. At the time, as a relatively young member, my nomination to this role initially felt daunting. However, with the unwavering support and guidance of fellow committee members, my tenure became a period of significant growth, impact, and learning. Together, we advanced the Society's mission, and strengthened engagement among professionals and students alike.

Although my time as President was short lived due to a decision to pursue further studies, my commitment to bioethics has remained. The experience has reinforced the importance of collaborative dialogue and continuous education in advancing ethical practice.

As the Society celebrates this milestone anniversary, I extend heartfelt congratulations and best wishes for its continued growth and impact. The work of the Bioethics Society of the English Speaking Caribbean remains vital, and I am confident that it will continue to inspire, educate, and lead in addressing the ethical challenges that are pertinent to our region.



“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”



BIOETHICS SOCIETY OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN – A POSITIVE FORCE MAJEURE

Professor Hariharan Seetharaman
Past President, BSEC 2016-2020

With the usual dynamism of a young doctor who dreams to save every human life, I took up anaesthesiology and critical care as my specialty with the idea that intensive care units (ICU) exist to save every life.

Reaching the shores of Barbados as a young professional, I started my clinical research in the surgical ICU at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, only to realise that medicine has its own limitations, all lives cannot be saved, and ‘medical futility’ is a reality. After publishing a paper in the subject of futility of care, and another paper on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of healthcare professionals regarding Bioethics, I was naturally drawn towards Bioethics as a subject and the Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean. I applied and was accepted as a member, sheepishly attended the BSEC Annual Forum at the University of Guyana and presented my topic of ‘futility and end-of-life care in ICU’. I was excited to listen to all the presentations, personally met with the stalwarts of BSEC, and experienced the great work BSEC was doing in the Caribbean.

Since then, I attended every Forum without fail even if I had to pay for the airfare and accommodation from my pocket. I was initially elected to be a regional representative, and then the Treasurer and without the slightest of my expectation – the President, which I held for two terms, especially during the pandemic.

As human development and modernisation progress, ethics becomes the sheet-anchor of human existence. In a competitive world of machines and humans, and the growth of economic and commercial significance – what stands out is the ethical behaviour of humans not only towards other humans, but also to every other animate and inanimate thing in the universe.

As I have always argued, ethics has been always influenced by geographical, cultural and other social factors, both in principles and in practice. In this context, BSEC being a regional beacon of guidance in the subject matter of Bioethics, it is undoubtable that BSEC is the positive force of strength to promote, educate, advocate as well as being the superior voice of Bioethics in the Caribbean.

I am proud to be part of this historical journey of the twenty years of existence of BSEC, which in my view will be growing and rooting like the banyan tree and enhance the ethical dimensions of the Caribbean people for centuries to come.

I pay tributes to the founding members of BSEC and implore young academics and professionals to take up the mantle and carry forward the future of this indispensable organisation from the Caribbean to the rest of the world.



“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”



MY TENURE AS PRESIDENT (2021–2023)

Dr. Shereen Cox

Past President, BSEC 2021-2023



I had the privilege of serving as the President of the Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean (BSEC) from 2021 to 2023 during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was both an honour and a responsibility I carried during a particularly difficult period for our region. Assuming the role during the pandemic was a challenge in that we now had to rely strictly on online forums. It was also a period when health professionals were stretched physically, emotionally and morally. Ethical questions were no longer abstract but immediate and deeply personal for healthcare professionals in the midst of uncertainty and scarce resources. It was with this in mind that we chose our forum theme in 2021: Moral Distress on the Frontline: COVID-19 in the Caribbean. We brought together health professionals from across the Caribbean who spoke candidly about the pressures they were facing, the decisions they had to make, and the emotional toll of working on the frontlines.

The response was overwhelming, with over 250 persons joining online from all over the globe including Africa, USA, Canada, Asia, Argentina, and Caribbean member countries. It reminded me that beyond theory, Bioethics must create space for people to be heard. It was in this same period that I reflected more deeply on what I later described in my article, Pandemonium Ethics, where I proposed that we need “an ethics for times when things are genuinely confusing, to help us navigate to the right path - a lighthouse guiding the shipwrecked sailor home. People are disinclined to hear ethical theories and the kind of language that is taught in schools. What is needed are ethicists assuming the roles of observers and discourse facilitators and less as academicians. Perhaps a return to the way of the ancient philosophical dialogues of Socrates and Plato.” This reflection was grounded in what we were witnessing across the region, and it shaped how I approached both leadership and engagement within the Society.

