

2025 Annual Report



Honoring our Past, Shaping our Future

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Letter from the Director

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

This year, as Baylor College of Medicine celebrates **125 years of learning and leading**, I find myself reflecting on the meaning of legacy: what we inherit, what we build and what we leave for those who come after us.

Since 1982, the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy has embodied inquiry and compassion. Though today's biomedical landscape presents new challenges, our mission endures by advancing ethical healthcare, just policy and responsive education. Rooted in a strong legacy, we remain optimistic about the future.

2025 was a pivotal and productive year in our journey. We continued to broaden our research portfolio by securing new grants from diverse funding sources on issues like **climate health, data privacy, artificial intelligence and genomic newborn screening**. We focused on **cultivating a vibrant, collaborative community** by strengthening our clinical ethics consultation services, welcoming two new assistant professors and engaging many other new and valued colleagues.

This has also been a year of meaningful milestones and change for Baylor. We honor **Dr. Paul Klotman and celebrate his upcoming retirement in 2026**. Dr. Klotman has been a visionary leader as president, CEO and executive dean, and has guided Baylor and our Center through an era of extraordinary growth and innovation. He championed the creation of our health policy program and has been a steadfast advocate for our work, partnering with us on initiatives like Baylor's TEDx event and our public position statements.



Along with Dr. Klotman, several others who have been instrumental to our Center are also retiring. **Rev. Charles Millikan**, vice president of spiritual care and values integration at Houston Methodist, has been a critical partner and devoted proponent of our Clinical Ethics Consultation Program. As a spiritual leader, he cultivated the integration of faith and ethics in clinical care, helping to shape a more compassionate and reflective approach to medicine. We also honor our longtime secondary faculty members, **Drs. Anne Gill and Stacey Berg**, as they retire. Their deep commitment and years of service have profoundly shaped our Center.

As we enter the next phase of our growth, we do so on a foundation built by all of these remarkable individuals whose contributions will continue to resonate. We are deeply grateful for the many ways they've enriched our work and hope they'll remain part of our broader community in the years ahead.

In 2026 and beyond, our Center will continue this momentum by advancing research that informs national discourse, guiding ethically complex decisions across the Texas Medical Center and preparing the next generation of clinicians and policy leaders to navigate the evolving landscape of medicine and ethics.

We are proud to share our ongoing efforts in this report and to celebrate where we are going and where we have been. Thank you for being part of our journey and for helping us continue to build a legacy that matters.

Amy McGuire
Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.
Center Director



Highlights and Impact

Broadening our research portfolio: Our expanding portfolio reflects innovation across key areas of bioethics and health policy. Here is a high-level snapshot of select projects Baylor faculty lead and are involved in, many of which are part of broader collaborations.



Artificial Intelligence

Center for Humanities-based Health AI Innovation (CHHAIN). A groundbreaking collaboration between Baylor and Rice University to create a central hub for exploring how humanities-based insights, particularly those grounded in ethics, history and patient narratives, can shape the future of responsible AI in healthcare. (National Endowment for the Humanities; funding begins in 2026; PI: Vasiliki Rahimzadeh, Ph.D.; PI: Kirsten Ostherr, Ph.D., MPH - Rice. Other Center faculty involved: Kristin Kostick-Quenet, Ph.D.; Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.; Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D., M.A.).



Ethics of Novel Neurotechnologies

Integrating Human-derived Neural Networks and AI for Information Processing in Brain Organoids. This project draws on science and technology studies (STS) approaches to study the ethical and social implications of the emerging field of brain organoid research. Jeske's team is conducting an embedded ethnography, analyzing the scientific practices through which brain organoids are constructed and the emergent social and ethical concerns that arise. (National Science Foundation; PI: Jenny Hsieh, Ph.D. - UTSA; Co-PI: Melanie Jeske, Ph.D.).

Bridge Funding for Ethical Decision-making in Early Translational Neurodevice Research. A project focused on strengthening ethical guidance for early-stage neurotechnology development, helping investigators navigate uncertainty, risk and the real-world implications of emerging neural devices. (Dana Foundation; PI: Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D., M.A.).

Genetics/Genomics

Building Evidence and Collaboration for GenOmics in Nationwide Newborn Screening (BEACONS) project. The first U.S. national initiative exploring the use of whole-genome sequencing in newborn screening. Will recruit, consent and enroll up to 30,000 newborns in as many as 10 states over the next three years. If successful, BEACONS will provide the first national evidence that genome sequencing can be implemented responsibly, fairly and sustainably through public health newborn screening programs. (National Institutes of Health Common Fund Venture Program; mPIs: Nina Gold, M.D., M.S. - MGB; Robert Green, M.D., MPH - BWH; Ingrid Holm, M.D., MPH - HMS; Nicole Kelly, Ph.D., MPH - UCSD; Stuart Lipsitz, Sc.D. - BWH; Jelili Ojodu, MPH - PHL, and Melissa Wasserstein, M.D. - AECM; site PI: Stacey Pereira, Ph.D.).



