

Fortnightly Digest by



Digest 56



Warm greetings!

We are pleased to bring you this fortnightly digest from the Health, Ethics and Law Institute (HEaL Institute) and the *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics* (IJME).

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## Newsletter Spotlight 1

### FMES-IJME Ethics Awards 2022-23

FMES-IJME Ethics Awards were instituted in 2018 to recognise and honour individuals for their contribution to healthcare ethics and bioethics in India.

The FMES-IJME Ethics Awards 2022-23 were co-hosted by the FMES in collaboration with Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM), and were awarded for '**Outstanding Contribution to Ethical Practices and Improving Access to Mental Healthcare for Marginalised Communities**', which were in line with the theme of the 9th National Bioethics Conference-5th Global Mental Health Summit, that was concluded in December 2022.

The [awards were virtually presented](#) on Friday, June 09, 2023. The award ceremony began with the introduction of FMES and IJME by Dr Amar Jesani and the introduction of BALM by Vijayalakshmi. The award ceremony included the information on the selection process by the [Selection Committee](#), followed by reading of citation by the editorial team of the IJME. Each

of the citation reading was followed by the speech of the respective awardees.



**FMES-IJME ETHICS AWARDS 2022-23**  
**IN COLLABORATION WITH**  
**BANYAN ACADEMY OF LEADERSHIP**  
**IN MENTAL HEALTH (BALM)**



**Awards presentation ceremony (Virtual)**  
**Friday, June 9, 2023 between 4:00 and 5:15 pm**

**AWARDEES**

**FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO ETHICAL PRACTICES AND IMPROVING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTHCARE FOR MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES**

**Category 1**  
Advocates/Champions foregrounding lived experiences and contributing to ethical practices for rights-based mental healthcare

**Winner**



**Aryan Somaiya**  
Co-Founder - Therapist, Trainer - Nature and Animal Lover - GuFraga Counselling and Psychotherapy, Sector 17, Vashi, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

**Appreciation Award**



**Sudarshan R Kottai**  
Assistant Professor - Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT, Palakkad, Kerala, India

**Category 3**  
Community-based civil society organisations

**Winner**



**EKJUT**  
**(Together Building Healthier Communities)**  
Plot no. - 55A8, Potta Chavathipuzha, West Singhbhum, Pin - 833702, Jharkhand, India.

**SELECTION COMMITTEE**



**Deepa Pawar**  
Founder Director, Anubhuti Charitable Trust, Thane, Maharashtra, India



**Harsh Mander**  
Chairperson, Centre for Equity Studies, New Delhi



**Ufra Mir**  
Founding Exec Director, Peace-psychologist, Palgaam & International Center for Peace-psychology, Kashmir

**FMES-IJME Ethics Awards Program 2022-23**

**Opening of the FMES-IJME Ethics Awards Presentation (10 mins)**

**FMES-IJME Ethics Awards Selection Committee | Nominations and screening process (7 mins)**

**Award Presentation and Speeches by Awardees of the FMES-IJME Ethics Awards 2022-23 (35 mins)**

**Floor open for awardees and audience (5-7 mins) steered by Amita Pitre**  
**Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks (7 mins) by Amar Jesani**



National Bioethics Conference

**Registration link for the e-ceremony:**  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/5ZMroQ-qrjguHd0zrMVRfPoHfPM8v9gp1Wfmsl>