The following year, we intentionally shifted the conversation toward the future where our forum theme was “The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and Robotics”. We were privileged to have Professor Peter-Paul Verbeek as our featured speaker, who at the time served as Rector Magnificus of the University of Amsterdam. He is also Professor of Philosophy of Technology at the University of Twente and chaired the drafting group for the UNESCO COMEST guide on the ethics of artificial intelligence. His presentation, along with our inaugural President, Dr Derrick Aaron’s, allowed insight and global relevance to the discussion and helped situate Caribbean concerns within broader international efforts to shape ethical governance of emerging technologies.



“Bioethics must create space for people to be heard.”

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

Throughout my tenure, I also wanted to ensure that our engagement extended beyond annual events. Led by our esteemed Editor, Dr. Grace Sirju-Charran along with Kamille Williams (Secretariat Manager), we managed to publish two newsletters annually. These newsletters became an important way of keeping the community connected. We highlighted member contributions, shared reflections on ethical issues affecting the region, and documented the work being done across the Caribbean. The COVID-19 special edition, in particular, captured many of the urgent concerns at the time, from vaccine equity to the realities faced by healthcare workers. For me, these newsletters were not just updates, they were a record of how our region was thinking through difficult issues together. Special recognition must be given to Kamille Williams who became our website coordinator and was able to facilitate the launch of a new updated website and a LinkedIn page. She worked voluntarily alongside the website developer and social media coordinator to ensure that members were kept informed of all activities. We also recognized the work of Professor Cheryl Macpherson in the Caribbean Research Ethics Education Initiative (CREEi) which has been a huge success. Through the CREEi programme and its partnership with Clarkson University in the USA, we now have over 100 persons qualified up the Masters level in Bioethics with emphasis on Research Ethics.

Another major milestone was our being able to successfully register BSEC as a company in Jamaica. This was important for our governance and sustainability. These administrative milestones were necessary to support the kind of growth and engagement we have been seeing. This registration was also an important step towards being able to collect fees online.

Looking back, this period was not about any one event or initiative, but about building something that could respond to the moment while also preparing for what comes next. I am grateful for the Executive members who contributed to that journey and for the opportunity to serve the Society during such a defining time.



**HAPPY 20TH
ANNIVERSARY
BSEC**

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”



BSEC'S IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Dr. Tony (MAC) Frankson
Past President, BSEC 2023-2025

In recent years the Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean (BSEC) remembered me and in the years 2023 to 2025 afforded me, Morton Anthony C. Frankson, the privilege of serving as President of this noble body. Globally, humanity was emerging from varying constraints and consequences (good and bad) of the novel SARS2-Covid 19 pandemic and arising from that ordeal we were seriously schooled in the use of electronic media like the Zoom platform to do wonders in communicating in groups with each other. We readily used that ever evolving technology and more (WhatsApp texting, etc.) to accomplish much in having BSEC bless the Caribbean region and elsewhere with two topical annual seminars interspersed with a newsletter here and there. All were challenging to be planned and executed, and all were highly appreciated by those in attendance.

That was not all, however. While endeavoring to offer these annual symposia we were able in late 2023 to enjoy the blessing of partnering with Northern Caribbean University (NCU) in Mandeville, Jamaica with Northern Caribbean and even include its President, Professor Lincoln Edwards, as one of the notable speakers. All speakers the involvement from NCU continued in presenting at the next year's annual symposium of BSEC on business ethics meeting ethical challenges in the Caribbean region and elsewhere. On both occasions NCU graciously provided the Zoom platform hosting capabilities and for that BSEC is most grateful.

It was also during these two years that BSEC begun rightly selecting an outstanding person, so far always a founding member, to be honored during these symposia. And, that tradition continues to the full satisfaction of BSEC's membership. May we habitually keep doing so prudently going forward.

