Editorial

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In this issue, we are pleased to present papers that underscore important bioethical themes and challenges that have arisen within Asia and the Pacific, although they are not strictly limited to these regions.

We begin with global health, and more specifically, the publication of the first international guidelines on public health surveillance by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 23 June 2017. These guidelines make clear the affirmative duty on the part of all WHO member states to undertake surveillance, while setting out ethical concepts that could guide policy-makers and surveillance workers in addressing core ethical and policy questions, including the institutional mechanisms that should be established to ensure that ethical issues are systematically addressed before data collection, use and dissemination. Since its publication, these guidelines have already been discussed in at least two events that were held in August in the Asia-Pacific: a full day WHO-led workshop at the 9th TEPHINET Global Scientific Conference that was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand and in a session of the Singapore International Infectious Diseases Conference. The latter was primarily focused on ethical challenges to conducting research and surveillance during an outbreak, while the former addressed a broader range of ethical issues; a summary of which is provided by Karel Caals et al. in this issue.

Recent global health guidance and policy documents on research and public health ethics have all consistently emphasised the need for community engagement. There are of course different approaches to engagement depending on the nature and purpose of the 'community', who or what its constituents are, and the intended objectives of the engagement, among other considerations. Scholars both within Asia and the Pacific and beyond continue to provide insightful findings on public perceptions and representations in relation to emergent technologies, notably in, for example, human stem cell research. In this issue, a preliminary study conducted by Mayumi Kusunose et al. uncovers a non-obvious and perhaps piquant counterpoint to the commonplace

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assumption that contributions of biological materials to research is a detached exercise. On a broadly similar theme, Kalina Kamenova's paper provides a poignant note that still more work needs to be done for media to be truly facilitative of public involvement and deliberation.

At the level of health systems, our focus is turned to continuing debate in Japan as to the goods and ills of accommodating a greater degree of privatisation. Most health systems across Asia and the Pacific are broadly characterised as mixed public-private, where the boundaries between state and non-state health services and service providers may not always be clear. In contrast, Japan's health system bears an essentially public character, with features that include strictly not-for-profit operation of tertiary healthcare institutions and government regulation of medical fees. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's attempt to privatise healthcare in Japan has generated much debate and in the light of weak July 2017 election result of his ruling Liberal Democratic Party, the momentum of the proposed healthcare reform may well be slowed. The paper by Atsushi Asai et al. provides insights on the competing claims to equality and solidarity in this ongoing debate. In contrast to healthcare reform, change has been found to be pervasive for the information infrastructure in Japan. The paper by Hiroyuki Nagai charts key changes from the 1980s onwards, in relation to regulatory mind-set and implementation, as well as in the concept of anonymization.

In the area of professional governance, we are pleased to present the perspective of Tan Chi Chiu on recent changes to the *Ethical Code and Ethical Guidelines* (ECEG) of the Singapore Medical Council. Dr Tan is the Chairperson of the Committee that spearheaded these changes, which have at least in one respect contributed to legal change on the standard of care for the provision of medical advice in Singapore. Even as the revised ECEG attempt to prepare the medical profession for foreseeable changes and challenges, current clinical practices continue to present intractable ethical conundrums and challenges. The case commentary by Ramkumar Aishworiya and Roy Joseph illustrates this in the context of paediatric organ transplantation. Where medical education is concerned, Anita Ho and Nigel Hee provide insights on the use of social media in professional identity formation. Social media has also been deployed for professional ethics training in Singapore, more specifically in the form of an online bioethics casebook in two volumes, the first launched in 2014 and the second in May 2017. We are grateful to Nancy Jecker for providing a review of the second volume of this online casebook. Outside of Singapore, Bushra Shirazi and Sualeha Siddiq Shekhani report on the challenge of breaking bad news to patients diagnosed with breast cancer in Pakistan. Their findings illustrate different means that have been devised by clinicians to cope with truth-telling and highlight the need for professional training to address this deficiency.

Future issues will include papers from the ABR Conference on Biobanking and from the 13th Annual International Conference on Clinical Ethics Consultation, both of which were held in May 2017 in Singapore. Meanwhile, we would like to thank those who have submitted manuscripts for the annual ABR Essay Competition. The first and second prize winners will be announced by the end of 2017.