

Update from the Director...

Several exciting projects are 'in the works' at the Concordia Center for Bioethics (CBI)! We are planning to co-host a conference with Columbia St. Mary's Hospital System that will address ethical issues in medicine during all stages of life from newborn through life's end. The conference is tentatively set for April 7, 2005 and will be open to medical professionals, chaplains, and pastors.

The CBI has joined forces with the LCMS Sanctity of Life Committee and Lutherans for Life (LFL) to co-host a national bioethics conference in St. Louis at the Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, November 11, 2005, one day before the 2005 LFL National Conference. We plan to have all-day presentations featuring some of the most widely-known Christian bioethics minds in the country. This joint conference will be a unique event, held in lieu of the usual Lutherans for Life pre-conference activities. Please watch for upcoming details!

The CBI Bioethics Update is now posted on the website at www.concordiabiethics.org. Check it out. The CBI website has evolved over the last several years to the point where frequent updates are now possible. My thanks go out to Paul Wangerin, Tom Phillip, and Bill Cario from CUW for making positive changes to the website. We hope to integrate extensive bioethics resources into the website in the near future.

Update (and Follow-up) on Stem Cell Research...

I received several comments from those of you who read the first issue of CBI Bioethics Update asking me to do a follow-up on stem cell research, describing some current results. Researchers have recently found a storehouse of stem cells in a place they least expected it - in the human heart! These stem cells are specifically programmed to generate new heart tissue. Apparently, heart cells are naturally replaced throughout life, as long as they don't require replacement on a large scale. Traditional medical teaching had always asserted that once heart cells were lost, they were never replaced. Now scientists in the U.S. and Europe are trying to use those newly-discovered cardiac stem cells to fix hearts damaged by heart attacks.

Doctors hope that they can fix damaged hearts by seeding the compromised area with stem cells grown in a lab. Progress is already occurring. Heart stem cells have already been observed to grow in the laboratory by first transforming into tiny collections of cells called 'cardiospheres' that beat independently like little microscopic hearts. Given to mice soon after heart attacks, the stem cells reduced scarring and helped the hearts beat more forcefully.

Not only do these 'new' heart stem cells hold tremendous possibilities for treatment, but some medical researchers say a better source might be the stem cells found in our bone marrow - those that normally produce and replace blood cells. At Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, stem cells taken from the bone marrow of pigs helped other pigs recover from heart attacks.

A study from the Medical College of Wisconsin has shown that stem cells from umbilical cord blood (derived from tissue leftover after a child is born) is almost as good as bone marrow transplants in treating cancers such as leukemia. This finding is expected to fuel cries for a national cord blood bank which could store cord blood so that it could be type matched and used to save thousands of lives every year. Three-year survival rates using matched bone marrow is 35%. A study from the University of Minnesota (my alma mater) showed a remarkable 60% survival rate using cord blood.

What this latest research reinforces is that the call by celebrities for human embryonic stem cell research is misleading. Tremendous breakthroughs are occurring on almost a daily basis regarding adult stem cells. On the other hand, embryonic stem cell research has yet to yield any beneficial results. Research on the exiting possibilities from stem cells can go forward without having to destroy human embryos!

Update on the Concordia Center for Bioethics (Abbreviated CBI)...

I have now been at the Institute for over a year now, stepping into the position vacated by Dr. Richard Eyer's retirement. I am very happy here at Concordia University Wisconsin. My office is located in the Health Services wing. Please feel free to stop in and see me if you are in town! Most of my time is taken up with teaching, writing, giving ethics presentations, serving on various community boards, and doing original research. The continued existence of the CBI is due to the support of a gracious anonymous donor. However, existence is not enough. I would like to reach out and do more by turning the CBI into one of the premier Christian bioethics centers, but I am limited by cost considerations. If you would like to help support the mission (see below) of the Concordia Center for Bioethics, please contact me. I need your help!

CBI Needs: Prayer for Kevin Voss and for the work of the CBI; Portable LCD projector for speaking engagements: \$1,500; Secretarial help: \$5,000; Necessary office supplies: \$5,000; Bioethics library: \$3,000; Update bioethics video: \$5,000; Update and print CBI brochure: \$2,000; Host annual bioethics conference: \$4,000; Website maintenance: \$2,000. For \$120 you may become a CBI Bioethics Associate Member. Thrivent matching funds are available for donations to the CBI. Please call for details.

Update on Upcoming Events...

- April 2, 2005: Dr. Voss spoke at the State of Illinois Lutherans for Life Annual Convention held at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Belvidere, IL.

- April 7, 2005: Columbia St. Mary's/ CBI joint bioethics conference.
- November 11, 2005: LCMS Sanctity of Life Committee, Lutherans for Life and the CBI co-sponsor a national bioethics conference at the Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, Missouri.

The purpose of the Concordia Center for Bioethics is to serve Jesus Christ and humanity by bringing the power of the Gospel and guidance from God's Law to help people make decisions compatible with the Christian faith on issues in biology and health care