**Heartiest congratulations to the winners!**



Forum for Medical Ethics Society

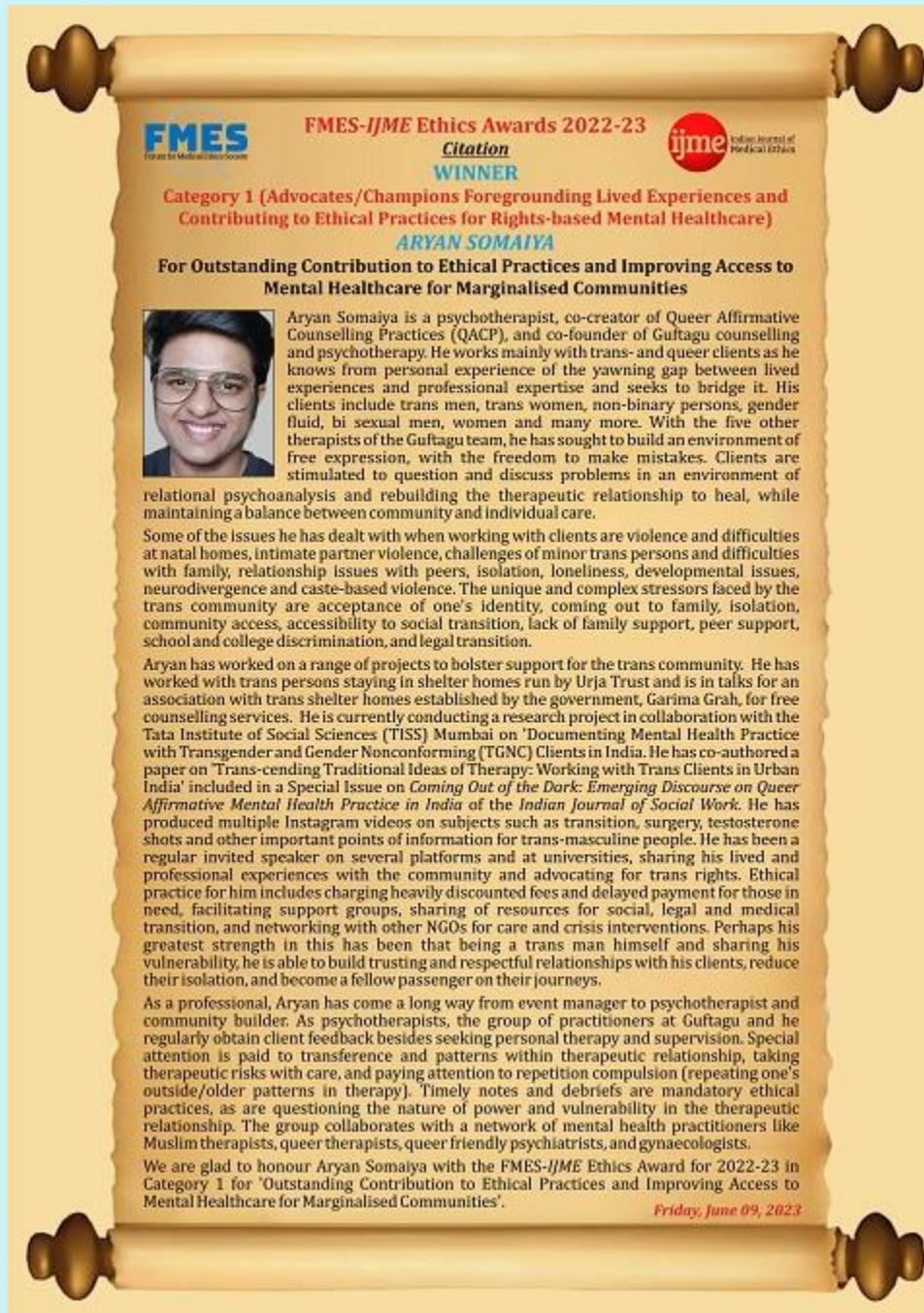
**Awardees**



## Category 1

Advocates/Champions foregrounding lived experiences and contributing to ethical practices for rights-based mental healthcare

Awardee: [Aryan Somaiya \(Citation\)](#)



**FMES** Forum for Medical Ethics & Bioethics

**FMES-IJME Ethics Awards 2022-23**


**Citation**  
**WINNER**

**ijme** Indian Journal of Medical Ethics

**Category 1 (Advocates/Champions Foregrounding Lived Experiences and Contributing to Ethical Practices for Rights-based Mental Healthcare)**

