



**May  
2023  
News**

Send news to include in the next edition to [bioethics@pitt.edu](mailto:bioethics@pitt.edu).

**CLINICAL ETHICS COLLABORATIONS:** Gina Piscitello—who was recruited to the Section of Palliative Care and Medical Ethics within the Department of Medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine, and to the Palliative Research Center (PaRC)—has initiated *Clinical Ethics*, a new forum designed to bring together Pitt and UPMC staff, faculty, and trainees for ethics discussions including journal clubs, policy discussions, and case conferences. These forums are being held at noon on the second Monday of the month (except August). Information may be found on the [Center's calendar](#).

The final talk in the *Healthcare and Religion Lecture Series* (HRLS) will be June 6 at 8:00 am, when PaRC Assistant Director for Community Outreach and Collaboration Justin Yu will present *Bridging the Gap: A Church-based Initiative for Training Black Lay Ministers as Hospice Ambassadors*. Then, the HRLS will be on hiatus until September, when it will again be co-sponsored by the Palliative and Supportive Institute, the Department of Religious Studies, and the Jewish Studies Program.

The Center, the Neuroethics Discussion Group, and UPMC Ethics co-hosted a screening of *Seizing Hope*, a mini-documentary about children with drug resistant epilepsy, their families, and the decision-making process they face with regard to pursuing experimental neurotechnology treatment options. The Center also held its 25<sup>th</sup> annual Healthcare Ethics Conference virtually, with an in-person pre-conference workshop, *Writing for Well-being in Loss, Grief, and Transition*, presented by Reinekke Lengelle (Athabasca University and The Hague University of Applied Sciences). The conference focused on ethical issues associated with clinician burnout, the use of psychedelics to treat mental health issues, and recognition of the association between social media use and mental health issues. Next year's conference will seek to create dialogue between bioethics and disability studies. The program planning committee includes Center faculty Valerie Satkoske and Daniel Wilkenfeld.

**DEVELOPMENTS IN BIOETHICS:** Earlier this month the University Council on Graduate Study voted to recommend to the Provost that she approve the proposed graduate Certificate in Bioethics. The Certificate which would build on the core curriculum of the MA Program in Bioethics. In 2019, then Associate Dean Holger Hoock invited a proposal of a graduate certificate from the Program. MA Program graduate Emily Ruppel Herrington and Lisa Parker drafted and circulated a proposal, whose submission was then postponed. With Michael Deem joining the Center and Program faculty, the time was ripe, and he and Lisa redrafted the proposal and submitted it in March 2022.

The Bioethics Program has received a record number of applications and recommended extending a record number of offers of admission. It remains to be seen how many new students join the three continuing students who are at the stage of proposing and writing their theses.

Fortunately, the Dietrich School has restored the tuition scholarship program that had previously encouraged out-of-state applicants to matriculate.

**THE YEAR AHEAD IN HEALTH HUMANITIES:** *The Canary*, a literary journal for the Greater Pittsburgh Healthcare Community, issued its first call for submissions on May 16. *The Canary* seeks to be “a place where the hearts of patients, providers, and community members can sing.” It is a journal of poetry, prose, and visual art, seeking submissions from healthcare providers, patients, and members of the Pittsburgh community. The virtual journal is being launched with support from the Center by Christy Lucas, who comments that “the idea for *The Canary* came about from feeling like a canary in a coal mine in residency, particularly in the pandemic era, and hoping for an outlet or space for expression.” Together with Chelsea Cockburn, Gaetan Sgro, Andrew Thurston, and a small team of other creative healthcare colleagues, Christy has spearheaded plans for the inaugural issue on the theme of hope: what does ‘hope’ mean to you? What brings you hope? What erodes your hope? To whom, where, or what do you cling in the uncertain moments of life? The [submission guidelines](#) provide additional details to submit by the September 15, 2023 deadline. Center Program Coordinator Mia Spinelli will provide organizational support.

On September 27, the Humanities Council and the Center for Bioethics & Health Law will co-host a Health Humanities Research Slam at the University Club. The late afternoon event will feature food, drinks, and health humanities research and pedagogy by Pitt faculty.

This summer Pittsburgh is presenting two health humanities plays in its theaters. [Every Brilliant Thing](#) will be presented by Kinetic Theatre Company in the Richard E. Rauh Studio Theatre in the Cathedral of Learning, May 25–June 11. Often described as a very funny play about depression, this work directed by Andrew Paul and starring Marcus Weiss explores what makes life worth living, beginning with the perspective of a six-year-old.

