

Report on Four-day National Workshop on “Capacity building for Humanitarian ethics in forensic Investigation, reporting and research publication dealing with cadavers in the Indian context” conducted by the Forensic Anthropology Unit, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology and Centre for Ethics, Yenepoya (Deemed to be University)

20 to 23rd September 2023

The need for Cadaver-based case studies and scientific research publications adds value to the scientific community as they help law enforcement agencies solve medico-legal cases. Cadaver-based studies/experiments provide evidence-based results. These results help clinicians and researchers to evaluate the procedures, products, or investigations for further use.

Scholars advocating the ethical rights of the deceased require that any scientific research involving the human body or tissue, whether alive or dead, be conducted with dignity and respect. Indian constitution provides fundamental rights to all its citizens, including the dead. Indian legislation has the provision to protect the dignity of the dead any direct and indirect harm to a dead person is considered a punishable offense.

However, we lack a specific and well-established ethical guideline to conduct cadaveric research in the Indian context. Many times, undignified treatment of the dead by the medico-legal fraternity and the public has been reported (especially in pandemic situation). Lack of awareness about ethical treatment for the dead, robust training programs, and poor sensitization of the humanitarian approach to dealing with the dead or during research on the dead are among the challenges in the Indian context. Hence there is an urgent need to sensitize and train the researcher, medico legal personnel, and first-hand responders dealing with the dead. This workshop which was supported by The American Academy of Forensic Sciences Humanitarian and Human Rights Resource Center (**AAFS HHRRC**) grant helped create the much required awareness towards the need for ethical treatment of the dead during humanitarian crisis and during research involving cadavers.

The four-day national workshop gathered expertise from both International and national level renowned experts from the field. Hon’ble Vice Chancellor of Yenepoya (Deemed to be University) inaugurated the workshop and shared his valuable experience including practical challenges in conducting research with cadavers. Dr. Amar Jesani, a renowned bioethicist and activist spoke on ethical norms and available guidance for dealing with the dead during disaster and for research purpose. Ms. Papiya Bhattacharya presented drawing from personal and professional experience on ethics of media reporting and responsibilities. Dr. Derek, forensic anthropologist and former forensic specialist for International Committee of the Red Cross Delegation for India, Nepal, Maldives and Bhutan shedded lights on humanitarian approach while dealing with the dead for research purpose. D. Mukesh Yadav, President of Indian Academy of Forensic Medicine shared his views on role of academic bodies in promoting respect for the dead in research. Resource person from within the University, Dr. Vina Vaswani,

Dr. Ravi Vaswani, Dr. Muhammad Nasir and Ms. KhadeejathFarseena actively contributed to create awareness regarding ethical treatment of the dead and facilitated debates and panels on the need for ethical guidelines for the same. A total of 19 participants from various discipline including forensic medicine, forensic science and journalism benefitted from the workshop. The workshop concluded with participants bringing out thoughts on the best ways to draft a guidelines and reach on consensus regarding guidelines on the use of cadavers in research.

Special thanks to Organizing President – Dr. VinaVaswani, Organizing Secretary Dr. Muhammad Nasir Ahmad, Joint Organizing Secretaries Ms. Khadeejath Farseena and Mr. Bedabrat Sharma. Mr. AkumaIfeanychukwu was the rapporteur for the program.