**ARYAN SOMAIYA**

**For Outstanding Contribution to Ethical Practices and Improving Access to Mental Healthcare for Marginalised Communities**



Aryan Somaiya is a psychotherapist, co-creator of Queer Affirmative Counselling Practices (QACP), and co-founder of Guftagu counselling and psychotherapy. He works mainly with trans- and queer clients as he knows from personal experience of the yawning gap between lived experiences and professional expertise and seeks to bridge it. His clients include trans men, trans women, non-binary persons, gender fluid, bi sexual men, women and many more. With the five other therapists of the Guftagu team, he has sought to build an environment of free expression, with the freedom to make mistakes. Clients are stimulated to question and discuss problems in an environment of relational psychoanalysis and rebuilding the therapeutic relationship to heal, while maintaining a balance between community and individual care.

Some of the issues he has dealt with when working with clients are violence and difficulties at natal homes, intimate partner violence, challenges of minor trans persons and difficulties with family, relationship issues with peers, isolation, loneliness, developmental issues, neurodivergence and caste-based violence. The unique and complex stressors faced by the trans community are acceptance of one's identity, coming out to family, isolation, community access, accessibility to social transition, lack of family support, peer support, school and college discrimination, and legal transition.

Aryan has worked on a range of projects to bolster support for the trans community. He has worked with trans persons staying in shelter homes run by Urja Trust and is in talks for an association with trans shelter homes established by the government, Garima Grah, for free counselling services. He is currently conducting a research project in collaboration with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Mumbai on 'Documenting Mental Health Practice with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming (TGNC) Clients in India. He has co-authored a paper on 'Trans-cending Traditional Ideas of Therapy: Working with Trans Clients in Urban India' included in a Special Issue on *Coming Out of the Dark: Emerging Discourse on Queer Affirmative Mental Health Practice in India* of the *Indian Journal of Social Work*. He has produced multiple Instagram videos on subjects such as transition, surgery, testosterone shots and other important points of information for trans-masculine people. He has been a regular invited speaker on several platforms and at universities, sharing his lived and professional experiences with the community and advocating for trans rights. Ethical practice for him includes charging heavily discounted fees and delayed payment for those in need, facilitating support groups, sharing of resources for social, legal and medical transition, and networking with other NGOs for care and crisis interventions. Perhaps his greatest strength in this has been that being a trans man himself and sharing his vulnerability, he is able to build trusting and respectful relationships with his clients, reduce their isolation, and become a fellow passenger on their journeys.

As a professional, Aryan has come a long way from event manager to psychotherapist and community builder. As psychotherapists, the group of practitioners at Guftagu and he regularly obtain client feedback besides seeking personal therapy and supervision. Special attention is paid to transference and patterns within therapeutic relationship, taking therapeutic risks with care, and paying attention to repetition compulsion (repeating one's outside/older patterns in therapy). Timely notes and debriefs are mandatory ethical practices, as are questioning the nature of power and vulnerability in the therapeutic relationship. The group collaborates with a network of mental health practitioners like Muslim therapists, queer therapists, queer friendly psychiatrists, and gynaecologists.

We are glad to honour Aryan Somaiya with the FMES-IJME Ethics Award for 2022-23 in Category 1 for 'Outstanding Contribution to Ethical Practices and Improving Access to Mental Healthcare for Marginalised Communities'.