During the years 2023 to 2025, we also had two annual general meetings with rich participant involvements as we attended to the wider business of this essential association. A challenging item on the agenda during those meetings was always how to solve the matter of better funding BSEC and in the process strengthen wider membership participation in ways mutually relevant. Another challenging item was how to better the web page interface for this modern society (BSEC). I am pleased that in attempting to solve these challenges we supported our honorable treasurer, honorable secretary and other executive officers as well as the indispensable regional representatives in providing hope that these could soon be successfully addressed. Indeed, in surmounting these and other tests, BSEC, with a carefully managed transfer of leadership, remains vital today despite particular members experiencing and bravely surmounting personal mounds, growing ever stronger in ethical ways in the process.



“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

REFLECTING THROUGH THE PAST 20 YEARS



Members of the Bioethics Society of the English Speaking Caribbean (BSEC) in an informal moment during the first BSEC Bioethics Forum, “Bioethics for the Caribbean”, held in Jamaica on 5 May 2007.



Founding BSEC Executive Committee
 Front Row, Left to Right: Derrick Aarons (President), Cheryl Macpherson (Vice-President), Donald Simeon (Treasurer)
 Back Row: Anthony Frankson (Regional Representative - North), Paul Ricketts (Regional Representative - South-east), Eileen Boxill (Regional Representative - West), Ralph Robinson (Secretary)



Dr. Derrick Aarons (Founding President)

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

REFLECTING THROUGH THE PAST 20 YEARS

Photos from 2nd BSEC Forum and ABM in 2008, hosted at the St. George’s University, Grenada



2008 ABM

Front row: Hon. Treasurer - Prof. Donald Simeon; BSEC President - Dr. Derrick Aarons; Vice-President - Prof. Cheryl Macpherson; Hon. Secretary - Prof. Ralph Robinson. Back row: Dr. Eileen Boxill; a BSEC member (name unknown); Dr. Paul Ricketts; Mrs. Shereen Dawkins Cox; Dr. Peta-anne Baker; Ms. Merle Mendonca; Dr. Grace Sirju Charran.



2008 ABM

Outgoing and founding Hon. Secretary Prof. Ralph Robinson being presented with a token of appreciation by then incoming Hon. Secretary - Mrs. Shereen Dawkins Cox - at the evening function after the ABM.



"Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting....."

REFLECTING THROUGH THE PAST 20 YEARS



BSEC'S 3rd Annual Bioethics Forum (June 5-6, 2009)
From left: Donald Simeon (BSEC Treasurer), Richard Schulterbrandt Gragg (Director of the Environmental Sciences Institute, Florida A&M University), Grace Sirju-Charran (BSEC member), Daniel Piedra-Herrera (BSEC Honorary member), Derrick Aarons (BSEC President)



“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

REFLECTING THROUGH THE PAST 20 YEARS



Left to right: Mrs. Shereen Cox, Dr. Donald Simeon, Dr. M. Anthony Frankson and Dr. Derrick Aarons.



Dr. Derrick Aarons, outgoing BSEC President receiving plaque from Mrs. Shereen Dawkins-Cox at the 4th Annual BSEC Forum May 27 -28, 2010 in Guyana.



Audience at BSEC's 4th Annual Forum



Dr. Derrick Aarons (Founding President)

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

REFLECTING THROUGH THE PAST 20 YEARS

A few pictures from the BSEC 2011 Forum in Dominica



BSEC Forum Speakers and Organizers



Paul Ricketts, Grace Charran and Hamish Mohammed



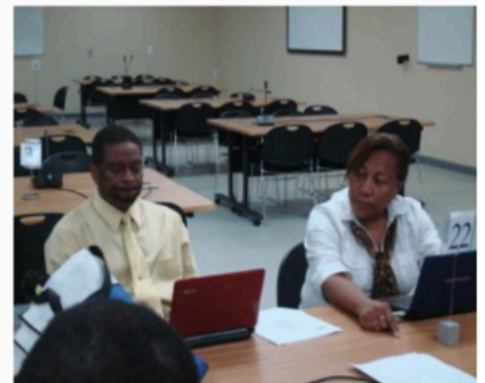
Audience at BSEC Forum 2011



Derrick Aarons and Paul Ricketts



Shereen Cox and Donald Simeon



Derrick Aarons and Eileen Boxill at the workshop

20 Years of Excellence...

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

REFLECTING THROUGH THE PAST 20 YEARS



North-east representative, **Dr. Paul Ricketts**, on receiving the Dominica’s Chief Personnel Officer’s Award as Exceptional Head of Division for the Year 2012



