

## Bioethics and Bioterrorism

### Press Release

Conference on "Bioethics and Bioterrorism"

February 28, 2002

National Press Club

Washington, DC

The Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania and the Center for Biomedical Ethics at the University of Virginia announce a joint conference: Bioethics and Bioterrorism, to be held on February 28, 2002 at the National Press Club in Washington, DC.

The events of September 11 and the subsequent use of anthrax to spread terror in the United States raise a host of issues for public policy and public health. Some of the most crucial questions that have emerged fall into the domain of bioethics. To date there has been no systematic attention to the core bioethical issues that bioterrorism raises for our society. This conference will identify the pressing ethical questions raised by bioterrorism, provide some context for thinking about these issues, and identify moral principles and values that should be utilized in thinking through the difficult challenges and choices that America now faces.

- Ethics of Prevention: One of the most tempting steps to take in the face of biological warfare risks is to try and protect citizens by a massive vaccination campaign. This may not be the best policy to pursue. Vaccines carry their own risks. As many as one person per million may die or suffer serious harm as a result of adverse reactions to standardized vaccines that are in use today such as anthrax or diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus. This risk ratio may be worse than simply doing nothing and then responding to an outbreak of a biological agent with a rapid focused vaccine campaign or treatments.

- Ethics of allocation of treatments: Allocation of treatment is a matter that requires far more public discussion than has taken place to date. Currently, physicians, government officials, and public health agencies would make allocation decisions. These persons may or may not have a set of principles in place that would govern who should receive treatment. It is also morally necessary for whatever rules that will be applied in such circumstances to be transparent and open so that the public may critique the policies and so that those who make these decisions are accountable for what they do.

- Ethics of research: It is important to proceed rapidly to test new agents against biological and chemical weapons. Such testing has been going on for some time. The historic role of national security agencies in the development of these weapons and defenses against them is instructive. As much of this work has

been and will continue to be done under a cloak of secrecy, it is important to consider what ethical standards should apply to such work, especially in the context of a democratic society that seeks to defend itself.

- The ethics of the war against terror: A number of commentators and policy experts have argued that in fighting terrorists we should be willing to abrogate long-standing commitments that we have against the use of torture or against harming civilian populations. Is it practical or effective? What circumstances would justify using torture or the blind extermination of civilians?

Nationally known scholars and commentators, including Arthur Caplan of the University of Pennsylvania and Jonathan Moreno of the University of Virginia, will address conference participants.

Conference size is limited. Registrations will be made on a first-come, first-served basis.

Call Carrie Gumm at 434.924.5695, e-mail [cg2b@virginia.edu](mailto:cg2b@virginia.edu), or visit center websites at [www.med.virginia.edu/bioethics](http://www.med.virginia.edu/bioethics) or [www.uphs.upenn.edu/bioethics/center/](http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/bioethics/center/) for more information.

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Presented by the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania  
and  
the Center for Biomedical Ethics at the University of Virginia  
National Press Club  
Washington, DC  
February 28, 2002

7:30 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. **Registration and Continental Breakfast**

8:15 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. **Welcome**

*Jonathan Moreno, Ph.D. and Arthur Caplan, Ph.D.*

8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. **Panel 1: Biological Weapons: Threat and Response**

*Eddie Bresnitz, New Jersey State Epidemiologist  
David Magnus, University of Pennsylvania, Center for*

*Bioethics*

*Claire Fraser, The Institute for Human Genome*

*Research*

*Gregory Saathoff, University of Virginia, Critical*

*Incidents Analysis Group and Department of Psychiatry*

9:45 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. **Panel 2: Vaccination Policy and Prevention**

*David Weiner, University of Pennsylvania, School of*

*Medicine*

*Phil Nieburg, University of Virginia, Center for*

*Biomedical Ethics*

*Paul Lombardo, University of Virginia, Center for*

*Biomedical Ethics*

11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. **Panel 3: Patents, Profits, and Public Health**

*Arti Rai, University of Pennsylvania, Law School*

*William Haseltine, Human Genome Sciences*

*Jim Childress, University of Virginia, Center for*

*Biomedical Ethics and Department of Religious Studies*

*Patricia Danzon, University of Pennsylvania, Wharton*

*School*

12:15 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Lunch (on your own)

1:30 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. **Panel 4: The Duty to Face Danger**

*Eric Feldman, University of Pennsylvania, Law School*

*Ann Hamric, University of Virginia, Center for*

*Biomedical Ethics and School of Nursing*

*Leslie Blackhall, University of Virginia, Center for  
Biomedical Ethics and University of Virginia Department of Medicine  
Walt Davis, University of Virginia, Center for  
Biomedical Ethics and University of Virginia Department of Rehabilitation  
Medicine*

2:45 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.      **Panel 5: Science in the Interest of National Security**

*Gary Ellis, the White House Office of Science and  
Technology Policy*

*Biomedical Ethics*

*Bioethics*

*Jonathan Moreno, University of Virginia, Center for  
Art Caplan, University of Pennsylvania, Center for  
Jason Karlawish, University of Pennsylvania, Center  
for Bioethics and School of Medicine*

4:00 p.m.

Adjourn