Friday, June 09, 2023

Appreciation awards: [Sudarshan R Kottai \(Citation\)](#)

**AWARD OF APPRECIATION**

**Category 1 (Advocates/Champions Foregrounding Lived Experiences and Contributing to Ethical Practices for Rights-based Mental Healthcare)**

**SUDARSHAN R KOTTAI**

**For Outstanding Contribution to Ethical Practices and Improving Access to Mental Healthcare for Marginalised Communities**



Sudarshan R Kottai is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Palakkad, Kerala. Stimulated by the discrimination he personally faced while in training as a clinical psychologist, Sudarshan has raised his voice against the discrimination faced by marginalised communities on the fringes of society, especially at the hands of mental health professionals. He saw how they were demeaned by medicalising their suffering and subjecting them to structural violence, thus isolating them further. He therefore pursued his PhD at a liberal arts institution in preference to a mental health facility, as he believes the subject requires a multi- and interdisciplinary perspective.

While his research has mainly been on the travails of the LGBTQIA+ community, especially in the context of unethical mental health treatment, he has focused on the need for an inclusive, value-based mental health practice embedded in the Indian sociocultural context. For his doctoral thesis, he used qualitative methodology to inform policy as well as bridge the gap between mental health academia and practice. He has been advocating for human rights as an essential aspect of mental healthcare.

Dr Kottai has consistently called out what he sees as a failure of the mental health community to consider the roots of socioeconomic issues like the epidemic of farmer deaths by suicide in several parts of the country. He has written extensively on this issue and on the migrant crisis during the pandemic, when many thousands of migrant workers had no recourse but to trek back hundreds of miles to their villages, abandoned by the authorities. He observed this crisis closely and wrote, did podcasts, and spoke on the politics of mental health which failed to see such issues from a socio-political perspective. He has studied and written on the farmers' protest which continued for over a year in North India and sees it in the context of "the agrarian crisis in India. Even though upstream factors that perpetuate farmers' suffering, including the role of the state in promoting agro-capitalism, have been discussed extensively by scholars and activists across the spectrum, mental health discourses almost always frame it as a mental health problem to be addressed by increasing access to psychopharmaceuticals." It is this aspect which he has been exposing.

His work has highlighted the need for collaboration and consultation between the experts that strives "to develop and enhance strategies to improve well-being at a macro level through transformatory interventions." He has been a staunch advocate for "culturally safe mental healthcare for people experiencing [historic] invalidation, invisibilisation, stigma and discrimination". His writings are aimed at raising public empathy for marginalised communities, advocating a shift away from the dominant biomedical model to a social disability model of mental health for contexts like India, where most of the mental health problems stem from inequality, inequity, poverty, and discrimination based on caste, gender, sexuality, race, class etc.

As a mental health professional, his primary focus has been on evolving mental healthcare for marginalised sections with its own historicity and politics, which recognises the impact of poverty, stigma and historical invalidation on the sufferers and is based on empathy. This, he believes would transform mental healthcare — which he believes is currently mechanical and technocratic, based on universal categories derived from ICD-10 which erased the disruptive nature of the everyday life of marginalised people.

He aims to carry out research which is collaborative, participatory, and with a focus on social justice, and to bring out unethical practices and human rights violations in mental health establishments. Sudarshan is critical of the hierarchical relations within mental health teams which give primacy to psychiatrists, leading to reduced interaction and cross-pollination in clinical practice.

His work has been published in *Anthropology and Medicine*, *Economic & Political Weekly (EPW)*, *Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry*, *Feminism & Psychology*, *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics (IJME)*, *Medical Anthropology*, and *Psychology and Developing Societies*. He has been invited to speak at McGill University, Montreal, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad, Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru, and Alternative Law Forum, Bengaluru, on his subjects of interest. His writing has been discussed on websites such as *Mad in America*, and *Re-set*, which deal with mental health, where he has argued that mental health spaces are also social spaces reflecting the existing social and moral norms and deep-rooted stereotypes that result in violation, not just medical spaces to be seen in isolation.

We are glad to honour Sudarshan R Kottai with the 'Award of Appreciation' under the FMES-IJME Ethics Awards for 2022-23, in Category 1 'For Outstanding Contribution to Ethical Practices and Improving Access to Mental Healthcare for Marginalised Communities'.