BSEC treasurer, **Professor Grace Sirju-Charran** on her receipt of the Vice-Chancellor’s award of Excellence in teaching from the University of the West Indies



Immediate Past President, **Dr. Derrick Aarons** *Distinguished Award* – Outstanding Justice of the Peace for St. Ann, Jamaica – St. Ann Justices of the Peace Association – Nov.2012



Executive member, **Dr. Eileen Boxill** on receiving the national award Order of Distinction (Commander Class) from the government of Jamaica



TRIBUTE TO THE BSEC IN ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Dr. Susana Vidal
Redbioetica UNESCO

The celebration of this anniversary—marking 20 years of sustained interdisciplinary, plural, and democratic work by a group of professionals from different countries and intellectual traditions of the English-speaking Caribbean—is a significant event that deserves recognition, particularly in times when a culture of individualism and a lack of solidarity and cooperation prevails.

The BSEC has demonstrated that it possesses the institutional and intellectual foundations necessary to sustain this convergence of ideas, values, proposals, and ethical, social, and cultural perspectives applicable to the field of health and the life and environmental sciences. It has also shown the strength to transform a discourse driven by countries of the Global North into a regional voice that speaks about its own issues, sensitive to human vulnerabilities and attentive to the cultural and social differences of the region, without losing sight of other perspectives. The distinction from other perspectives, particularly those of the USA and Canada, is reflected in the words of Dr. Derrick Aarons: Caribbean countries are "being fair to those who are vulnerable and protecting them not so much on the individual level but collectively as communities. We all respect the concepts of bioethics, but the emphasis may be different depending on the culture..." [1] which clearly marks a distance from the autonomy-centered individualism characteristic of Anglo-American bioethics.

Its mode of operation—promoting cooperation among countries, generating annual meetings of experts, symposia and congresses, organizing talks, and fostering education and capacity building in bioethics and research ethics—has made it a lighthouse institution and a reference point for the English-speaking Caribbean and for the Region of the Americas. This is particularly due to its invaluable effort to identify context specific ethical issues, placing emphasis on national health priorities and the rights of its communities, rather than merely reproducing dominant regional and international bioethics frameworks or tendencies.

This was surely what its founders had in mind since that first congress in 1993,[2] and undoubtedly what guided the figure known as the "Father of Bioethics in the Caribbean", Dr. Derrick Aarons, who after completing his training returned to the region to travel across countries and promote bioethics, research ethics, public health ethics, and environmental ethics.

Those early pioneers set out to create a scientific society at a time when bioethics was emerging strongly in developed countries but was still incipient in the Latin American region, and in both the Spanish- and English-speaking Caribbean. These initial steps made it possible for strong roots to grow, leading to the first initiative with the formation of the steering committee [1] and the subsequent establishment of the BSEC in 2006. New generations of experts later followed, continuing the path of building networks for the development of the discipline and assuming successive presidencies of the BSEC.

From the Latin American and Caribbean Bioethics Network, (Redbioetica UNESCO) founded in 2003 with the support of UNESCO, we observed with great enthusiasm and high expectations the creation of this network of experts in the Caribbean, particularly because there had been a communication barrier due to language, despite shared problems and a common territory. Cultural, religious, and territorial aspects also contributed to a diversity that, far from being an obstacle, has provided enormous inter- and transcultural richness to exchanges and has undoubtedly contributed to the perspectives developed in Latin America and the Caribbean.

This was also our view from the vantage point of the UNESCO Regional Bioethics Program, which has supported activities in the English Caribbean since 2006 [1] by organizing events, promoting training-of-trainers courses, supporting continuing education programs in bioethics, jointly organizing courses in research ethics, and encouraging the creation of national bioethics committees in the English-speaking Caribbean (particularly in Jamaica [2] and Trinidad and Tobago), with the participation of experts from Latin America and Europe. It has also invited BSEC authorities to the congresses organized by Redbioética and opened the UNESCO Redbioética Journal to publications in three languages: Spanish, Portuguese, and English.

