

FORUM FOR MEDICAL ETHICS SOCIETY

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**Forum for Medical Ethics Society
Annual report – 2020-2021**

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Introduction

In this reporting year 2020-2021, the Forum for Medical Ethics Society (FMES) completed 28 years since its inception. It continues to focus on strengthening medical ethics in modern healthcare. However, over time, FMES has expanded its engagement beyond medical ethics to the broader discipline of bioethics and its various sub-fields.

We take this opportunity to report the work accomplished during the year 2020-2021 across its three platforms namely:

- I. Health, Ethics and Law Institute for Training, Research and Advocacy (HEaL Institute) for FMES' programmatic work (since 2018);
- II. The *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics* for exchanges between non-medical experts, philosophers and social scientists, medical providers, health researchers, paramedical personnel and advocacy groups. IJME, till date, is the only journal on bioethics and medical ethics published from India (since 1993);
- III. National Bioethics Conferences (NBCs) platform for engagement amongst the stakeholders in bioethics. So far, FMES in collaboration with other organisations including academic institutes have organised seven NBCs in different parts of India (since 2005).

In this report, we present the activities undertaken and achievements in relation to these three platforms.

Additionally, **Section IV** presents contributions of FMES members¹ to various domains of bioethics, such as, scholarly writings; serving as faculty on bioethics educational programs; participated and/or steered seminars, webinars, or conferences as panellist; serving on ethics review boards or institutional ethics committees; and advocacy and campaigns steered/co-steered by FMES members in their own individual capacity.

Finally, **Section V** presents the audited statement of accounts for the reporting financial year 2020-2021, that is the assessment year of 2021-2022.

I. Health, Ethics and Law Institute (HEaL Institute) For Training, Research and Advocacy

The Health, Ethics and Law Institute ([HEaL Institute](#)) for Training, Research and Advocacy, a programmatic platform of FMES is the youngest one amongst the three platforms of FMES. It was established in 2018-2019. The HEaL Institute aims to serve as a bridge between academia and activism for promoting and safeguarding people's democratic and constitutional entitlement to health. The HEaL institute takes a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral, and intersectional approach which enables it to critically engage with law, regulations, and constitutional entitlements.

I.1 Research Initiatives

During this reporting year, most of our work at the HEaL Institute evolved to respond to various ethical, legal, and policy issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We briefly lay out select work undertaken during this reporting year.

I.1.1 Exploration: Data capture systems and gendered vulnerabilities during COVID-19 and public health emergencies [Non-funded]

This work is part of our work in the space of gender justice. Appropriate, well-informed, timely, and sustained response to public health emergencies in general, and to those of global concerns such as COVID-19 in particular, is a key to contain the pandemic. One of the critical pieces in achieving this goal is existence of a well-established system for epidemiologic data capture, required infrastructure, and robust governance structures for creating data repositories, data retrieval, and data sharing. Such an intelligence is essential to inform policies to help

¹ Every year, FMES sends out a communication to all its members requesting them to share their contributions to bioethics during the reporting year to be included in the FMES' Annual Report. We include materials that we receive from members. For various reasons not all members able to respond to the request.

rebuild communities, constituencies, and nations post pandemic. The World Health Organization notes the challenges involved in conducting global surveillance.

Extensive work evolved during the pandemic time in this thematic. Ours was one of those.

This is available in the form of a working paper.

I.1.2 Exploration: Ethical, legal and human rights issues in digital technology-based applications to respond to COVID-19 [Non-funded]

The public health emergency of global concern caused by the virus, namely Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2, henceforth COVID-19) and its impact on all spheres of our lives is unprecedented. The reasons for it to be unprecedented, amongst others, are its global spread, largely 'novel' nature of the virus and its behaviour, asymptomatic high infectious character, and no prevention or treatment options available at the moment and that it would be some time before these might be available and accessible to all. The other concerns are serious adverse impact it has on the overall economy leading to serious adverse impact on the marginal and vulnerable sections of our population. It has become an existential crisis for many in India which we have reason to believe is on account of how the government of India has been responding to the pandemic. A multi-prong approach to contain pandemic remains essential. Digital tracking mobile phone technology is one amongst the multiple strategies being resorted to in India and globally.

While innovative approaches, including digital technology-based ones, may be required to augment and complement other containment efforts during the pandemic. These innovations must comply with broader legal, ethical frameworks and constitutional rights of citizens. There is an inevitable challenge of striking a balance between 'safeguarding individuals' rights and freedom' and 'achieving greater public good' in such pandemics in alignment with foundations of public health ethics. The evolving scholarship on usefulness of apps such as Aarogya Setu for containment lacks consensus since the evidence of its effectiveness is varied and context-dependent. We are taking a critical look at digital technologies, especially Aarogya Setu, to appreciate the challenges and opportunities involved in deploying such apps in Indian context.

This led to:

- collaboration with other networks namely, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA), Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF), and All India Peoples Science Network (AIPSN).
- development of a manuscript which is currently with a peer reviewed journal for publication purposes.
- collaborative campaign on the issues relating to digital technology-based apps introduced during the pandemic

I.1.3 Exploration: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic response on other health research [Non-funded]

While governments have been focusing on the unprecedented disruption to the global economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the urgent need for COVID-19 research, other health research have become a casualty of the pandemic. Major research operations that are unrelated to COVID-19 have been significantly diminished or suspended entirely because of either COVID-19-related legal restrictions or logistical, staffing or operational concerns. Billions of people globally are currently affected by lockdowns or curfews. Because the timescale of such restrictive measures is unknown and subject to change, many studies are now in limbo and the welfare of tens of thousands of study participants is at risk. These circumstances have introduced complex ethical challenges that merit urgent attention from international sponsors, researchers and regulators. Certain sponsors and regulators have published guidelines on how the COVID-19-related disruptions to clinical research should be managed. Although these guidelines provide a good starting point in navigating the challenges of the evolving pandemic, they only apply to those researchers funded or governed by these bodies. Here, we provide guidelines on managing such disruptions that apply beyond these specific settings. We highlight some of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on other ongoing research projects that are unrelated to COVID-19 and provide practical guidance on how the welfare of affected study participants should be managed. We conclude that policy-makers, sponsors, researchers and regulators must adopt a more flexible approach to ensure participant safety, while maintaining data integrity and complying with good clinical practices.

I.1.4 Ending the caste-based violence including casteist discrimination and resulting deaths by suicides amongst medical students from marginalized communities in higher education institutions [May 2019 onwards] [Non-funded]

We reported in the previous Annual Report that FMES, in collaboration with three other networks, initiated an enquiry into the issue at hand of Institutionalised casteism in medical education that was triggered by the tragic death by suicide of Dr Payal Tadvi, a young woman who aspired to a bright future for herself and carried dreams of being of service to her community and society at large. She lost her life to the machinations of a cruel, discriminatory, and hierarchical system. Many others before her have also been driven to death by a system that is dominated by those in power, that operates through a systematic denial of dignity and which seems to be impervious to even the constitutional principles of inclusion, equality, and justice. This is the understanding from which this enquiry has begun.

This enquiry was initiated in 2019 soon after this unfortunate incident. And we went beyond this once single incident to look deeper into systemic and legal issues. It is being conducted by members of Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW), Forum for Medical Ethics Society (FMES), Medico Friends Circle (MFC), and People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL). It has been a journey for us to delve deeper into the issue and work towards not only recommendations but sustained collective efforts to make a difference.

We expect the report to be ready in the coming few months to be made available in the public domain. In the meanwhile, we also remained engaged with the justice process which was underway and the constraints therein in case of Dr Payal Tadvi's death by suicide. Statements issued on two occasions are presented later in the subsequent section.

