

## Assalaamu alaykum

### Dear IMANA Members and JIMA Readers:

Since I assumed the chairmanship of the Ethics Committee of the Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA), we have been deliberating on the need to have a conference solely devoted to ethics. To be successful, we wanted it to be multidisciplinary and not to be limited to IMANA members as has been with other IMANA conferences. To achieve these two goals we agreed that it would be best to hold the conference jointly with an established medical institution and for it to be held in a metropolitan area. Dr. Faroque Khan, the vice chairman of the Ethics Committee and a resident of Long Island, New York, suggested the local Hofstra University to be the venue for the conference.

The next major decision was to decide the theme of the conference. At the time there was a lot of heated debate between politicians and in the media about health-care reform. Part of these discussions involved end-of-life care. This is a very significant issue, more so for the immigrant community with their different cultural backgrounds and specifically with Muslims because of their religious beliefs. We felt a great need to explore these issues in depth and decided to have the theme End-of-Life Issues: Ethical and Religious Perspectives.

Dr. Khan has good connections with leaders of other faith communities in the area and specifically with several faculty members of the newly established medical school that is a part of the well-recognized Hofstra University. We agreed with the suggestion. We contacted the university's Muslim chaplain, Professor Mamdouh Farid, professor emeritus of management, entrepreneurship, and general business. He was very enthusiastic about the project and assumed the responsibility of providing the space and the local arrangements. I contacted Professor Daniel Varisco, of Hofstra's Anthropology Department, who has been working in Yemen. He showed great interest in the project and offered to recruit Hofstra faculty members for the conference. I asked him to co-chair the program, and he gra-

ciously agreed.

The next step was to select the faculty. Several members of IMANA Ethics Committee – Drs. Malika Haque, Shahid Athar, Faroque Khan, and myself – agreed to participate. Other IMANA members with great interest in medical ethics – Drs. Hasan Shanawani and Aasim Padela – were asked to and agreed to participate. Other IMANA members who work in disciplines that involve end-of-life issues were asked to participate: Dr. Tanveer Mir in palliative care, and Dr. Ali Nadroo in neonatology. We then looked for religious leaders. I selected Dr. Gamal Badawi to represent the Islamic faith. Dr. Khan recruited Rabbi Jerome Davidson and Dr. Fredrick Smith to represent the Jewish and Christian faiths, respectively.

Professor Varisco asked the head of the Anthropology Department, Professor Cheryl Mwaria, and Professors Warren Frisina and Julie Byrne of the Religion Department to participate. Professor Frisina invited Professor Stephen Post, director, Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics Department of Preventive Medicine, Stony Brook University Medical Center, to be part of the program. Dr. Samuel Packer, the chair of the Ophthalmology Department and the past chair of the Ethics Committee, American Academy of Ophthalmology, agreed to participate.

To complete the mix of speakers, I wanted to include a chaplain, preferably, a Muslim. After some search, I chose Ms. Mary Lahaj. She not only was a Muslim chaplain but the first woman Muslim chaplain. She has done extensive clinical training at Brigham and Women Hospital, Boston, after completing the chaplaincy program, making her a perfect candidate for the program.

The conference was held September 17-18, 2010. Considering that this was the first such conference to be held by IMANA and the first IMANA conference to be cosponsored by an established university, it was a great success alhamdulillah. We hope to follow with other similar conferences in the future.

In this issue of JIMA, we publish the edited proceedings of this conference. The presentations are arranged in two categories; panel discussions and

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articles. The styles of the presentations are different. Some authors submitted edited versions of their presentations, while others submitted regular articles. There were many informative questions and comments, which are included either at the end of the specific article or at the end of the presentations of the panelists in each of the panels.

I edited the arrangement and wording of texts in this issue to improve flow and readability. The conference was videotaped, and web-friendly videos are available online. Links to the video presentations are included with each article in this issue.

The conference covered a wide variety of subjects from different perspectives. It provides useful

information that I hope will be useful for all the readers. As you know, it will be available online at [jima.imana.org](http://jima.imana.org) and indexed in PubMed Central.

**Wassalaam,**

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