“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

Alongside its institutional development, the BSEC has played an important role in promoting education and capacity building in bioethics and research ethics at different levels, training teachers, members of clinical and research ethics committees, and fostering its own bioethical thoughts rooted in the Caribbean region. [1] As José Mainetti stated years ago, in Latin America bioethics has gone through stages of reception, assimilation, and recreation. [2] In this latter sense, the BSEC has played a central role in promoting and supporting these necessary steps toward building a distinctive and broad bioethical perspective with a clear local commitment and a progressive development of the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions specific to small island states. It is remarkable to observe the transformation along this path, which has its roots in medical ethics, philosophy and Christian theology, and has flourished into a broad, interdisciplinary, and plural ethics of life that takes into account social and environmental dimensions. This evolution is reflected in the themes proposed annually in the forums organized by the BSEC. Some of these topics have been highly complex, [1] as can also be seen in the works published in its newsletter [2] and other interregional exchange initiatives. [3]

In this way, the BSEC has been able to adapt to changing times, addressing current challenges in the fields of health, life sciences, and converging technologies faced by societies in this complex 21st century. This has gone hand in hand with an understanding of the impact of the bio- and geopolitical context on its countries, reflected in global inequality, climate change, armed conflicts, enforced migration processes, and, undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic, to mention only a few factors that profoundly affect all forms of life.

Thus, an ethics of life broadens the boundaries of the biological sciences to address the social, cultural, and environmental determinants that affect human and non-human communities, and brings to the forefront ethical values that can provide a path toward democratic dialogue, rational argumentation, and policy advising, as well as advocacy in support of the most vulnerable sectors of society, including a perspective grounded in the protection of human rights, solidarity, and mutual cooperation.

Bioethics in our regions requires special attention to respect for human dignity and the protection of human rights, particularly for the most vulnerable sectors, addressing the enormous problems caused by injustice, violations of the right to health, poverty, social exclusion, privacy, sexual and reproductive rights, and the rights of participants in multinational research, attending their social and environmental dimensions, all of which are clear social determinants of health, disease, and the preservation of life.

In this sense, the BSEC, like our UNESCO Redbioética Network, shares the same sentiment expressed some years ago by Dr. Derrick, namely that we feel we “ought to make a difference in the world.” [4] Twenty years after its creation, the BSEC has made that dream a reality.

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GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE AND THE VALUE OF RESILIENCE FOR CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

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Among the numerous low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) bordering the Caribbean Sea are English-speaking countries like Guyana and several small island developing states (SIDS). The region also includes countries where English is widely spoken, though not the native language like Suriname and Belize and countries where Spanish is the main language such as Mexico and Honduras. These LMICs share economic and other vulnerabilities to extreme weather and other environmental changes. Their limited capacity to mitigate global emissions or adapt locally make them some of the world's most vulnerable stakeholders to global warming.

Their Caribbean location and geography, like extensive coastlines, intensify their vulnerabilities to environmental changes like extreme weather, sea level rise, and rising sea temperatures.¹ Moreover, they are physically isolated from high income countries (HICs) on whose food and building and electrical supplies they rely. This distance increases the costs of importing these goods. This essay highlights Caribbean perspectives on how Caribbean LMICs may respond to environmental risks despite minimal contributions to them.

Caribbean perspectives on regional impacts of environmental change

Environmental change jeopardizes human health and disproportionately afflicts countries like SIDS and LMICs: they contributed least to it² and have limited resources to adapt their infrastructure or healthcare systems accordingly. This exacerbates global health inequalities and hinders LMICs' economic development, particularly given HICs' greater geopolitical influence. Unsurprisingly, Caribbean stakeholders often condemn HICs for their high greenhouse gas emissions and hold them responsible to mitigate global emissions and support climate adaptation in LMICs. Within and beyond the United Nations Climate Negotiations, adaptation aims to proactively or reactively ameliorate the harms to key human interests.³ In 1990, Caribbean and other SIDS united as a bloc to enhance their influence in international climate negotiations (AOSIS, 2023).⁴