I.2 Advocacy and campaigns

During this reporting year, HEaL Institute engaged with a number of issues relating to both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19, although the former dominated our work given the emerging issues during this unprecedented pandemic. We contributed substantively and substantially building on its long-standing work in health, ethics, rights and law spaces to these advocacy efforts. The key constituencies of advocacy engagement have been policy makers and other government offices, such as, central and provincial Ministries, Directorate of Health Services, and entities such as Medical Council of India and/or provincial Medical Councils. Most of these advocacy efforts and campaigns were collaborative engagements with other like-minded groups and national or regional networks in the areas of human rights, health rights, civil liberties, and groups working against the oppression of women.

Most of the advocacy efforts and campaigns have been supported by practitioners from across the sectors including health research, clinical practice, nursing practice, public health; civil society groups, national and regional networks and movements; and academia.

Alongside we steering and co-steering these advocacy efforts on issues relating to COVID-19, some of the FMES members, core team members of FMES and/or IJME also steered campaigns in their own individual capacity or collaborated with other like-minded individuals, groups/entities and networks. These are briefly mentioned in Section IV.9 later in this Annual Report.

Below, we present brief overview of the four themes of advocacy and campaigns we, as HEaL Institute and FMES, steered or co-steered during the year 2020-2021:

I.2.1 Technical, legal, ethical and implementation concerns regarding Aarogya Setu and other apps introduced during COVID-19 in India [Non-funded]

One of the responses of the Government of India to the pandemic comprised of introduction of digital technology-based apps, such as Aarogya Setu (AS) and later Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network (CoWIN). Early on and soon after the introduction of Aarogya Setu, a tracking app, we and a number of other groups/organizations, networks, and individuals expressed concerns about these apps. Some of the key concerns were related to violation of privacy, and compromised ethical principles and values, due to the AS App's design, its deployment, related policies regarding data storage, preservation of privacy and data sharing, as well as

overall policy implementation and inadequate legal frameworks for data protection and grievance redressal for users. We believe that the key challenge is ensuring that a balance ought to be struck between achieving greater public good and safeguarding individuals' rights and freedoms in alignment with frameworks provided by the Constitution of India, public health ethics discourse, International Health Regulations 2005 ([IHR 2005](#)), the [Siracusa Principles](#) on Civil and Human Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Together with the Internet Freedom Foundation ([IFF](#)), Jan Swasthya Abhiyan ([JSA](#)), and All India People's Science Network ([AIPSN](#)), we developed a discussion paper and [a statement](#) to raise these wide ranging issues involved in digital-technology based apps. The discussion paper currently is with a journal for publication purposes.

We have continued our engagement with this area given the aggressive push for digital technology-based health care solutions, and the introduction of National Digital Health Mission (NDHM). As part of this sustained engagement, we served on panels at webinars on the topic, and have integrated the thematic in our short duration intensive trainings in various sub-fields of bioethics.

I.2.2 Responding to the manifestation of interference of religion-based prejudices with public health science during the pandemic in medical text books [Non-funded]

We wrote '[An Open letter](#) regarding unscientific epidemiological practice and Islamophobia in a textbook of Medical Microbiology' to the authors of the 3rd edition of the Microbiology [textbook](#) titled 'Essentials of Medical Microbiology' published early in 2021 regarding the unscientific and seemingly prejudiced choice of using as an epidemiological [example](#), the Tablighi Jamaat (Society of Preachers) gathering organised in India between March 13-15, 2020. The Open letter argued that it is concerning that such an unscientific approach to epidemiology also runs the risk of inculcating discriminatory, in this case, Islamophobic ideation in public health teaching and more importantly in the minds of future generations of health professionals.

Some of the networks and groups, amongst others, include, Campaign against hate speech, Health for all campaign, Campaign against racism and casteism (India chapter), Jan Swasthya Abhiyan – Mumbai, Bebaak Collective, Indian Christians for Democracy. It [was published](#) on the online platform Kafila.

FMES in its own capacity and a number of FMES members including core team have sustained engagement with medical education and medical text books given the overall mandate of FMES. Over-medicalisation of medical textbook in Indian context suffer from being blinded to sex and gender-based specificities, lack any substantive engagement with ethics matters, and remain largely oblivious to intersectionality and how it plays in peoples' access to healthcare. Medical textbook plays a role in shaping the future clinical practitioners. Such prejudiced and unscientific approach to textbooks runs a risk of adversely impacting generations of medical students and in turn healthcare professionals.

I.2.3 Ending the caste-based violence including casteist discrimination and resulting deaths by suicides amongst medical students from marginalised communities in higher education institutions [May 2019 onwards] [Non-funded]

We issued two statements on this issue, one in August 2020, and the other in October 2020. First, we issued a statement in response to the decision of Maharashtra Medical Council (MMC) to restore licences of two of the three accused doctors registered with MMC in the Dr Payal Tadvi case of suicide despite the pending enquiry at MMC and court verdict; and MMC abdicating the responsibility of upholding the principles of medical ethics. The two demands included that the MMC: (a) restores suspension of the licenses of the accused doctors registered with it pending completion of the enquiry and the trial court's verdict.; (b) urgently undertakes the inquiry into the complaint filed by Dr Payal Tadvi's mother, Ms Abeda Tadvi, for gross misconduct of the three accused which resulted in suicide by Dr Payal Tadvi, and it must be completed without further delay, in a time bound and conclusive manner.

Second, a statement addressed to the Government of Maharashtra (GoM) was issued. The letter was a request to the GoM, to file review petition in Supreme Court in CRIMINAL APPEAL Nos.660-662 OF 2020 [Arising Out of Special Leave Petition (Crl.) Nos.3083-3085 of 2020] ANKITA KAILASH KHANDELWAL AND ORS.VERSUS STATE OF MAHARASHTRA AND OTHERS. The letter urged to ensure: (a) **State of Maharashtra** to immediately file a review petition in the Supreme Court against the aforementioned order, and appoint a Senior Criminal Lawyer to defend

the review petition in the Supreme Court; (b) **MUHS, BYL Nair Hospital and the Topiwala National Medical College (TNMC)**, Mumbai to expeditiously implement the recommendations of the Anti-ragging Committee and suspend the accused doctors from college report; (c) **State of Maharashtra** to ensure speedy justice delivery to Dr Payal Tadvi and her family.; (d) **Maharashtra Medical Council (MMC)** to restore the suspension of the two accused doctors who are registered with it as per the Maharashtra Council Act, 1965 and expedite the inquiry against them without any further delay; (d) **State of Maharashtra** to seek explanation from all the concerned offices, such as, MMC, MUHS, and the BYL Nair Hospital and TNMC, Mumbai for not taking required actions in response to the suicide of Dr Payal Tadvi which have seriously obstructed delivery of justice; and if needed seek concerned office bearers to resign to enable justice delivery.

We issued both these statements/letters on behalf the four networks – FMES, FAOW, MFC, and PUCL-MH – who are working on the enquiry report since 2019.

I.2.4 Standing in solidarity with grassroots healthcare workers during the pandemic [Non-funded]

We pursued some of our earlier work with grassroots workers, such as, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and other community-level health workers (CHWs) during the pandemic. The professional associations of these healthcare workers (HCWs) played an important role in supporting their work on the ground during these challenging times. Our efforts, along with a number of other groups and networks were to stand in solidarity with them demanding accountability from the state and to provide HCWs with all the support needed to help deliver on their commitments to communities by building and maintaining trust-based relationships with communities. The underlying philosophy is to enable HCWs to be change agents, rather than mere service providers. We organised a [webinar](#) for them to present their stories of struggle and resilience and steering advocacy with the government, and joined efforts made by other networks and groups. FMES-HEaL Institute also submitted a note to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) laying out issues that the grassroots healthcare workers faced during the pandemic. It was done in response to NHRC's appeal to civil society to help them provide insights into the issue, towards informing advisories which NHRC planned to issue to safeguard rights, well-being and safety of grassroots health workers.