Friday, June 09, 2023

**Category 3**

**Community-based civil society organisations**

Awardee: [EKJUT \(Citation\)](#)



**For Outstanding Contribution to Ethical Practices and Improving Access to Mental Healthcare for Marginalised Communities**



Ekjut is a civil society organisation working with marginalised and tribal communities living in some of the most underserved areas in India to address a range of community health issues, including maternal and child health; nutrition, adolescent health, and wellbeing, psychosocial distress and gender-based violence through a community mobilisation approach. It is Ekjut's mental health initiative in four blocks of West Singhbhum district, Jharkhand, which is being honoured through this award for its path breaking work, primarily among the Ho tribal communities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who make up 3.8% and 67.3% of the population respectively, while a third of the tribal population lives below the

state-specific poverty line. The Ho people are dependent on subsistence agriculture supplemented by forest produce and wage labour. Seasonal migration within the state and outside is common. The community is plagued by unemployment, low wages, high child mortality rates, uncertainty of livelihood, poor diet and domestic and gender-based violence, all of which lead to mental health conditions, with an estimated 11% plus people in Jharkhand living with mental health problems, and facing stigma and ostracisation. Some reported cases exist of such individuals being labelled as 'witches' and subjected to violence. Ekjut has, over its two decades of work, identified the indicators of mental health distress and has been addressing these through a structured community mobilisation model.

Ekjut's engagement with mental health began in 2017, while working on the issue of gender-based violence. An individual found severely distressed was taken regularly to the Central Institute at Ranchi, provided medication and follow-up, and restored to better health. This incident revealed the urgent need for a mental health intervention, and the seeds of this project were sown. The primary challenges faced were the complete absence of mental health services (both public and private) in the district, aggravated by inadequate primary health care facilities. However, the pandemic intervened and became the immediate cause of action.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ekjut was faced with the urgent needs of the most marginalised even among Adivasi tribal communities, such as households headed by women, the elderly left out of the social security programmes, persons with disabilities, with severe psychosocial disabilities and their families, unemployed wage labourers, the LGBTQI community, etc. The immediate challenge was to supply relief materials to all of them at regular intervals, besides counselling services to those with psychosocial disabilities in the remote areas. The pandemic presented several such additional challenges. Ekjut worked with the district authorities to counsel those with vaccine hesitancy, listed people with comorbidities, and worked to improve the uptake of COVID vaccination and post-vaccination follow-up, to assess any side effects due to the vaccine. In Ranchi, the organisation involved itself in providing relief to the urban homeless and returned workers who were deprived of their bare subsistence by the forced migration.

However, the work on providing mental health interventions resumed with these areas of focus:

- Collaborative tele-psychiatry +treatment: Provision of quality care and treatment through experts from Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi, with contextual inputs from in house medical professionals with a community medicine background. These are monthly sessions at the Ekjut office in Chakradharpur. Till April 2023, a total of 271 service users with severe mental health issues have accessed care and the number is growing.
- Dose-step counselling: Trained Mental Health Peer facilitators, *dukhu sukhu saathi*, from the area provide counselling and support to help service users to recover, reduce distress, and ease their rehabilitation.
- Support groups have been formed at nine different sites covering four blocks, which conduct monthly group meetings for service users to increase solidarity and confidence and support treatment adherence.
- Derived from its earlier Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) plan which had success in reducing neonate mortality and post-partum depression, the same format was adapted to increase awareness, and to address the social determinants of mental health problems, through monthly capacity building sessions.
- Social contact programmes where volunteers with lived experience share their stories (after taking their informed consent) to raise awareness and reduce stigma and violence.
- Activities to support rehabilitation of service users to live dignified and productive lives in the community respecting their agency and informed choice, such as distribution of vegetable seeds and fencing material to develop vegetable gardens, composting, as also poultry rearing, bamboo craft, etc.
- Reuniting lost individuals with mental health issues with their family members for social support and recovery.
- Supporting service users to claim their state entitlements under the 'sapki sarkar apke dvar' doorstep scheme.
- Conducting research on strictly ethical lines with informed consent, respecting the maxim 'Nothing about us, without us', all findings are discussed and debated at village level in the local language and local dialects with community representatives.

