

## Islamic studies and bioethics: Does the curriculum need revision?

Aamir Raof Memon

Madam, the curriculum for Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS), Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT), Doctor of Pharmacy (D.Pharm) and Bachelor of Nursing (BSN), has "Islamic Studies" as a compulsory subject in all the health sciences institutions of Pakistan.<sup>1-4</sup> Being Muslims, it is advisable that we have sufficient knowledge about our religion but as health science professionals, we ought to understand the bioethics from an Islamic perspective and the Islamic context of health and disease. Whilst the integration of religion in health is a good decision but the content of the curriculum and book recommendations for the course appear irrelevant and outdated. The content headings of the course are: Introduction to Quranic Studies, Sunnah, Seerat of Holy Prophet, Islamic History, Islamic Law & Jurisprudence; Islamic Economic, Political, and Social System; Islamic Culture & Civilization; Islam & Science, and Selected Text from Quran and Hadith. However, in the syllabus of MBBS, I found a unit on medical ethics but without any book recommendations. I could also observe ethics as a part of different courses like Gynaecology in MBBS and Professional Practice in DPT but Islamic bioethics did not appear as a separate entity i.e. a full-fledged course. Most of the topics included in the content of this undergraduate course have already been covered at the intermediate level and prior to it. Therefore, the new generation, during its undergraduate studies, should be introduced to the religious context of bioethical issues and dilemmas. The Centre of Bioethics and Culture (CBEC) Karachi, offers post-graduate courses in Bioethics however, undergraduate curriculum still lacks its integration.<sup>5,6</sup> Recently, bioethics has been given much importance in the Western countries and different religions but particularly in Pakistan, education of Islamic bioethics is still insufficient.<sup>5-7</sup>

I have a few suggestions for inclusion to the contents of the Islamic Studies course in these undergraduate programmes. Firstly, the recommended books should be up to date and relevant. In this context, "Contemporary Bioethics: Islamic Perspective", "Disability in Islamic Law", and "Health and Well-Being in Islamic Societies: Background, Research, and

Applications" are few good examples to be recommended. Secondly, content of the course should be revised to include relevant topics such as principles of bioethics, fiqh issues related to patients, legal issues, contemporary medical practice, and Islamic ruling and fatwas on issues related to health and disease, similar to that in other Muslim countries.<sup>8</sup> These topics may be referred from the above mentioned books. Thirdly, subject teachers should be encouraged to share their ideas with the students regarding the recent developments on these topics. Finally, this course should be included in the later years of studies when students have sufficient background knowledge to absorb the course contents. Health care students are our future and they should have adequate knowledge to address the ethical issues raised during their professional life. Therefore, it is really important that Islamic Studies may be revised to Islamic Bioethics and should have updated contents in parallel with the modern era, so that this objective could successfully be accomplished.

**Disclaimer:** None.

**Conflict of Interest:** None.

**Funding Source:** None.

### References

1. Curriculum of MBBS - Higher Education Commission. [Online] 2010 [Cited 2016 December 1]. Available from URL: <http://hec.gov.pk/english/services/universities/RevisedCurricula/Documents/2010-2011/MBBS-Draft-2010-11.pdf>.
2. Physical Therapy - Higher Education Commission. [Online] 2010 [Cited 2016 December 1]. Available from URL: <http://hec.gov.pk/english/services/universities/RevisedCurricula/Documents/2010-2011/PhysicalTherapy-2010.pdf>.
3. Revised Pharm. D. Curriculum 2013 - Pharmacy Council of Pakistan. [Online] 2013 [Cited 2016 December 3]. Available from URL: <http://www.pharmacycouncil.org.pk/doc/Pharm%20D%20Curriculum%20Final%202013.pdf>
4. Curriculum of Bachelor of Nursing (BSN) 04 Year Degree Program. [Online] 2013 [Cited 2016 December 3]. Available from URL: <http://www.pnc.org.pk/admin/uploaded/HEC%20BSN%204%20Year.pdf>.
5. Shamim MS, Shamim MS. Medical ethics: a slow but sustained revolution in Pakistan's healthcare. *J Pak Med Assoc.* 2010; 60: 706-7.
6. Jamshed SQ, Ibrahim MI, Al-Haddad MS, Hassali MA. Is bioethics in pharmacy inconceivable? *J Pak Med Assoc.* 2011; 61: 407-8.
7. Chamsi-Pasha H, Albar MA. Western and Islamic bioethics: How close is the gap? *Avicenna J Med.* 2013; 3: 8-14.
8. Aldughaiter SK, Almazyiad MA, Alsultan SA, Al Masaud AO, Aldakkan AR, Alyahya BM, et al. Student perspectives on a course on medical ethics in Saudi Arabia. *J T U Med Sc.* 2012; 7: 113-7.

.....  
Institute of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Sciences, Peoples University of Medical & Health Sciences for Women, Nawabshah, Sindh, Pakistan.

**Correspondence:** Email: [dpt.aamir@gmail.com](mailto:dpt.aamir@gmail.com)