We collaborated with the Community of Practitioners on Accountability and Social Action in Health ([COPASAH](#)), Azim Premji University ([APU](#)), Bangalore; Innovative Alliance for Public Health ([APH](#)), and [Seher](#).

I.3 Trainings: International and national collaborations

The pandemic disrupted our yearly training programs in three sub-fields of bioethics. However, we continued with the two training programs which were planned to take place in virtual spaces. These were as follows:

I.3.1 International collaboration with University for Essex for a Summer School in Migration and Health

We had an opportunity to be collaborate on a summer school on 'Strengthening capacities for evidence informed policy and practice on Migration & Health' being hosted by the Global Health Policy & Intersectional Equity, School of Health & Social Care, University of Essex, UK. The summer school takes place also under the aegis of the Migration Health for South Asia ([MiHSA](#)) network. We have this collaborative arrangement in place since 2019-2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic led to cancellation of the summer school scheduled in 2020. The next one is now scheduled in August 2021 and the preparation is underway.

Dr Sunita Bandewar is serving as part of the core team and as module faculty for one of the five modules comprising the summer school. The five modules include: Probing concepts & deepening understandings; Migration Health Policy & Governance; Evidence gaps & methodologies; Ethics & Responsibilities in Migration Health; and Creative lab and using social media. Dr Sunita is leading the module on ethics and justice center-staging issues around research ethics involving migrants, data sharing and surveillance and the overall conception of justice with reference to migrants, health and policy.

I.3.2 'Social Research Ethics' UGC-SWAYAM Online Training program: Round 3rd and 4th

We completed two additional rounds, the 3rd and 4th, of the online training program namely, '[Social Research Ethics](#)' hosted at the UGC-SWAYAM platform during this reporting year. We generally have registration ranging between 300-1000 individuals, although often it is a smaller number of registrants who remain active and complete the program. Registrants come from diverse disciplines. We complement the online session with live sessions on select themes relevant to the registrants and in response to their request. Given the pan-India outreach, it has helped us to reach out to various parts of India.

As reported in the previous Annual Reports, FMES in collaboration with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai developed this online research ethics training program in 2019 and was made available since 2019. It was supported by the UGC-SWAYAM grant in 2018 hosted at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. It is a 15 weeks long program and earn course participants four credits to the course participants. The mode of assessment is written examinations, intermediate and final.

I.4 HEaL Institute's blog space '[COVID-19 Insights: Analysis from ethics, law and human rights perspectives](#)'

To enable spaces for publishing short writings on the ethical, legal and human rights issues of the COVID-19 pandemic, HEaL Institute created a blog space in July 2020. It published about 20 pieces between August 2020 and March 2021 on various aspects of the ethical issues relating to the pandemic and responses developed by the policy makers, the healthcare systems and campaigns undertaken by civil society and health movement networks.

It also served as a repository of evolving resources both, at the National and the Global Level. We made efforts to enlist orders issued by the government and the international agencies such as the World Health Organization; published research reports published by other groups, posted announcements of webinars being organised by various constituencies to discuss the pandemic and response to the pandemic.

I.5 Collaborators: Academic institutes, networks, and organisations

As always, we continued working collaboratively with a number of like-minded organisations, networks, and academic institutes during the year for research activities, advocacy and campaigns, and training initiatives.

Academic institutes: Center for Ethics, Yenepoya – Deemed to be University, Mangalore; Global Health Policy & Intersectional Equity, School of Health & Social Care, University of Essex, UK; and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

Networks: All India Peoples' Science Network (AIPSN), Azim Premji University, Bangalore; Bebaak Collective, Campaign against hate speech; Community of Practitioners on Accountability and Social Action in Health (COPASAH); Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW); Health for all campaign; Indian Christians for Democracy; Innovative Alliance for Public Health, India; Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (JSA); Jan Swasthya Abhiyan – Mumbai; Medico Friend Circle (MFC); People's Union of Civil Liberties, Maharashtra Chapter (PUCL-MH); Campaign against racism and casteism (India chapter),

Organisations: Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF); and Seher.

II. *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics (IJME)*

Now in its 29th year, *IJME* continues to face financial challenges, but has succeeded in carrying on with continuous publication. Considered a reliable source of healthcare ethics information and policy, our articles are cited by journalists, policy makers, and even the courts. *IJME* content is used widely for ethics courses. The bleak healthcare scenario in the country is extremely challenging under the battering by waves of Covid-19, but the journal has an important role to play in the debate on the emerging ethical issues and possible solutions.

This brief report summarises the journal's work from April 2020 to March 2021.

II.1. What we published

From April 2020 to March 2021, *IJME* published 148 items, 105 of them in the four issues from April 2020 to Jan-March 2021, while 43 were published as Online First till March end. These included some received over the previous year. The section-wise distribution of content of all the four issues is shown below:

Editorials: 8; Covid-19 section: 24; Research articles:9; Theme articles:6; Comments: 12; Commentaries:2; Case study:1; Law and Bioethics section:1; Discussion section:7; Interview:1; Creative pieces:5; and Students' Corner: 1; Reports: 2; Reviews: 11; Letters:12; Obituary:1; Financial Report:1.

During the year, we published one Theme issue on the subject "Disability Rights: Accommodation, Autonomy and Advocacy" with six theme articles and an editorial.

Over the year 2020-21, the journal received 442 submissions, including invited ones. Of these: **262** were declined and archived (including 2 withdrawn), showing a rejection rate of 59%; **112** were accepted; **53** are under review. While 15 are with the authors for revision (up to Mar 31, 2021).

We welcomed Meenakshi Sushma to the editorial office in January 2021 as the new Editorial Coordinator.

II.2. Our reviewers

We are fortunate to have dedicated expert reviewers who put their sincere efforts into working on and improving submissions. Besides our internal reviewers, we thank the following external reviewers for their support during the year 2020-21:

Aamir Jafarey, Aarthy Ramasamy, Aarthi Raveendiran, Aasim Ahmad, Abha Saxena, Abida Sultana, Akhila Vasan, Alastair McLennan, Alex London, Alok Sarin, Anindita Majumdar, Anjali Nair, Arun Bhatt, Arun Kumar Annamalai, Astrid Lobo Gajiwala, Bernard Dickens, Bevin Vijayan, Bijoya Roy, Bushra Shirazi, Catherine Slack, Charles Weijer, David Healy, Deepa Pandit, Deepa Venkatachalam, Denny John, Dheeraj Kattula, Dhvani Mehta, Dipika Jain, Eldred Tellis, Eric Meslin, Florencia Luna, George Thomas, Hareesh Angothu, Ido Solt, Ignacio Mastroleo, Ishita Goyal, Jagriti Gangopadhyay, Jasodhara Dasgupta, Jayanta Bhattacharya, Jing-Bao Nie, J Devika, Jissa VT, JK Lakshmi, Joe Varghese, Kenneth Zysk, Ketaki Chowkhani, KS Jacob, Lakshmi Lingam, Lars Breimer, Lopa Mehta, Md Abid Geelani, Madhurima Nundy, Malu Mohan, Manickam Ponnaiah, Manjulika Vaz, Mario Vaz, Monica Sakhrani, Monty Khajanchi, Nagendra Dudi-Venkata, Nandini Kumar, Naveen Kumar, Nithya Gogtay, Nobhojit Roy, Omesh Bharti, Padmaja Shaw, Pragati Hebbar, Pragna Rao, Pravin Bolshete, Priya Satalkar, Priyadarshini C, Priya Pais, Radha D'Souza, Radha Holla Bhar, Raj Kumar Mani, Rakesh PS, Rakhil Gaitonde, Rakesh PS, Raman Kutty, Ramesh Awasthi, Ravi Prasad Varma, Ravi Vaswani, Reike van der Graaf, Richard A Cash, Rubesh Kumar, Ruth Macklin, Saima Iqbal, Sadhana Natu, Samiran Nundy, Sandeep Bawdekar, Santosh Vijayakumar, Satendra Singh, Saumil Dholakia, Saurav Basu, Sayori Ghoshal, Shahista Parveen, Shaibya Saldanha, Shilpa Phadke, Shining Star Lyngdoh, Shireen Jeejeebhoy, Shrinidhi Datar, Siddharth Sarkar, Smitha Deshpande, Sophia Modi, Soumitra Pathare, Subhasri B, Suchitra Dalvie, Sudarshini Subramaniam, Sudarshan Kottai, Sudha Ramalingam, Sujit Chandy, Sundar Sarukkai, Sunil K Pandya, Sunil Rajpal, Sunu C Thomas, Supriya Subramani, Suthanthira Kannan, Swarnalakshmi Singaravelu, Sylvia Karpagam, Upreet Dhaliwal, Usha Raman, Vallish BN, Varalakshmi Elango, Vipin Vashishtha, William Joe, Yogesh Jain.