[12:52 The Mike Webster Story](#), the story of “Iron Mike” Webster (1952-2002), the first NFL player to be diagnosed with chronic traumatic encephalopathy, will be presented by Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company, June 16–25, in the company’s new home, the Madison Arts Center at 3401 Milwaukee Street. The play, written by neurologist Randall Benson and playwright Ross Howard, depicts the degenerative disorder linked to repeated head impacts experienced by Webster, a member of the Pittsburgh Steelers for a record-breaking fifteen seasons.

**IN MEMORIAM:** Finally, the Center would like to acknowledge the past support of David Bartholomae, Professor of English, who contributed funding from his Charles Crow Chair endowment to the Center’s successful 2018 symposium, *Responsible Reporting of Gun Violence: Protecting Communities and the First Amendment, Preventing Copycat Violence*. His interest in bringing together ethicists, policymakers, mental health professionals, and writers reflected his deep commitment to teaching students about the power of language— “not just the language of ‘capital A’ Authors,” comments colleague Annette Vee, “but the language of everyday people” and the journalists who write for them. David died on April 4, 2023.

## CENTER FACULTY:

Several Center faculty members presented at the 2023 Carol Carfang Healthcare and Nursing Ethics Conference in Clearwater, Florida, in March:

- **Michael J. Deem** delivered the plenary panel presentation “Nursing Ethics Education: Current Trends and Prospects,” and co-presented (with Rebecca Kronk and Eric Vogelstein) “The Design and Implementation of an ELSI Module within a Doctoral-Level Genetics Competency Course for Nurses.” He co-chaired the conference, served on its planning committee and review committee, and has been invited to serve on the planning committee for the 2025 conference.
- **Grant Martsof** presented “Abortion is Health Care! But in What Sense?”
- On the plenary panel, **Doug White** presented “Who Gets What? How to Conduct Ethical Triage during Disasters.”
- **Daniel Wilkenfeld** presented “Ethics, the Law, Distress and Dilemmas – A Guide for the Confused.”
- **Jamie Zelazny** presented “Ethical Considerations for the Implementation of a Suicide Risk Predication Algorithm in Clinical Care.”

**Robert Arnold** published, with colleagues **Doug White, Margaret Rosenzweig, Dan Hall, and Yael Schenker**: Cohen MG, Althouse AD, **Arnold RM, White D**, Chu E, **Rosenzweig M**, Smith K, & **Schenker Y** (2023). Primary Palliative Care Improves Uptake of Advance Care Planning Among Patients with Advanced Cancers. *Journal of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network*. <https://doi.org/10.6004/jnccn.2023.7002>

**Mary Crossley** lectured at Seton Hall University Law School as its Center for Health & Pharmaceutical Law's Distinguished Visiting Health Law Scholar. During the visit, she gave a public lecture on her book, *Embodied Injustice: Race, Disability, and Health*, presented “Affirmatively Furthering Health Equity” at a Faculty Colloquium, and delivered a classroom guest lecture.

She was also a panelist on an episode of The Boston Congress of Public Health’s video series *The Great Health Debates*; “What Happens if We Continue to Ignore Disability Culture and Visibility?” served as the third season premiere of the series. She delivered “Race-Disability Intersectionality as a Health Equity Imperative,” at the Boston University School of Law as its 2023 Pike Lecture and at the University of Arizona College of Medicine–Phoenix as part of its Inclusive Excellence Speaker Series.

In March, at the *Catholic Medicine in a Secular Society* conference in Charlotte, North Carolina, **Michael Deem** presented “Genetic Screening, Genetic Engineering, the Gift of Life, and the Dignity of the Human Person” and served on a panel, “The Well-Formed Conscience of a Health Care Professional.” In April, he delivered “Toward the Just Use of Genomic Sequencing for Listing Decisions in Pediatric Transplantation” in the University of Pittsburgh Department of Human Genetics Seminar series.

Michael was also named a Faculty Fellow of the Beatrice Institute, an ecumenical learning and research community based in Pittsburgh that serves students, faculty, and the broader public. Center faculty **Dan Hall** and **Grant Martsof** are also Beatrice Institute Faculty Fellows.

**Kristen Ehrenberger** co-edited a special journal issue on German-language health humanities and body studies: Ehrenberger, K & George, AX (Eds.). (2023). Medical(ized) Bodies in the German-Speaking World [Special issue]. *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, 59(1).

Building on last spring's success, on April 22, **Bridget Keown** hosted the second *Rethinking War Conference*, a virtual conference attracting an international group of scholars. These conferences seek to challenge traditional binaries of war/peace, veteran/civilian, home-front/battlefield, and digital/tangible sites of war as a way of querying the nature of war itself as part of the human experience.

