As the 2008-2009 year comes to a close, the Consortium Ethics Program (CEP) takes the time to reflect on the year’s accomplishments.

Membership: The CEP welcomed one new member this past year- UPMC Health Plan. Now with two of the area’s largest third-party payers, including Highmark, Inc., CEP membership crosses all lines of affiliation in the current changing healthcare environment. Membership consisted of 27 institutional members (acute-care hospitals, long-term care, home-health and third-party payers) with 80 representatives.

Annual Ethics Retreat: The 19th Annual Retreat, “Medical Ethics & Health Law,” was held at Oglebay Resort & Conference Center in Wheeling, WV, from September 12 – 14, 2009, and set the stage for the year’s educational programs. Visiting faculty members included: Susan Fix, JD, Emergency Medical Physicians, Canton, OH, Jasone Manne, Esq, Pennsylvania Department of Welfare, and Alan Steinberg, JD, Hory, Springer & Mattern PC. Local faculty members included: Aviva Katz, MD, Children’s Hospital of UPMC, Valerie Satkoske, MSW, PhD, University of Pittsburgh Center for Bioethics Health Law, and David Korman, JD, University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. Presenters covered topics ranging from reconciling legal and ethical conflicts, medical decision-making, informed consent and long-term care ethics to pandemics and rationing and ethical/legal issues in the face of a natural disaster.

Educational Seminars: The law and ethics theme introduced at the retreat continued into 14 educational seminars throughout the year. Topics covered included: organizational ethics/hospital trusteeship, transfers of decision-making power, ethics consultation, informed consent and competence, medical futility, and end-of-life/long-term care ethics.

On-Site Programming: Included in CEP membership is six on-site programs per year, which are generated by the request of CEP representatives. This specialized programming enables staff members at each institution to receive the same type of practical ethics education that representatives receive. The CEP delivered 27 on-site programs to member institutions this year. Topics included: POLST, end-of-life care, conflict resolution/mediation, domestic violence confidentiality, do-not-resuscitate, living wills, advance directives and conducting ethics consultations.
**Health Plan Ethics:** For members Highmark, Inc. and UPMC Health Plan, the CEP invited Jim Sabin, MD, director of the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Ethics Program and clinical professor of psychiatry and ambulatory care/prevention at Harvard Medical School, to Pittsburgh to discuss the role of ethics in health plans. Professor Sabin’s visit was well received by the third-party payers and he will return to Pittsburgh this fall to teach CEP representatives.

**Children’s Hospital Consultant Education:** When Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC (CHP) moved into its new facility this year, a CHP-based team of ethics consultants began service. Through case discussions, role playing and lectures, the new team received hands-on training from experts in the ethics field. Speakers included: Mark Kuczewski, PhD, director of the Neiswanger Institute for Bioethics and Health Policy at Loyola University, Mark Aulisio, PhD, director for the Center for Biomedical Ethics at MetroHealth, Case Western Reserve University, Robert Arnold, MD, director of clinical training at the Center for Bioethics and Health Law at the University of Pittsburgh, and Ellen DiBenedetti, MED, training coordinator and senior trainer at the Pittsburgh Mediation Center. An “Ethics Week” at Children’s Hospital will be planned for the fall to introduce the work of the CHP Ethics Committee to the physicians and staff at the new hospital. The new consult team will be showcased during the week!

**20th Year Kickoff**

The CEP had the opportunity to began kickoff its 20th year by holding the annual weekend retreat, “Medical Ethics and the Humanities,” on May 29 – 31, 2009 at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.

Educational seminars included: “The Power of Story,” Margaret Kimmel, PhD, University of Pittsburgh, “Should Clinicians Incorporate Spirituality into their Practices?” and “The Nature of Suffering/Goals of Palliative Care,” Randy Hebert, MD, MPH, WPAHS Forbes Hospice, “In Any Language, No Can Really Mean No- A Look at Informed Refusal” and “It’s Only Natural to Grieve, but is it Professional?,” Denise Stahl, MSN, ACHPN, Department of Veterans Affairs, “Embodied Poetry Writing Workshop,” Cortney Davis, RN, MA, ANP, Sacred Heart University, and “Narrative Contribution to Medical Communication,” Janet Grover, DHCE (c), Mount Aloysius College.

In addition, the CEP hosted *Life-Breathe-Carry*, a spoken-word dance performance based on the poetry of Jeanne Bryner, RN, from her book, *Tenderly Life Me: Nurses Honored, Celebrated, and Remembered*. Performed by Verb Ballets of Cleveland, OH, this spoken-word movement showcased the lives of 10 stellar nurses whose lives spanned three centuries. These included Helen Albert, the first African-American registered nurse hired in Warren, Ohio; Rebecca Anderson, rescue nurse and victim of the Oklahoma City bombings of 1995; and Lynda Arnold, who tested HIV positive after receiving a needle stick from a patient less than one year on the job.

Medical ethics and the Humanities will continue to be the theme for the 2009-2010 year and educational sessions will include topics such as literature and medicine, religion and ethics, ethical approaches to cutting health care costs and a reader’s theater.

*Founded in 1990, the Consortium Ethics Program (CEP) is the regional healthcare ethics network in western Pennsylvania. This premier ethics education network trains staff members from participating healthcare institutions in the language, methods and literature of healthcare ethics. Member institutions form the network, which is instrumental in sharing ethics resources and experiences in a cost-effective manner. Over 400 frontline healthcare professionals from more than 70 institutions have been trained by the CEP.*