II.3 Social media presence

The *IJME* Facebook group now has 2630 followers. We also have a Facebook page for HEaL institute with 557 followers. Additionally, we have Twitter accounts for *IJME* and HEaL Institute with 1866 and 168 followers, respectively, and a LinkedIn account for *IJME* with 954 connections. Bioethics news items across media and new articles published in *IJME* are regularly posted on these spaces.

II.4 Indexing

We continue to be indexed in Medline, The Philosopher's Index and Scopus. We have been part of PubMed's LinkOut facility from 2017 onwards, in order to provide direct access to readers searching the database. The Table below shows the direct usage from the PubMed database over the three years up to March 2021. We have

extended the range of our content to law, philosophy and the social sciences, and will keep striving towards inclusion in more databases in those disciplines, enlarging the reach of our content.

Month (2018-19)	Hits	Month (2019-20)	Hits	Month (2020-21)	Hits
Mar 2019	1239	Mar 2020	974	Mar 2021	1535
Feb 2019	1058	Feb 2020	939	Feb 2021	1213
Jan 2019	1020	Jan 2020	880	Jan 2021	1177
Dec 2018	823	Dec 2019	824	Dec 2020	1160
Nov 2018	1032	Nov 2019	800	Nov 2020	1220
Oct 2018	966	Oct 2019	857	Oct 2020	1129
Sep 2018	923	Sep 2019	869	Sep 2020	1033
Aug 2018	897	Aug 2019	758	Aug 2020	971
Jul 2018	885	Jul 2019	790	Jul 2020	1162
Jun 2018	814	Jun 2019	707	Jun 2020	1573
May 2018	1081	May 2019	904	May 2020	1953
Apr 2018	1136	Apr 2019	1095	Apr 2020	1217

II.5 Web management

We have four full time staff for all FMES/IJME work. Mahendra Shinde and Vijay Sawant, both veterans of the NGO sector, have been part of our team since 2019-20. While Samanvay Foundation continues as technical partner, we have accomplished a transfer of skills to enable in-house website management including page-making, uploading of content, and management of the back-end towards making FMES largely self-sufficient in technical management.

II.6 Usage data for the website

The Table below gives information about the comparative usage of our website over the past four years:

Indicator	2016-17	2017-18	2018 -19	2019-20	2020-21
Users	133207	156659	288962	572504	422565
Number of sessions	172809	198645	362369	709948	529277
Page views	324073	377224	554739	983615	744,345
Pages/session	1.88	1.90	1.53	1.39	1.41
Average session duration (minutes: seconds)	1.35	1:29	1.13	1.03	1.04
Bounce rates (%)	73.72	63.72	80.79	83.79	83.30
Key to terms used:					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Session: A session is the period/time a user is actively engaged with the website. When a user is inactive for 30 minutes or more, any future activity is attributed to a new session. 2. Bounce rate: Any user session which views only one page is considered to have bounced. Bounce rate is single-page sessions divided by all sessions. 3. Cumulative time spent = number of sessions multiplied by average session duration (in seconds) divided by 86400 seconds 					
Explanation:					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The number of users has reduced by about 25% over the past one year, similar to the page views. 2. There is a slight increase in the average session duration and pages per session, and a slight decrease in the bounce rate. 3. Based on 1 and 2 above, the following inferences can be drawn: (a) In comparison to the previous year, though the number of users reduced, the users who came to the website spent a longer time. (b) This could indicate that the users might be more engaged in the subject matter they are reading on the site. 4. Finally, consolidating all metrics, the total time spent by all <i>IJME</i> users has decreased by 24%, from 518 days in 2019-20 to 392 days in 2020-21. This needs to be seen in continuity with 2018-19 as 2019-2020 depicts what can only be an outlier year with a sudden increase in number of sessions and page views. 					

II.7 Our print issue

We have maintained the size of the print issue at 88 pages, except for the October Theme issue which was extended to 92 pages to accommodate more content. The subscription rates have been revised in January 2021, as shown below. We have been able to print all four issues throughout 2020-21, although the lockdown following the pandemic caused lengthy delays in printing. Mailing of the last two print issues has been delayed by the current lockdown in the second wave of the pandemic, but has now been resumed.

Subscription rates for IJME Effective from January 2021														
Period	India (in INR)						SAARC Countries* (in INR)				International (in USD)			
	Individual		Student		Institutional		Individual		Institutional		Individual		Institutional	
	Print - copy	E-copy**	Print - copy	E-copy	Print - copy	E-copy	Print - copy	E-copy	Print - copy	E-copy	Print - copy	E-copy	Print - copy	E-copy
One Year	1,440	1,300	720	650	3,600	3,240	2,160	1,940	4,320	3,890	90	80	180	160
Two Years	2,520	2,270	1260	1140	6,300	5,670	3,960	3,560	7,740	6,970	150	140	330	300
Five Years	6,480	5,830	NA	NA	16,200	14,580	10,080	9,070	19,800	17,820	360	320	810	730
Life-time	72,000	64,800	NA	NA	1,80,000	1,62,000	86,400	77,760	1,98,000	1,78,200	7,200	6,480	18,000	16,200

*SAARC Countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka
 **This will be an e-copy of the full issue in pdf format that subscribers to the e-copy will receive via email.

III. National Bioethics Conference platform and the 8th NBC 2020

The Forum for Medical Ethics Society (FMES) established the National Bioethics Conference (NBC) platform in 2005 to provide a space for deliberation on issues of national, regional and global concern relating to justice, equity and ethics. The themes range from health and allied subjects to improving people's well-being, the healthcare system, responding to newer issues with advances in health technologies, and challenges arising from the changing terrain on account of climate change. All NBCs have involved co-hosts and collaborators which made it a shared platform despite being established by FMES. We have been able to maintain this spirit over the past fifteen years since its inception. So far, we have organized seven NBCs, each attracting between about 350 and 700 participants

III.1 8th National Bioethics Conference 2020

The year 2020 has gone down in the history of humankind as one of its biggest civilisational crises, due to the pandemic. In addition to the challenges, it poses to global livelihoods, economy, governance and social order, COVID-19 has posed a massive challenge to healthcare. Besides putting a huge strain on its capacity and delivery, it is also testing its ethical frameworks as never before.