Anecdotally, Caribbean citizens and leaders tend to share the view that HICs have debts to LMICs in pursuit of reparative and/or retributive justice. In the year-long CREEi-Hastings Center Climate Bioethics Program (CBP) that we led, roughly 40 participants initially echoed this view. The program was a collaboration of Caribbean- and US-based bioethicists and Caribbean and Latin American advisors with most participants being regional bioethicists and public health practitioners. Across several forums, participants discussed regional responses to environmental changes like warming, extreme weather, and sea level rise. This included a dual-language seminar series for nine professionals drafting climate bioethics papers⁵; a dual-language 3-day climate bioethics workshop for 40 regional scholars; and an English-language webinar with Caribbean health leaders.⁶

In these discussions, participants shared their experiences and perspectives about what their countries are or should be doing. Bioethics, a field concerned with health and healthcare, framed these discussions to facilitate multiple stakeholder realities and perspectives. Early on, a nuanced, shared perspective emerged that further discussion refined. The initial perspective was that independent of HIC action or inaction, their own SIDS and LMICs should build climate resilience for their communities. Later, participants proposed that investing in the human capital of their communities is the best way to do so.

Incorporating local perspectives and skills in designing and implementing regional responses to environmental change has ethical and practical value. Ethically, the co-creation of responses helps counter epistemic and structural injustice and reduces global inequalities.^{7,8} Practically, it builds political will and prioritizes the use of local knowledge, needs, and resources in response strategies, strengthening their success and sustainability.

The importance of community and national resilience for Caribbean countries

As bioethicists, our curiosity about regional experiences and perspectives was the program’s genesis. Our goal was to generate dialog, mentor writing, and stimulate networking to ultimately enhance regional responses to environmental threats and changes. We did not anticipate consensus among participants. We were unsurprised to hear early on that Caribbean LMICs can and should pursue resilience to environmental change despite the inaction of high emitting HICs. We were, however, surprised by the countless iterations of that view numerous participants expressed throughout the year, and by their validation of each other’s experiences and perspectives.

We believe that the most potentially useful perspective that emerged centered on the meaning and implications of building resilience to environmental risks. For participants, altering built environments to better withstand damage is different from understanding resilience as the “capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event, trend, or disturbance by responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure while also building the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation”.⁹ This understanding calls for investing in local human and environmental capital to enhance the capacity of people, communities, and nations, and alleviating the structural and environmental injustices that partially constitute their economic and geographic vulnerability.

Educational programs are part of resilience-building because they help inform and empower community participation in decision-making and local political action. Nine of our participants published their experiences and perspectives⁵ to enhance educational (Susan Muir), public health (Rosmond Adams), sport (Sharmella Roopchand-Martin), and displacement policy (Zain Hernandez), and other responses in Caribbean and other LMICs. These authors and other participants identified synergies between Caribbean food and water security, tourism, construction, health, and other sectors that can and should support sustainable development.

They recognized that designing and implementing policies, practices, and regulatory environments to promote local agriculture and consumption of local food and drinks, reducing reliance on imported food and drinks while increasing local employment, strengthening local economies, and promoting healthier populations would build resilience and reduce global emissions.

Bioethicists, especially from Caribbean and other LMICs, are adept at identifying plural values and geographic and socioeconomic circumstances that warrant attention in regional policy and other decision-making, and facilitating associated cross-disciplinary dialog. Bioethics tools are ripe for the cross-disciplinary North-South partnerships that are essential to promoting health and resilience and environmentally sustainable development.

Acknowledgements

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“Promoting Bioethics in the Caribbean - Twenty and Counting.....”

BUILDING CLINICAL ETHICS CAPACITY IN CARIBBEAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS: A REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR EDUCATION, SUPPORT, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Latelle J. Barton, II, MD, HEC-C
BSEC North Regional Representative

Healthcare professionals throughout the English-speaking Caribbean regularly encounter difficult ethical situations in patient care. Questions involving informed consent, end-of-life treatment, confidentiality, mental health, family disagreement, and limited healthcare resources are becoming increasingly common across hospitals and healthcare systems in the region. Yet many institutions still lack formal clinical ethics support or structured ethics training for healthcare staff.

The Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean (BSEC) is well-positioned to help address this growing need through regional education and professional development initiatives focused on clinical ethics.

One practical approach could involve BSEC developing training programs for healthcare professionals employed within hospitals and healthcare systems throughout the Caribbean. Under this model, hospitals could sponsor physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists, chaplains, administrators, and other healthcare professionals to participate in structured bioethics education designed specifically for Caribbean healthcare settings.