So far Ekjut has been able to support 271 persons with severe psychosocial disabilities in three blocks of the region. It aims to increase coverage substantially to the entire district in the coming years, with emphasis not only on the right to quality medical treatment, but to participation in livelihood activities, to empowerment, and to community support, free of stigma. The organisation plans to activate and build up the district mental health board as mandated under the Mental Health Care Act, 2017, to collaborate with other groups working on mental health; and to facilitate a leadership training programme for more *dukhu sukhu saathi* from the local communities, so they can run the programme in future.

We are honoured to present the FMES-IJME Ethics Award 2022-23, in Category 3, for 'Outstanding Contribution to Ethical Practices and Improving Access to Mental Healthcare for Marginalised Communities' to Ekjut for its community mental health initiative.

Friday, June 09, 2023

**Awards E-ceremony ([video recording](#))**



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## Newsletter Spotlight 2

Sexual harassment in sports in India



**Photo Credit:** PTI/Manvender Vashist Lav (Outlook)

The allegations of sexual harassment by the Indian wrestlers on the Chief of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), Brij Bhushan Singh, who is also a member of Parliament, has put the spotlight on the sexual harassment in sports in India and worldwide.

**We bring to you select pieces from the popular press and academic spaces discussing this issue.**

[Sexual harassment allegations against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh: the story so far, and what lies ahead](#) | Gaurav Saxena | The Leaflet | May 20, 2023

[Sexual Harassment: The Chronic Illness Of Indian Sport](#) | Akshay Sawai | Outlook | Apr 27, 2023

[Sexual harassment in sports](#) | The Tribune | Feb 04, 2023

[In Sports or Otherwise, Failing to Act on a Complaint of Sexual Harassment Is Criminal](#) | Indu Agnihotri | The Wire | Jan 04, 2023

[An Indian Cyclist's Sexual Abuse Complaint Shows How Power Dynamics Operate Within Sports](#) | Saumya Kalia | The Swaddle | Jun 8, 2022

**IJME:**

[Abuse with impunity in sports: Some reflections](#) | Padma Prakash | September 23, 2022

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**Online First from *IJME***

Amini, K., Meshkini, S., Ramezanibadr, F. (2023). [Patients' preferences on breaking bad](#)

[news: a cross-sectional study from Iran.](#) *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*, June 17, 2023

Babu, T. (2023). [Are doctors allowed to cry at work?](#) *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*, June 2, 2023

Gopichandran. V., Subramaniam, S., Thiagesan, R. (2023). [Ethical issues in m-Health applications in community health work in India — a scoping review.](#) *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*, June 9, 2023

Hannah, M., Abi-Jaoude, E. (2023). [Breaking free: Navigating antidepressant withdrawal.](#) *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics*, June 14, 2023

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## Announcement from the local and global peer community

### Forthcoming conferences and webinar

[Policy Consultation on Inclusive Societies for Women with Disabilities](#) | C20, G20, US, US Consulate, Mariwala Health Initiative | June 22, 2023 | 2 pm to 5 pm IST

The poster is for an interactive online meeting. On the left, a teal vertical bar contains the text 'Interactive Online Meeting' and a QR code with the word 'Register:' next to it. Below the QR code, it says 'Session organized by:'. The main white area of the poster features the title 'OUR VOICES MATTER: Shaping Priorities for Social Participation in Health Reform' in teal. Below the title, a dashed box contains the date '20 June 2023', the time '7:00-8:15 am EST | 1:00-2:15 pm CET | 4:30-5:45 pm IST', and the location 'Online'. A paragraph of text invites participants to give their views on social participation in health decision-making. At the bottom, logos for CSEM, Save the Children, SPHERE, and the World Health Organization are displayed.