At the IJME/FMES/HEaL, we realised that there is an urgent need to identify and reassert the importance of ethical and human rights issues around the pandemic, especially its impact on healthcare in South Asia through multisectoral dialogues. It seems that this challenge is going to be with us for some time to come. Against this backdrop, we organized the [8th NBC](#) on a virtual platform, on the theme, '**Crisis within a crisis: Scientific, ethical & humanitarian challenges of COVID-19**'.

III.2 Format: Past NBCs have been spread over two and a half consecutive days and have hosted multiple events in that short time, with keynote addresses in plenary sessions, parallel scientific sessions for presentation of papers, parallel workshops, pre- and post-conference and satellite sessions. Simultaneous art and humanities conferences have also been part of some of them.

The 8th NBC was a simple and short virtual event, rolling over four Saturdays, but with a sharper focus on the urgent issues arising out of the pandemic and providing a platform for debate and consensus on some critical issues.

III.3 Participants: The online format allowed for the participation of a much larger number, as compared with the 695 participants at the last NBC. While the largest number of participants, 913, were from within India, 46 were from the rest of the sub-continent; 12 from other Asian countries, 9 from African nations, 14 from the Middle Eastern nations, 44 from the US and Canada, 3 from South American countries, 28 from the UK and Europe, 3 from Australia and New Zealand, with no information about 69 participants. From a professional perspective, considering occupational affiliation of the participants, 640 were medical professionals, 115 were from the academic sector, 105 students, 81 researchers, 11 represented the law, 22 the media, 10 were from the administrative and management sector, 2 were Catholic priests, and 155 provided no affiliation details.

III.4 Organisers and co-hosts

The Forum for Medical Ethics Society, Mumbai

The 8th NBC was organised in collaboration with Centre for Ethics (CFE) Yenepoya (Deemed to be University), Mangalore. It was co-hosted by MOHAN Foundation, Chennai & Oxfam India.



III.5 Pre conference

International Conference of Transplant Coordinators, November 21–22, 2020

Objectives:

- To gain an understanding of the recently concluded multi-country “World Brain Death project” and its impact on organ donation; and
- To get an overview of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected organ donation and transplantation in India, its impact on the health of organ failure patients, recipients and transplant coordinators.
- To initiate discussion on common ethical dilemmas in the field of organ donation in India with special reference to organ allocation.
- To enthuse the Transplant coordinators by giving living examples of “Women in Transplantation”.

Target audience: This conference was intended for transplant coordinators across India, most of whom are medical social workers, nurses and a few doctors. This is the 13th edition of the conference and about 100 delegates participated.

Description: This time the conference focused on the following issues which included the World Brain Death Project, Impact of COVID-19 on the life of patients, recipients, transplant coordinators, working of NGOs, ethical issues in organ allocation and highlight some of the success stories on Women in Transplant.

III.6 Post Conference Session

Age of marriage, age of motherhood and improved maternal health Right concerns, wrong solutions?
15th January 2021, 4 to 6 pm

III.7 NBCs organised so far: An overview

The FMES-IJME, in collaboration with partners, has organized seven national conferences with varying themes till date. We hosted the 14th World Congress of Bioethics jointly with the 7th NBC in December, 2018.

No	Year	Theme	Venue	No. of collaborating organizations	No. of participants
1	2005	Ethical challenges in biomedical and social science research	Mumbai	20	317
2	2007	Moral/ethical imperatives of healthcare technologies	NIMHANS, Bengaluru	38	500
3	2010	Governance in healthcare	AIIMS, New Delhi	38	350
4	2012	Ethics and regulatory challenges in health research	University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad	03	370
5	2014	Integrity in healthcare and research	St John's Medical College, Bengaluru	03	695
6	2017	Healing and dying with dignity: ethical issues in palliative care, end-of-life care and euthanasia	YASHADA, Pune	21	370
7	2018	Health for all in an unequal world: Obligations of Global Bioethics {with 14th World Congress of Bioethics}	St John's Medical College, Bengaluru	04	655
8	2020	Crisis within a crisis: Scientific, ethical and humanitarian challenges of Covid-19	Online	02	1141

IV. FMES members' contribution to the bioethics discourse, research, capacity building and other engagements (2020-21)

IV.1 Research projects

IV.1.1 Research Project: Enhancing the Quality of Response of the Health Care System to Sexual Assault

Dr Sunita Bandewar has been involved in this project in her individual capacity as co-Principal Investigator along with Prof Dr Lakshmi Lingam, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. The study supported by the Indian Council of Medical Research; New Delhi was hosted at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. We are poised to wrap up this study and the study report is due for publication in the April 2021. This report presents a comprehensive study we undertook of healthcare and medico-legal care for survivors of gender-based violence

with special focus on domestic and sexual violence and identification of gaps in infrastructure and human resources. The study covered two states – Maharashtra and Telangana.

IV.1.2 Research project: Acquiescence and submission to COVID-19 vaccination: Ethics consideration [Supported through WHO, Geneva]

Compelling individuals to be vaccinated with candidate vaccines that have been granted emergency use approval based on limited data, and penalising non-compliance, raises challenging ethical issues. For instance, some individuals may wish to be vaccinated, but may be hesitant to be vaccinated with particular vaccine candidates. On the other hand, some individuals may be averse to vaccination of any sort but may find themselves being forced to submit to vaccination in certain situational contexts to gain access to benefits or services. In all such instances, acquiescence and submission runs counter to the notion of voluntariness, which is a central pillar of the doctrine of informed consent.

It was short duration (3 months) project and Dr Sunita Bandewar was involved in individual capacity.

IV.2 Scholarly contribution to COVID-19: Papers published in academic journals

1. George, T., Ramanathan, M. and Mishra, US. (2020). COVID-19 and Lockdown. The Divergent Trajectory of Interstate Migrants in Kerala. University Practice Connect, Responses to COVID. June 16, Retrieved from: <https://practiceconnect.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/covid-19-and-lockdown-the-divergent-trajectory->
2. Ghoshal, R. (2020). [Twin public health emergencies: Covid-19 and domestic violence](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*. 5(3), 195-9.
3. Gopichandran, V., Subramaniam, S. (2020). [Response to Covid-19: An ethical imperative to build a resilient health system in India](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*. 5(2), 89-92.
4. Gopichandran, V. (2020). [Clinical ethics during the Covid-19 pandemic: Missing the trees for the forest](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*. 5(3), 182.
5. Gopichandran, V. (2020). [Integrity during pandemic times: The case for flexible adamancy](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*. 5(3), 1-4.
6. Gopichandran, V. (2020). [Moving from clinical to pragmatic equipoise in health policy and systems research](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*. 5(3), 1-4.
7. Gopichandran, V. (2021). [Up close and personal with Covid 19: An interview with Dr Usha Sriram](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*. 6(2), 140-2
8. Gopichandran, V., Subramaniam, S. (2021). [A qualitative inquiry into stigma among patients with Covid-19 in Chennai, India](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*. March 2021. 6(3), 193-201
9. **Gopichandran, V.**, Subramaniam, S. & Kalsingh, M.J. (2020). COVID-19 Pandemic: a Litmus Test of Trust in the Health System. *Asian Bioeth Rev*, 12(2), 213–221, Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41649-020-00122-6>
10. Hiruthya, CV., Vaz, M., **Timms, O.** and others. (2020). *A Catholic Ethical Response To Questions About Covid-19 Vaccines*. Conference of Catholic Bishops of India, 1-12, Retrieved from: <https://ccbi.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/A-Catholic-Response-to-Covid-Vaccines.pdf>
11. Jesani, A. (2020). [Scientific integrity tested by the Covid-19 pandemic](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*. 5(3), 261-3
12. Singh, J. A., Bandewar, S. V., & Bukusi, E. A. (2020). [The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic response on other health research](#). *Bull World Health Organ*, 98(9), 625.
13. Pitre, A. (2021). What about women? Budget 2021 ignores gender gap widened by COVID. *The Quint*, Retrieved from: <https://www.thequint.com/voices/women/union-budget-2021-women-ignored-inequality-gap>
14. **Ramanathan, M.**, Mishra, US., Vijayan, B. (2020). COVID 19 and Elderly Care: Japan registered low mortality despite highest ratio of 65+ population. *Devdiscourse*, Retrieved from: <https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/health/1038306-covid-19-and-elderly-care-japan-registered-low-mortality-despite-highest-ratio-of-65-population>
15. Srinivasan, S. (2021). [Covid-19 vaccines: The public must have confidence in the science](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*, 6(1), 3-5.
16. Srinivasan, S. (2021). [Placebo in new Covid-19 vaccine trials: data quality prioritised over participants' rights](#). *Indian Med Ethics*, 6(2), 103-105
17. Srinivasan, S. (2021). [Covid-19 vaccines: The public must have confidence in the science](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*. 6(1), 3-5