Implementing Newborn Screening for Cancer Predisposition

Syndromes in Texas: The INSPECT Study. Cancer predisposition gene (CPG) mutations are found in 8-10% of childhood cancer patients and can significantly affect prognosis and treatment. This project aims to reduce pediatric cancer morbidity and mortality in Texas by evaluating the feasibility and clinical utility of incorporating CPG testing into routine newborn screening. Leveraging Texas's statewide screening infrastructure and cancer registry, the study will develop testing methods, assess stakeholder perspectives and generate recommendations for ethical implementation. (Cancer Prevention Research Institute of Texas; mPIs: Stacey Pereira, Ph.D.; Donald Parsons, M.D., Ph.D. - BCM).

Outcomes and Health Risks among Individuals with Genetic

Predispositions to Cancer: The ORIGen Cohort. A national research effort examining long-term outcomes, environmental influences and health disparities among individuals with inherited cancer risk, including populations historically underrepresented in genomic research. (National Cancer Institute / Leidos Biomedical Research; PI: Philip Lupo, Ph.D., MPH - EUSOM; site PI: Stacey Pereira, Ph.D.).

IGG Policy Surveillance Study. This will conduct an empirical survey of all U.S. federal and state investigative genetic genealogy (IGG)-specific statutes, genetic privacy statutes and digital data privacy statutes with implications for IGG. To execute the survey, we will use established methods for policy surveillance, which is the scientific collection, coding, and publication of laws of public importance. The outcomes will include a publicly accessible, empirical dataset and a detailed analysis of patterns across policies and implications for IGG, with policy recommendations. (Arnold Ventures; PI: Christi Guerrini, J.D., MPH; Co-investigator: Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.).

Polygenic Embryo Screening Toward Informed Decision-Making.

Recent progress in complex trait genetics, coupled with the technical ability to generate accurate genome-wide genotypes from single-cell input, has made it possible to genetically screen embryos for common polygenic traits and disease risk. However, little empirical work has been done to quantify the utility of polygenic embryo screening (PES), examine its ethical implications and assess stakeholder perspectives. This study is designed to provide the necessary empirical basis for informed ethical discussion. (National Institutes of Health / National Human Genome Research Institute Home; mPIs: Stacey Pereira, Ph.D.; Shai Carmi, Ph.D. - HUJI, Todd Lencz, Ph.D. - Hofstra/Northwell, Gabriel Lazaro-Munoz, Ph.D., J.D. - HMS; Co-investigator: Vasiliki Rahimzadeh, Ph.D.).



Psychedelics



RETREATS: Retreat Ethics—Taking a Reasoned, Evidence-based Approach to Therapeutic Safety.

This initiative will develop consensus-based best practice guidelines to improve safety and accountability in the rapidly growing psychedelic retreat sector. (Ortus Foundation; PI: Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.; Co-investigator: Christi Guerrini, J.D., MPH).

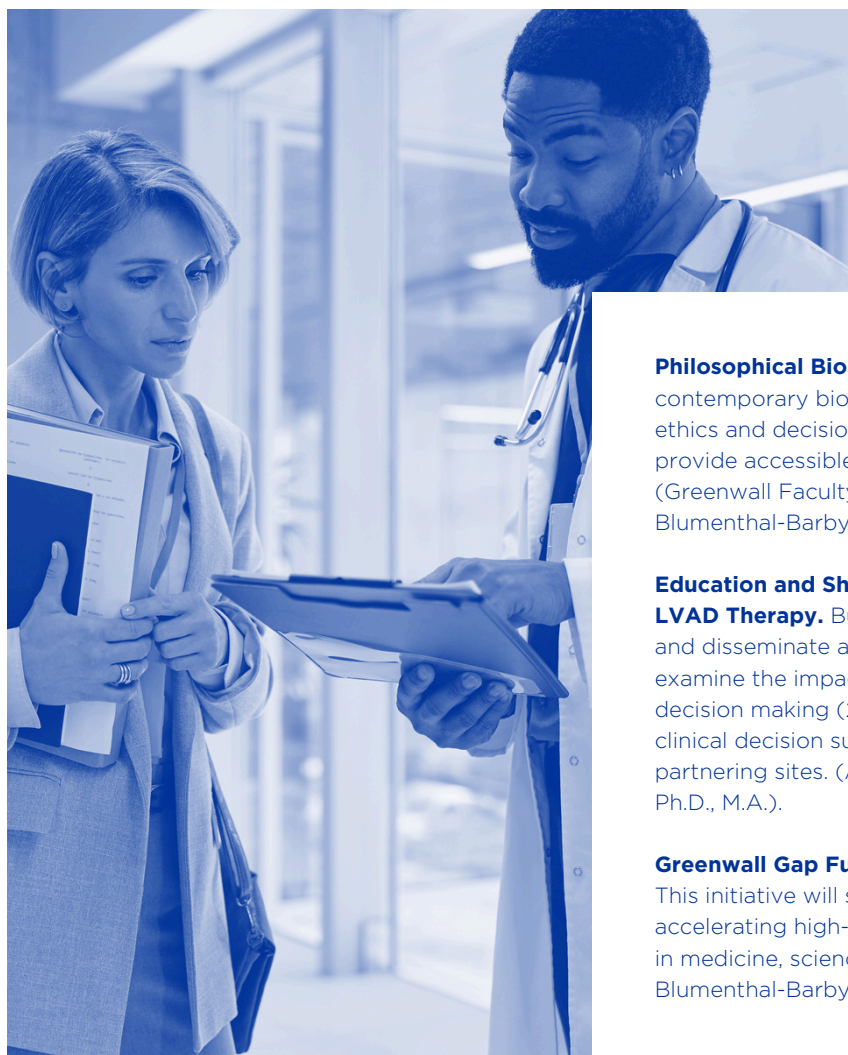
Gulf Coast Climate Health Early Warning Systems. Baylor, in collaboration with Rice University and UT School of Public Health, is launching a bold cross-disciplinary climate health initiative to develop early warning systems for emerging infectious diseases. By integrating climate, pathogen and health data, and expanding surveillance beyond wastewater to include mosquito monitoring, the initiative aims to detect and respond to new viral threats with unprecedented precision. This effort builds on cutting-edge genomics and molecular tools to track more than 3,000 known viruses, marking a major leap forward in public health preparedness. (Anonymous Funder; Co-PIs: Cheryl Walker, Ph.D.; Peter Hotez, M.D., Ph.D.; Anthony Maresso, Ph.D. – BCM; Eric Boerwinkle, Ph.D. – UTHealth; Sylvia Dee, Ph.D. – Rice. Co-investigators: Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.; Mary Majumder, J.D., Ph.D.; Christi Guerrini, J.D., MPH; Melanie Jeske, Ph.D.).

