

Dear All,

Invitation to the First International Conference of the CUHK Centre for Bioethics

Next January 9-10, The Chinese University of Hong Kong will hold a major international conference on bioethics, focusing on the challenges of ageing in global cities and the new horizons created by genomic science. Co-organized with the Hastings Center, and supported by the Central Policy Unit of the Government of the Hong Kong SAR, the conference will bring together some of the world's eminent specialists on bioethics, public health, genetics, and care for the elderly. It will also serve to introduce the new CUHK Centre for Bioethics, and some of the exciting work it is conducting with bioethics and genetics research around the globe.

The title of the conference is "Building Bioethics Capacity in Hong Kong: Ethical Dimensions of Policy for Ageing and Genetics." By choosing ageing and biotechnology as the twin themes of our first conference, we hoped to flag both the local and international dimensions of developments that are critical to the future of Hong Kong. Our city, like many of our East Asian neighbors, is facing a steep rise in life expectancy at the same time as fertility rates drop well below replacement. Put simply, what was once a "demographic dividend" is becoming a demographic deficit.

As a global city, Hong Kong has many advantages in coping with this shift, including excellent medical care and an inclusive health system. It is also a center for genetic and biotechnology research. New developments in these areas are changing the terms for coping with Alzheimer's and other diseases of ageing, as well as creating new means for human enhancement, overcoming the current limitations of the human body. At the same time, on an almost daily basis we read headlines about the shortfalls in resources to care for the ageing, abuses in new industries created by unregulated new technologies created by genetic science, and problems created by our failure as a society to consider values as an integral part of adaptation to change.

Bioethics addresses a wide range of ethical issues relating to human health and welfare, and offers one of the few ways we have to assess the incredible breakthroughs we are seeing in biotechnology in terms of a moral compass. It also offers a way to create a conversation across generations, cultures, and even, in this case, cities. We will be looking at case studies and examples of coping with demographic change from Shanghai and Singapore as well as global cities in the mature economies of North America and Europe.

We are very proud of the quality of talent and intellect assembling for this event, and hope that it will prove useful not only to scholars and health care workers, but also to policy makers and others looking ahead to our future. Please join us, together with your friends and colleagues.

With best regards,



Francis K L Chan
Dean
Faculty of Medicine



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Interim Director
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