IV.3. Scholarly contributions in the areas of bioethics: Papers published in academic journals

1. Bandewar, S.V.S. (2021). Ending caste-based oppression of students in educational institutions: An unfinished agenda. *Indian J Med Ethics*. Jan-Mar; 6(1) NS: 6-9. DOI: 10.20529/IJME.2021.007. <https://ijme.in/articles/ending-caste-based-oppression-of-students-in-educational-institutions-an-unfinished-agenda/>
2. Ghoshal, R. (2021). What NFHS-5 Says About Violence Against and Empowerment of Bihar's Women. *The WIRE*. Mar 14, Retrieved from : <https://thewire.in/women/bihar-women-empowerment-violence-nfhs-5>
3. Govind, N., Chowkhani, K. (2020). [Integrating concerns of gender, sexuality and marital status in the medical curriculum](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*, 5(2), 92-4.
4. Maxrath, A., Pitre, A. (2021). Nirbhaya Fund plagued with transparency and underuse issues, says Oxfam India. *IDR*, Retrieved from: <https://idronline.org/nirbhaya-fund-plagued-with-transparency-and-underuse-issues-says-oxfam-india/>
5. Sahi, M., Shroff, S., Navin, S., Kumar, P. (2021). [Organ commercialism, trafficking and transplant tourism](#). *Indian J Med Ethics*, July 28, pp. 1-8,
6. Pai, S. A. (2020). *William Osler and medical ethics*. In *Sir William Osler – An encyclopedia*. (Ed.) CS Bryan. Jeremy Norman Publishing, California.
7. Pai, S. A. (2021). *The doctor-doctor relationship*. In *Reflections on Medical Humanities*. (Ed.) Swarupa Bhagwat. Dr Manu V.L. Kothari Chair and Division of Medical Humanities, Seth G.S. Medical College and K.E.M. Hospital, Mumbai. Retrieved from: <https://www.slideshare.net/AnjaliMalpani1/reflections-on-medical-humanities>
8. Pai, S. A. (2021). *Ethics in biomedical sciences*. In *Handbook of academic and research integrity*. (eds.) B. Patwardhan B, and Thakur A. University Grants Commission, (in press).
9. Pitre, A., Lingam, L. (2021). [Age of Consent: Challenges and contradictions of sexual violence laws in India](#). *Sex Reprod Health Matters*, 29(2).
10. Pitre, A., Agnes, F., and others. (2021). *Her Right to Equality: From Promise to Power*. (eds.) Agarwal N , Penguin Book, ISBN: 9780670092994, Retrieved from: <https://penguin.co.in/book/her-right-to-equality/>
11. Pitre, A. (2020). Condemning the Hathras horror isn't enough. We need to talk about caste and gender in our institutions. *NewsLaundry*, Retrieved from: <https://www.newsLaundry.com/2020/10/06/condemning-the-hathras-horror-isnt-enough-we-need-to-talk-about-caste-and-gender-in-our-institutions>
12. Pitre, A. (2020). Hadiya to Love Jihad Laws: Why do we keep infantilizing women? *The Quint*, Retrieved from: <https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/love-jihad-and-other-laws-misused>
13. Ramanathan, M. (2020). Obsessive compulsive hygiene: The new normal. *Bioethics Links, a newsletter*, Retrieved from: <https://siut.org/bioethics/cbec-newsletter-bioethics-links/>
14. Vaz, M., Timms, O., Johnson, A. R., S, R. K., Ramanathan, M., & Vaz, M. (2021). Public perceptions on Controlled Human Infection Model (CHIM) studies—a qualitative pilot study from South India. *Monash Bioeth Rev*, 39(1), 68–93. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40592-020-00121-1>
15. Srivastava, S., Ramanathan, M., Dhillon, P. et al. (2021). Gender Differentials in Prevalence of Loneliness among Older Adults in India: an Analysis from WHO Study on Global AGEing and Adult Health. *Ageing Int.*, Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12126-020-09394-7>
16. Timms, O., Sinora, D. and Ewuoso, C. (nd). Managing feeding needs in Advanced Dementia: Perspectives from Ethics of Care and Ubuntu Philosophy. *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*.
17. Timms, O. (2020). *A look at the Doctor Patient Relationship*. In *Reflections on Medical Humanities*. Ed. Swarupa Bhagwat, Dr Manu V.L. Kothari Chair and Division of Medical Humanities Seth G. S. Medical College and K.E.M hospital, Mumbai.
18. Timms, O. (2020). *Clinical Ethics Case studies*. FMES-HEaL Institute and CSER, 2020.
19. Vaz, M., Timms, O., Johnson, A.R., Rathna Kumari S., Ramanathan M. and Vaz M. (2020). Public perceptions on Controlled Human Infection Model (CHIM) studies—a qualitative pilot study from South India. *Monash Bioeth. Rev.*, 39. 68-93, Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40592-020-00121-1>

IV.4 Contributions to public engagement on bioethics issues: Writing in the popular press

A number of members of FMES contribute to the bioethics discourse by writing in the popular press which serves as part of our public engagement efforts. Amongst others, Dr Sanjay Nagral, Chairperson, FMES, wrote a weekly piece in Mumbai Mirror, a popular daily under '[Second Opinion](#)'. Amongst others, Dr Vijay Gopichandran runs a blog space titled '[Story Telling](#)' to present his own experiences working in the clinical care settings and

articulating complex ethical issues he and his colleagues faced during the pandemic; and Dr Olinda Timms also wrote in popular press center-staging ethical issues in health and health care.

IV.5. Visiting and guest faculty in areas of bioethics

Amar Jesani

1. A virtual class with six sessions on different topics of research on bioethics and moderation of discussion was held. This includes a mock ethics review by Institution Ethics Committee (IEC). Also, an intensive summer workshop on Ethics and Research (I-SWEAR) was conducted for four-days, it was a certificate course, organised by Centre for Ethics, Yenepoya Deemed to be University, Mangalore [July 7- 11, 2020]
2. A virtual class on application of research ethics in social sciences was conducted for the students in M.Sc. in Research Ethics program, Centre for Ethics, Yenepoya Deemed to be University, Mangalore. [August 10,12,14,21, 2020].
3. From 10 am to 1 pm, two sessions on “Research Ethics”. Workshop was held along with the Regional Mentor Institute, Ramalingaswamy Centre on Equity and Social Determinants of Health Bangalore. [September 22, 2020]
4. A virtual class on Historical Aspects of Research Ethics was conducted for the students in M.Sc. in Research Ethics program at the Centre for Ethics, Yenepoya Deemed to be University, Mangalore. [October 5 - 8,2020]
5. A virtual class was conducted along with Vijay Gopichandran. The session included Ethical challenges in the race for the Covid vaccine: different rules for pandemics? Also research and public health ethics certificate course, by KEMRI (Kenya Medical Research Institute), Nairobi & CBEC (Centre for Biomedical Ethics and Culture), Karachi, supported by the NIH-Fogarty International. [October 16, 2020]
6. A virtual class was held including Session on “The Science and Ethics of Vaccine Research: Perspectives from the Pandemic” for PG Diploma and Master’s Degree program students in bioethics, Centre for Biomedical Ethics and Culture, Karachi. [December 19, 2020]
7. Session on: "Coercive means to enforce writ of the state: role of physicians" was held for PG Diploma and Master’s Degree program students in bioethics, Centre for Biomedical Ethics and Culture, Karachi. [February 6, 2021]