These programs could include workshops, case discussions, seminars, and applied ethics training focused on real-world clinical situations commonly encountered in the region. Participants who complete the program could receive a certificate of completion from BSEC recognizing specialized training in clinical ethics and ethical decision-making in healthcare.

This type of initiative could provide important benefits for hospitals, healthcare workers, patients, and families alike. For hospitals, ethics training would help strengthen internal capacity to manage difficult cases and improve communication among healthcare teams, patients, and relatives. Many conflicts within healthcare settings develop not because of poor medical care, but because of misunderstandings, unclear communication, or uncertainty surrounding difficult decisions. Staff members with ethics training may help institutions navigate these situations in a more thoughtful and organized way.

Healthcare professionals themselves may also benefit. Physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals working in demanding clinical environments often experience moral distress when faced with emotionally difficult decisions or limited resources. Structured ethics education can provide practical tools for communication, ethical reflection, and collaborative decision-making while supporting professionalism and resilience within healthcare teams.

Patients and families may benefit as well. Caribbean healthcare systems are often deeply family-centered, and relatives frequently play an important role in medical decisions. Clinical ethics education can help healthcare workers approach sensitive conversations with greater confidence, cultural awareness, and compassion. This may strengthen trust between healthcare providers and the communities they serve.

For BSEC, programs such as these could help establish a meaningful regional role in healthcare ethics education and ethics capacity-building. In addition to supporting healthcare systems, educational initiatives may help strengthen collaboration among healthcare professionals across the Caribbean while increasing awareness of clinical ethics as an important part of quality patient care.

Importantly, the goal would not be to create unnecessary bureaucracy or replace existing healthcare leadership. Rather, the focus would be on equipping healthcare professionals with practical skills to help address ethical challenges that already exist within everyday clinical practice.

Over time, hospitals participating in these programs may choose to further develop ethics committees, ethics consultation processes, or designated ethics leadership roles within their institutions. In this way, BSEC could help support the gradual growth of clinical ethics infrastructure throughout the English-speaking Caribbean.

As healthcare systems continue to evolve, the need for ethical guidance, communication skills, and patient-centered decision-making will likely continue to grow as well. Regional organizations such as BSEC have an important opportunity to help Caribbean healthcare institutions meet these challenges through education, collaboration, and professional development tailored to the unique needs of the region.

BIOETHICS SOCIETY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING CARIBBEAN NEWSLETTER: A THEMATIC LENS

Prof. Liris C. Benjamin

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Abstract

The Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean (BSEC) through its newsletter, forums and workshops has, over the past two decades, served as a platform for advancing bioethical discourse in the Caribbean. This article provides a thematic analysis of contributions published in the BSEC newsletter between 2007 and 2024. It highlights the major domains related to the bioethics of research, clinical care, environment, public health, medical education and emerging technologies. The analysis demonstrates through the lens of the Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean (BSEC), a progression from foundational ethical frameworks to engagement with complex global challenges such as pandemics such as COVID-19, the environment and climate change, artificial intelligence and innovations in medical education. The Newsletter reflects both regional priorities and global ethical concerns, illustrating the continued development of bioethics as an academic and applied discipline in the Caribbean.

Keywords

Bioethics, Caribbean, research ethics, clinical ethics, environmental ethics, public health, medical education, emerging technologies, BSEC



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Newsletter of the Bioethics Society of the English-Speaking Caribbean (BSEC)
December 2024 Issue

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Editor's Note.....2-3
- President's Message.....4
- Members' Articles.....5-24
 - Tribute to Dr. Derrick Aarons.....5
 - Introduction of Bioethics to the English-speaking Caribbean: Dr. Derrick Aarons.....7
 - The Vital Role of Protecting Healthy Volunteers in Clinical Trials: Dr. Shereen Dawkins-Cox.....10
 - Nurturing Ethics in Medical Simulations: Dr. Liris Benjamin.....15
 - Environmental Literacy and Our Climate Crisis: Ms. Athene Aberdeen.....18
- Members' Accomplishments.....25-33
 - Dr. Derrick Aarons.....25
 - Professor Harbaran Seetharaman.....25
 - Dr. Shereen Dawkins-Cox.....26
 - Dr. Michael Campbell.....27
 - Professor Cheryl Cox Macgherson.....29
 - Ms. Donna Mc Kinnon.....30
 - Mr. Kareem Coomansingh.....31
 - Dr. Michael Campbell.....33
 - Dr. Shakel Hanson.....33
- BSEC's Annual General Meeting.....34-35
- BSEC's Social Event in St. Lucia.....36