Bridget also received Year of Emotional Well-Being Initiative funding to study the "War Risk Files" held in regional archives of the National Archives and Records Administration. Her project, *War Risks: Understanding War Trauma through a Comprehensive Study of War Risk Insurance Claims by American Veterans of the First World War*, will examine how specific symptoms or social conditions, including race, gender, and class, affected the ability of veterans with claims of "shell-shock" to access care.

With Lisa Parker, Bridget organized a Faculty Seminar for the *Research, Ethics and Society Initiative* of Pitt Research: *Generative AI: Opportunities, Risks, and Implications for Higher Education*. Approximately forty faculty from three Pitt campuses participated in four sessions combining hands-on experience with interdisciplinary discussion.

**Marta Kolthoff** assumed the role of the Chair of Ethics at West Penn Hospital (Allegheny Health Network). She also published: Kolthoff, M. (2023). Lessons from Babies with Trisomies. *Allegheny County Medical Society Bulletin*, 113(3).

**Jennifer Lingler** will lead a study to advance understanding of real-world patient and family member reactions to biomarker-informed Alzheimer's disease diagnoses. The project, which earned a \$2.1 million grant from the National Institute on Aging, will be co-led by Joshua Grill of the University of California, Irvine. It seeks to better understand the psychological and social impact of using Alzheimer's disease biomarkers in clinical practice by interviewing patients with memory impairment and one of their family members.

**Lisa Nelson** was selected as a co-director of the [Collaboratory Against Hate](#), a joint venture between Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh that brings together collective expertise from all relevant disciplines to combat hatred based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation and other prejudices.

This spring, **Lisa Parker** participated on these state and national committees: Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund study section, the Expert Scientific Panel of the eMERGE Network (NIH), the Advisory Council of the National Human Genome Research Institute, and its Genomics and Society Working Group. She was also invited to serve on the planning committee of the ELSI Congress 2024. At the University, she was recently appointed to co-chair a committee examining the use of generative AI (artificial intelligence); she is already co-chairing the Institutional Conflict of Interest Committee and serving on the Data and Tissue Sharing Policy Committee.

She was invited by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Career Development to organize the April session of the Faculty Leadership Academy on Fostering Institutional Advocacy and Equity; **Bob Arnold** will lead the June session.

Lisa consults or is a co-investigator on research projects addressing ethically relevant issues across a range of technologies and strategies: biomining of heavy metals, implantable brain devices, implementation of whole exome/genome sequencing in healthcare systems, preventing

opioid overdose among those recently released from jail, reducing maternal and infant mortality among African Americans, and whole exome sequencing NICU patients.

Center co-founder **Ken Schaffner** will be profiled in the Spring issue of *Pitt Med Magazine*.

The MSU Center for Social Justice has included **Gaetan Sgro's** poem "Untitled [American, 2020]" in its exhibition *Creativity in the Time of COVID-19*.

In March in Austin, Texas, **Ritu Thamman** spoke at SXSW (South by Southwest, founded in 1987 to celebrate the convergence of tech, film, music, education, and culture). She participated on a panel exploring physicians' mental health challenges, barriers to getting help, and how the health industry can provide better support services.

**Peter Trachtenberg's** photo essay "My Father at the Border" received the *Virginia Quarterly Review's* 2021 Staige D. Blackford Prize for Nonfiction, which honors the best nonfiction writing to appear in the pages of VQR each year. His book, *The Last Artists in New York*, will be published by Black Sparrow Press in 2024.

As part of the Conference on Religion and Medicine held in March, **Jonathan Weinkle** presented "Have You Sat Too Long in the Valley of Tears? Jewish Teachings on Re-entering the World of the Living After a Loss."

**Mark Wicclair** gave two presentations on conscientious objection at Thiel College and for the Center's Consortium Ethics Program during its April 2023 Bioethics Boot Camp.

With undergraduate Christine Durmis, **Daniel Wilkenfeld** published: Durmis, C & Wilkenfeld, D. (2023). Diagrams, images, and conceptual maps in nursing education. *Nursing Philosophy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nup.12441>

## **MA PROGRAM STUDENTS:**

Bioethics program student and doctoral candidate in History and Philosophy of Science, **Marina DiMarco**, has accepted a tenure-track position at Northeastern University. She is writing her MA thesis with Michael Dietrich (chair), **Michael Deem**, and Sara Green from the University of Copenhagen.

**Gabriella Nutter** successfully defended her MA thesis, *Anosognosia in Hemiplegia: Toward a Process of Surrogate Decision-Making*. **Lisa Parker** served as her advisor, and **Jason Rosenstock** and **Mark Wicclair** served on her committee. Gabriella will be attending medical school in the fall.