Mala Ramanathan

1. Jointly with Ravi Prasad Varma: online module on Public Health Ethics as part of the Masters of Public Health (MPH) course, organised by Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies (AMCHSS), Thiruvananthapuram. [May 16 - June 10, 2020]
2. Taught 3 sessions of I-SWEAR course, Centre for Ethics, Yenepoya Deemed to be University, Mangalore. [July 9 - 11, 2020]
3. Developed and taught an online module on ‘Qualitative Research Methods’ for the Batch C, Masters’ in Research Ethics program, Yenepoya Deemed to be University, Mangalore. [October 12 – 17, 2020]
4. Training module on ‘Qualitative approaches for social innovation’ for the TIMED fellows, BMT Wing, SCTIMST. Thiruvananthapuram. [October 17, 23, 30 and November 6, 13, 2020]
5. Taught a two-hour session on ‘Thinking about sampling’ for the module on Qualitative Research Methodology for Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai [November 10, 2020]
6. Delivered the inaugural session on ‘Theoretical Foundations of Qualitative Research’ for the course on ‘Qualitative research methods in mental health – A course for residents and trainees’ for NIMHANS, Bengaluru [January 16, 2021]
7. Organised and moderated an informal talk for AMCHSS PhD students’ titled ‘Navigating the writing phase of PhD-what the style manuals don’t tell you!’, for AMCHSS PhD Students Forum, Thiruvananthapuram. [January 22, 2021]
8. Faculty for a training module on ‘Ethics in community-based research’ for PGDB and MBE students, for CBEC, SIUT, Karachi. [February 6, 2021]

Olinda Timms

1. Training on Research ethics for PhD training Faculty on Publication Ethics was held along with St Johns Research Institute. [August - September, 2020]
2. Training on E-Empower Basic Ethics Course Resource Person Teaching modules and presentation – Pediatric Ethics was held along with Indian Society of Pediatrics. [January – March, 2021]
3. DRISHTi a training on Lead faculty Informed Consent Privacy and confidentiality, along with Sangath (NGO). [March, 2021]

IV.6. Members of committees appointed by the Government of India and allied bodies

Amar Jesani

1. Joined as Member of Board of Studies, Philosophy Department. With Jai Hind College (Autonomous institute of University of Mumbai), Churchgate, Mumbai [March 23, 2018]
2. Joined as Member, Scientific Committee with Association for Responsible Research and Innovation in Genome Editing (www.arrige.org) Paris, France [March 17, 2019]
3. Joined as Member on Board of Studies, Sociology Department, with Mithibai College of Arts (Autonomous institute of University of Mumbai), Vile Parle West, Mumbai [April 4, 2019]
4. Joined as member of National Apex Committee for Stem Cell Research and Therapy, with Govt of India: ICMR & DBT [September 25, 2020]

Mala Ramanathan

1. Joined Examiners' Committee for MPH Part 1, Viva-voce in PGIMER, Chandigarh [July 14, 2020]
2. Joined Selection committee, MPH, PHFI in PHFI, Delhi [July 21-24, 2020]
3. Joined Selection committee for MPH in AMCHSS, SCTIMST [July 27-28, 2020]
4. Joined as Scientific Advisory Board in Centre for Ethics, Yenepoya University [March 27, 2021]

Olinda Timms

1. Joined Institutional Committee for Stem Cell Research in National Center for Biological Sciences, Bangalore [September, 2020]
2. Joined Advisory Committee for GoCoronaGo Project in Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore [June, 2020]

IV.7 Members of Ethics Review Boards/Committees

Amar Jesani

1. Member, International Ethics Review Board (ERB) in MSF - Medicine Sans Frontiers for over a decade.
2. Member, Institutional Review Board (IRB) in TISS – Tata Institute of Social Sciences over the past four years.

Mala Ramanathan

1. Was part of the Institutional Ethics Committee, Member Secretary in SCTIMST, [April 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020]
2. Is part of the IEC, Member in HAP to date
3. Member, Scientific Advisory Board, Tealeaf programme of DLR Prerna in DLR Prerna [December 17, 2020]

Olinda Timms

1. Chairperson, Institutional Review Board in Bangalore Baptist Hospital, [Since 2015]
2. Chairperson, Institutional Ethics Committee in Trans-Disciplinary University Bangalore, [Since 2016]
3. Member, Institutional Ethics Committee in St Marthas Hospital, Bangalore [Since 2012]

Sanjay A Pai

1. Member, IRB committee in Karunashraya Hospice, Bangalore [Since 2010]
2. Member, IRB committee in Institute of Ayurveda and Integrative Medicine [FRLHT/TDU], [Since 2012]

Sumana Navin

1. Member Secretary, MOHAN Foundation Ethics Committee for Three years [2019 – 2022]

Vijayaprasad Gopichandran

1. Member, Scientific Review Committee, IRB in The Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University.
2. Member, Institutional Ethics Committee in World Vision India.
3. Member, Institutional Ethics Committee in ESIC Medical College and PGIMSR, Chennai.

Sunita Sheel Bandewar

1. Member, International Ethics Review Board (ERB) in MSF - Medicine Sans Frontiers since 2006.
2. Chairperson, ARMMAN Ethics Review Board (A-ERB) since 2021

IV.8. Participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, colloquiums, international visits

Amar Jesani

1. Had presented on: Covid-19 Pandemic: Public Health, Safety and Governance in S.P.N. Doshi Women's College, Mumbai, the National Virtual Conference on "Multidimensional Perspectives of Navigating with COVID 19" [May 27, 2020]
2. Participated in session on: "Health Research Ethics: History, Framework and Integrity. Conducted by Department of Sociology and Research Committee of the KC College, Mumbai, 'Qualitative Research in times of COVID 19' [June 16, 2020]
3. Had presented on: 'Scientific and Ethical Standards of Clinical Trials in Public Health Emergencies' conducted by Webinar Series on 'Ethics in Clinical Research', organized by Indo-US Vaccine Action Programme, of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India and National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health (NIH), United State [September 24, 2020]
4. Conducted a lecture on Medical Ethics For students and faculty of the NIHF (National Institute of Health and Family Welfare), New Delhi, 11.30 am to 1 pm. [September 25, 2020]
5. Had presented on: Safe Clinical Trials in Developing COVID Vaccine in a Webinar on 'Pandemic Medical care and Changing Perspectives of Medical Ethics', The Centre for Health Law and Policy (CHLP), National University of Advanced Legal Studies (NUALS), Kochi, Kerala. 2 pm onward. [October 7, 2020]
6. Conducted a session on: Health consumers or patients? in a Webinar series on: Making a profit from providing health care and private health care without a profit motive: is there a conflict? Organised by Indian Institute of Public Health, PHFI, Gurgaon [February 4, 2021]
7. Had presented on: The ethical challenges of PPPs and private health care in the context of the constitutional right to health care services and health as a social good? During the Webinar on Private Medical care and PPPs in India and in Bihar, organized by Asian Development Research Institute, Patna & Oxford University [February 11, 2020]
8. Conducted a Session: About bioethics and Ethics and Assisted Reproduction For researchers and faculty of: C-Help (Centre for Health Equity, Law & Policy), Indian Law Society, Pune. 11 am to 1 pm. [January 27, 2021]
9. Participated in COVID 19 - Masks, Vaccines and Lockdowns: Rights or Wrongs? (Panel Discussion) conducted by India Science Festival, 2021 (<https://www.indiasciencefest.org/>) [January 10, 2021]
10. Conducted a Session on Ethics in health teaching a class of social work, at the Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai [February 9, 2021]
11. Conducted a Session on Ethical consideration in research with human participation in a Workshop for researchers, South Asia Nitrogen Hub, UK-India Joint Projection. [February 18, 2021]
12. Conducted five webinars on: Ethical and Legal Challenges in Research on Preventive Vaccines and in Making Approved Vaccines Accessible. Jointly organised with N. Sarojini, Yogesh Jain, Veena Johari and Chinu Srinivasan [November 7, 9, 11, 17 & 21,]
13. Gave a presentation on doctors and coercive interrogation: History, ethics debate and split loyalty in a webinar organized by Naavu Bharathiyaru/We The People of India, Bangalore [July 25, 2020]

