

Professional Ethics Network

2015-2016 Events

Dr Paula Boddington - Towards a Code of Ethics for Artificial Intelligence Researchers

28th January 2015

Is there a need for a code of ethics specifically addressed to researchers in artificial intelligence (AI)? And if so, what might it look like? Among the questions considered will be: does AI raise any distinctive ethical issues which need to be addressed in a code or codes? Or are the challenges facing us best dealt in other ways, such as under the codes of conduct of other relevant professionals (e.g. within the practice of medicine, or within laws of warfare)? AI may develop in ways that it is hard to predict and which might have profound and far-reaching impact upon not just society, but on how we understand the individual person, for example through AI-human interfaces. So how can codes of professional conduct for AI meaningfully speak of public benefit and of the avoidance of harm, given such large uncertainties? And what ethical challenges does AI pose which fall outside the responsibility of individual professionals – for instance, such as widespread changes in the labour market?

Dr Paula Boddington, Senior Researcher, University of Oxford, will be giving a presentation on this topic. This will be followed by group discussion.

Professor Young - Changing Consumer Behaviour on Sustainability, Green or Ethical Issues, is it Working?

18th June 2015

There has been much effort over the last 20 years by government, local authorities, NGOs and companies to incentivise and provide infrastructure to improve the behaviour and practices of consumers and householders on environmental issues. This has mainly focused on education and awareness campaigns but there have also been for example, wider availability of green products, recycling facilities, green mentoring, smart energy meters and local food schemes. Has any of this resulted in the reduction of the environmental impacts or have we just become good at green talk?

William Young is a Professor of Sustainability and Business and Co-Director of the Sustainability Research Institute at the University of Leeds. His research focuses on changing the behaviour of consumers and households on sustainability issues for measurable reductions in environmental risks. He works with companies such as Asda and is Co-Investigator on the ESRC Consumer Data Research Centre.

Dr Karen Le Ball and Dr Anne-Marie Slowther - The Role of Clinical Ethics Committees

19th November 2015

Delivering healthcare is an intrinsically ethical activity, yet evidence in the media from around the NHS, such as in the case of Mid Staffs Hospitals and in other notable cases, suggests that healthcare professionals may fail to act ethically. Healthcare professionals may also struggle with other day-to-day decisions. There are 85 Clinical Ethics Committees (CECs) who deliberate on ethical issues in the NHS, so what should their role be in improving ethical decision-making? This interactive workshop will consider the role of CECs in the NHS and examine and discuss selected clinical dilemmas. It will be of interest to those working within healthcare as well as in other professional areas concerned with improving ethical decision making within their organisations.

Dr Karen Le Ball and Dr Anne-Marie Slowther, Chairs of the UK Clinical Ethics Network, will be giving a presentation on the Background to the UK CEN, Analysis of ethical decision making in the NHS, the role of CECs, membership and skills of CEC members, future directions. This will be followed by group discussion.

Dr Neelke Doorn - How to Distribute the Burdens in Flood Risk Management

28th April 2016

In the last years, the UK is repeatedly confronted with severe flooding. This has prompted the question whether the current flood risk policy is the most adequate one. This question should be seen in the light of the so-called governance-turn in flood risk management, in which both private parties as well as regional and local governmental bodies have a role to play. This transition has been marked by a move from controlling and defending against flood, to the paradigm of flood risk management, which recognizes that flooding cannot and should not be prevented at all costs, but that safety should also be provided by other means. In this context, government policy is partly achieved through guiding the conduct of citizens, private companies and lower level agencies. In this presentation, I will discuss different measures that can be taken before, during and after flooding to mitigate its effect. By comparing the system of flood risk management of the UK with that of the Netherlands, I show how different geographies but also different political choices have implications on how the burdens of increased flood risks are distributed.

Dr Neelke Doorn, Assistant Professor, Technical University Delft, be presenting at this event. This will be followed by group work and discussion.

Intercalating Medical Students - Death, Choice and Mental Illness

26th October 2016

We have three excellent short talks, which will be followed by group work and discussion. All three of our speakers are fourth year Medical Students, who intercalated in the BA or MA for Biomedical and Health Care Ethics last year.

Dead, alive, or somewhere in between? What does 'brain dead' mean?

Emily Lindsey

Doctors frequently use the term 'brain dead', but with little thought as to what the term actually means. In this talk she will discuss what we mean by the term brain death and, through looking at some patient cases, discuss whether this is the correct definition for human death.

Emily is a fourth year medical student at Leeds. Last year she took a year out of studying medicine to take a masters degree in Biomedical and Healthcare Ethics. Her masters dissertation was on the topic of defining human death.

Would the legalisation of Physician-assisted-suicide be detrimental to the doctor-patient relationship?

Elizabeth Learoyd

Elizabeth's research looks into the main views of the value of life and how this effects people's views on a doctor-patient relationship. As the doctor-patient relationship is complex with issues of best interest, trust, choice and autonomy, this talk focuses on how these factors involved in the relationship may be affected by the legalisation of physician assisted suicide.

Elizabeth Learoyd is a Fourth Medical Student at Leeds University, who intercalated in Medical Ethics BA last year.

Ulysses Contracts: Can they ever be morally permissible?

Harriet Standing

Chronic mental illness prompts a need for a means to allow such individuals to protect themselves from the devastating consequences of a relapse. One proposal of a means for people to protect themselves is the use of Ulysses Contracts. Harriet will present an overview of what Ulysses Contracts are, how they could be applied in psychiatric practice and whether Ulysses Contracts could ever be morally permissible.

Harriet is a 4th year medical student, who intercalated last year and completed an MA in Biomedical and Health Care Ethics.

This Professional Ethics Network Event prompted the start of our annual Medical Ethics Evenings.