Introduction

The Bioethics Society of the English Speaking Caribbean through its forums, newsletters and workshops has provided interdisciplinary dialogue on bioethics in the English-speaking Caribbean. Drawing on more than twenty years of scholarship, this article summarizes the thematic breadth of the Newsletter and highlights the evolution of bioethical discourse within the region.

Foundations of Bioethics and Professional Ethics

Early contributions established the conceptual foundations of bioethics in the Caribbean. The themes included ethical decision-making, professionalism, and the integration of ethics into healthcare and education. These works provided a framework for understanding bioethics within a regional context, aligning global ethical principles with local healthcare realities.

Clinical Ethics and Patient Care

Clinical ethics has remained a central area of focus, addressing issues such as patient autonomy, informed consent, pain management, and ethical decision-making in complex clinical settings. Ethical concerns in the management of infectious diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, were prominent in earlier discussions and later expanded to include end-of-life care and critical care ethics. During the COVID-19 pandemic, clinical ethics discourse evolved to address triage, resource allocation, and the balance between individual rights and public health obligations.

Public Health Ethics

Public health ethics has been an important theme with ethical considerations for population health strategies, disaster response, and community engagement. Earlier contributions emphasized public health policy and research ethics, while more recent work focused on pandemic response, vaccination strategies, and global health equity.

These discussions highlight the importance of ethical frameworks in guiding public health interventions in resource-constrained settings.

Environmental Bioethics

Environmental bioethics emerged as a major theme, particularly in discussions surrounding pollution, conservation, and environmental health risks. The focus on environmental ethics reflects the Caribbean’s vulnerability to ecological challenges, including climate change.

Recent contributions revisit these issues with renewed emphasis on sustainability, environmental responsibility, and the ethical implications of human interaction with the natural environment.

Research Ethics and Capacity Building

Research ethics has been a foundational component of the Newsletter. It addresses issues related to participant protection, ethical review processes, and governance of research practices. Discussions have included the effectiveness of Research Ethics Committees and the ethical conduct of clinical trials.

Significant attention has also been given to capacity building in the region, particularly through structured initiatives aimed at strengthening research ethics education and institutional frameworks.

Emerging Technologies and Innovation

The ethical challenges posed by emerging technologies are discussed. Topics include genetic engineering, reproductive technologies, and artificial intelligence.

These discussions emphasize the need for robust ethical frameworks to guide the responsible development and implementation of biomedical and technological innovations, particularly in healthcare settings.

Bioethics Education, Training, and Professional Development

Bioethics education has remained a central and evolving theme, extending from early discussions on teaching ethics in medical curricula to broader considerations of ethical training in clinical environments.

Recent contributions highlight the integration of bioethics into experiential learning contexts, including simulation-based medical education. This approach emphasizes the development of ethical reasoning, professionalism, and reflective practice within training environments.

Together, these developments reflect a shift toward embedding ethics across all levels of healthcare education and professional formation.

Social Justice and Human Rights

Themes of equity, justice, and human rights are consistently represented throughout the Newsletter. Discussions have addressed stigma, healthcare disparities, the ethical treatment of vulnerable populations, and the broader social determinants of health.

This emphasis underscores the importance of justice-oriented bioethics in addressing inequities within Caribbean health systems.

Conclusion

The BSEC Newsletter from 2007 to 2024 reflects a dynamic and evolving body of bioethical scholarship. The progression from foundational ethical discussions to engagement with contemporary global challenges—including pandemics, environmental change, technological innovation, and advances in medical education—demonstrates a mature and responsive regional discourse.

The integration of ethics into diverse domains, including public health, research, and simulation-based training, highlights the Newsletter’s role as a critical repository of ethical reflection. It continues to inform policy, clinical practice, and education across the Caribbean and beyond. Reflection through the lens of the Bioethics Society of the English-speaking Caribbean has not only promoted bioethics in the Caribbean but also risen with the global challenges and emerging technologies

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