[Our voice matter: Shaping priorities for social participation in health reform](#) | CSEM, Save the Children, SPHERE, WHO | June 20, 2023 | 7:00-8:15 am EST | 1:00-2:15 pm CET | 4:30-5:45 pm IST | Online

**Publications (academic and popular press) on bioethics, human rights, law and allied themes**



## Academic and popular press

[Is second opinion a healthy strategy?](#) | Sanjay Nagral | Hindustan Times | June 19, 2023

## Reports

[The Right to Health & Universal Health Coverage – 4 working papers](#) | C-HELP | 2022

## Call for Applications



**WE ARE HIRING**

**Project Coordinator,  
DICC 2.0 & Kiphart, Sangath Bhopal Hub**

**Required Skills:**

- Post-graduate/ Master's degree in development studies, anthropology, sociology, social work, epidemiology, public health, public policy, and other related fields
- At least 2 years of full-time work experience
- Experience working with diverse teams
- Strong understanding of LGBTQIA+ and the disability community and perspectives, especially with respect to health

**Salary range:** INR 40,000 – 50,000 month / INR 4.8 - 6 lakhs per annum (commensurate with qualifications and experience) + staff benefits

Apply at <https://bit.ly/PCDICCKIPHART> by 26th June 2023

Both projects take a participatory approach and will prioritise applications from persons from the **LGBTQIA+ and disability communities.**

[Project Coordinator for DICC 2.0 & Kiphart projects](#) | Sangath Bhopal Hub

## Other Blog spaces

[Nutritional Revolution by Reducing Hemoglobin Cut – Offs? Anemia is not a numbers game](#) |

Dr. Veena Shatrugna, Dr. Sylvia Karpagam, Siddharth K Joshi

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## **Capacity strengthening in bioethics and its sub-fields: Enquires for short-duration intensive training program**

Please write to us on [fmesmumbai@gmail.com](mailto:fmesmumbai@gmail.com) and [admin@fmesinstitute.org](mailto:admin@fmesinstitute.org) with your enquiries for customized short-duration intensive training program in various sub-fields of bioethics. For over two decades, we have been organizing training program in bioethics sub-fields, amongst others, research ethics in social science research in health; public health ethics; clinical ethics, research ethics in public health research; implementation science and ethics, research ethics in mental health interventions; research ethics and digital technology-based health interventions; ethics of program monitoring and evaluations; and research ethics in research involving adolescents and children.

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## **Advertise and help to sustain IJME**

IJME welcomes advertisements for the print issue as well as the website. Two advertisement spaces on the website, in banner and box area, are available on the landing page and can be viewed at <https://ijme.in/>.

The guidelines, tariff details, and payment details are available [here](#).

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## **APPEAL FOR DONATION TO THE FORUM FOR MEDICAL ETHICS SOCIETY** **APPEAL TO PAY WHAT YOU CAN AFFORD FOR ACCESSING THE IJME and ITS DATABASE**

*Indian Journal of Medical Ethics (IJME)* is published by the **Forum for Medical Ethics Society (FMES)** since 1993. It is a **multi-disciplinary** journal of bioethics, healthcare ethics and humanities. It is also committed to maintaining editorial independence, from the publisher as well as by avoiding financial dependence that could create conflict of interest. In addition, we are striving to keep the IJME online free and open-access. Therefore, the IJME/FMES need support through donations and grants from individuals and non-profit foundations. ***Donations/grants are solicited only from Indian individuals and entities*** as Indian laws do not permit a journal to receive donations/grants from foreign sources.

However, foreign as well as Indian readers/authors may wish to support the journal by voluntary payment of a fee in the following manner:

- By paying or gifting subscriptions to the print or soft PDF copies of the journal;
- By paying a fee of any amount for full-text views or PDF download of any article from the IJME website;
- By paying article processing charges of any amount on publication as affordable to the readers/authors.

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