14. Gave a presentation on Preventive Vaccines for SARS-Cov-2 and CHIM (Controlled Human Infection Model for Covid-19) in a webinar on Ethical challenges of conducting research in a pandemic, Organised by SunoIndia (www.sunoindia.in) [June 27, 2020]
15. Gave a presentation on Ethical challenges in preventive vaccine trial for SARS-Cov-2 (Covid-19) in a Webinar on Speeding up vaccine trials in India, Organised by Indian Scientists Response to Covid-19 (<http://indscicov.in/>) [July 7, 2020]
16. Gave a presentation on Covid-19 Pandemic: Public Health, Safety and Governance in a Webinar organised by CARD (Centre for Adivasi Research and Development), Bhubaneswar. [September 27, 2020]
17. Was part of the session on Approaches to social science research: History and ethics in a webinar on Feminist Research Methodology, Dept of Women's Studies, University of Calicut [February 12, 2021]
18. Was part of a Panel discussion in a webinar on Democracy, Human Rights and the Right to Health in the time of Covid-19, organised by Uplift International, Seattle [March 4, 2021]

Amita Pitre

1. Organised a Post Conference Event at the 8th National Bioethics Conference on the latest government move to consider increasing the minimum age of marriage for better maternal health, Oxfam India, FMES and Yenepoya University Ethics Centre [January 2021]

Mala Ramanathan

1. Delivered a talk on 'IRB Adaptations during COVID19', for the CORE-net Coffee Hour session. CORE-net is an informal space for network members to discuss their work, share experiences with each other, and learn about other ongoing work on COVID-19 [November 3, 2020]
2. Was a panellist in 'Crisis of ethics review and research ethics committees in the COVID-19 pandemic' as part of the National Bioethics Conference, 2020 [virtual conference held over four weeks], NBC 2020 and workshop organised by the CORE-net group [December 12, 2020]
3. Was a panellist for a session on 'Independent Midwifery Practice'. 15th National Conference of the Society of Midwives India 2021, organised by the Kerala Chapter [February 12, 2021]
4. Gave a plenary talk on 'Gender and the Pandemic' on the occasion of International Women's Day on March 8 2021'. Seminar organised by the International Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai. [March 8, 2021]

Nikhil Govind:

1. Was a Member of Organising Committee, 8th National Bioethics Conference, November 28 to December 19, 2020. It was organised by FMES, Mumbai, and Center for Bioethics, Yenepoya (Deemed to be University), Mangalore. [November 28 to December 19, 2020]

Olinda Timms:

1. Was a speaker at Nurture Commodified & Presented paper on commodification of womens' bodies in cross-border surrogacy arrangements, in University of West England, The Australian University and The Open University [March 2021]
2. Participated jointly with Dina Signora in Asia Pacific Bioethics Education Network (APBEN) Conference on Surrogacy in the Pandemic: Implications for Bioethics Education' [March 2021]
3. Was a speaker at 'Ethics of Body donation and Brain donation' online seminar on brain bank by Dr Anita Mahadevan, NIMHANS. Catholic Womens League. [March 4, 2021]
4. Was a Speaker at International Webinar on Resilience and Coping amidst the Pandemic'. St Johns College of Nursing, Bangalore [April 29, 2021]

Rakhi Ghoshal:

1. Was a panelist at Global Health Science and Practice, Technical Exchange (panel on health systems response to gender-based violence) at USAID [April 21-24, 2021]
2. Was a panelist at WHO Webinar on Health Systems Strengthening response for Gender Based Violence. WHO and MOHFW [March 15, 2021]

3. Was a guest speaker at a special talk series on CARD Odisha at the Dept of History and Political Science, Jawaharlal Nehru College, Odisha. [October 17, 2020]

Sanjay A Pai:

1. Conducted a Zoom Lecture on Ethics in medical writing as Part of series of lectures organised by Springer-IAMJE, for an hour [October 9, 2020]
2. Was part of the panel discussion on the Authorship issues in medical research organised by AIIMS Bhubaneswar via ZOOM, for Two hours. [December 10, 2020]
3. Presented a paper on Ethics in Medical Writing organised by Urological Society of India and Indian Journal of Urology during a Webinar: Scientific writing-the wider perspective via Zoom. [December 13, 2020]

Sumana Navin

1. Was part of 8th National Bioethics Conference – Organizing Committee member and Rapporteurs Committee member, held on [November 28, December 5, 12 and 19, 2020]
2. Was an Organizer and Faculty – Pre-conference satellite meeting of 8th National Bioethics Conference – International Conference of Transplant Coordinators organized by MOHAN Foundation and Network & Alliance of Transplant Coordinators (NATCO) held on [November 21 and 22, 2020]

IV.9 Advocacy and campaigns

IV.9.1 COVID-19 related concerns

Some of the members of FMES and core editorial team members of IJME pursued the issue relating to lack of scientifically robust approach of the government bodies towards deaths that occurred of some of the recipients of COVID-19 vaccination. Two campaigns were taken up by FMES members in collaboration with others. These are: [Investigations of deaths of 11 healthcare](#) and frontline workers following administration of COVID-19 vaccine [Feb 17, 2021]; [Urgent investigation](#) of deaths and serious adverse events following administration of COVID-19 vaccine [March 16, 2021]. These statements argued that the government is responsible for ensuring safety of all vaccines and particularly those administered through a government programme. This includes monitoring and surveillance of adverse events following immunisation (AEFIs). AEFIs are to be investigated through well-defined procedures for vaccine pharmacovigilance and the reports made available in the public domain, for trust-building and transparency. This is especially important for new vaccines such as the COVID-19 vaccines currently being rolled out across the country under emergency use authorisation, targeted to millions.

Members of the FMES supported many other advocacy campaigns relating to COVID-19 pandemic on various issues, such as, irregularities and ethical violations in the conduct of the clinical trial for Bharat Biotech's COVAXIN. This involved participating in drafting statement/letters to the government bodies/ministries, and/or supporting the statements issued by other organizations and networks towards strengthening these campaigns.

IV.9.2. Other issues from within health, ethics, justice and law spaces

We supported campaigns on wide ranging issues of human rights, legal reforms, ethical issues in clinical trials, environmental issues, prisoners' right to health and safety during pandemics; and concerns of marginalised constituencies such as survivors of sexual violence, safeguarding sex workers' rights, and women's safety and prevention of sexual violence.

V. Audited accounts 2020-2021 (attached separately)