Virome Characterization Center for the Oral-Gut-Brain Axis. This will establish one of five Centers, or HVCCs, to advance understanding of the virome's role in human health and disease across the oral-gut-brain axis. The center aims to characterize virome richness, diversity and structure in healthy individuals across different age groups and ethnic backgrounds. This will establish a baseline for identifying disease-associated virome alterations, potentially enhancing early detection, diagnosis and treatment. (National Institutes of Health Common Fund Human Virome Program; mPIs: Joseph Petrosino, Ph.D. – BCM; Yvonne Hernandez-Kapila, D.D.S., Ph.D.; Clara Lajonchere, Ph.D. – UCLA; James Cerhan, M.D., Ph.D. – Mayo Clinic; Janice Lee, D.D.S., M.D. – NIDCR. Co-investigators: Mary Majumder, J.D., Ph.D.; Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.).

Optimizing “De-facing” in Probabilistic Deep Learning Cervical Lymph-Node Auto-segmentation (PDL-CLASIFIER). This administrative supplement will evaluate how different facial de-identification methods affect the quality of medical images used in cancer treatment. This work will provide valuable insights into the trade-offs between privacy and the usefulness of medical data, helping researchers and clinicians make more informed decisions. In addition, the project will engage with patients, clinicians, researchers and other experts to explore their views on sharing medical images containing facial features. (National Institutes of Health / National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research; mPIs: Clifton Fuller, M.D., Ph.D.; Mohamed Naser, Ph.D. – MDA; site PI and co-investigator: Kristin Kostick-Quenet, Ph.D.).

Bionic and Robotic Prostheses: Identifying Bioethical Concerns to Improve Development and Clinical Translation. With the number of amputations expected to double by 2050, the demand for prosthetic devices is rising. While technological advancements have propelled the field forward, bioethical concerns, such as equitable access, insurance reimbursements and user involvement in development, remain largely unaddressed. The insights gathered will inform the creation of a decisional support document designed to guide ethical research and policy development in the field. (National Institutes of Health / National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering; PI: Graci Finco, Ph.D. – BCM; site PI and co-investigator: Kristin Kostick-Quenet, Ph.D.).





Ethics & Decision-Making

Philosophical Bioethics. The seminar series includes various contemporary bioethical issues in public health, research ethics, clinical ethics and decision-making. The Philosophical Bioethics Hub aims to provide accessible philosophical resources to a general audience. (Greenwall Faculty Scholars Program; renewed until 2027; PI: Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D., M.A.).

Education and Shared Decision Making for Patients Considering LVAD Therapy. Building on our team's previous work to develop, test and disseminate a patient-centered decision aid (2014-2020) and examine the impacts of a personalized risk calculator on LVAD patient decision making (2020-2025), this grant will help provide this vital clinical decision support tool to clinicians and patients at Baylor's partnering sites. (Abbott Laboratories; PI: Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D., M.A.).

Greenwall Gap Funding Initiative for Faculty Scholars and Alums. This initiative will support innovative bioethics scholarship by accelerating high-impact projects and advancing timely ethical analysis in medicine, science and policy. (The Greenwall Foundation; PI: Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D., M.A.).

Looking to the future: We continue to actively pursue new funding opportunities.



Do you want to help shape the future of ethical healthcare? You can help us launch evidence-based research pilot projects, create patient-centered tools, host cross-disciplinary events and trainings and support the next generation of ethics scholars through our pathways, postdoctoral and internship programs. To explore these opportunities, [click here](#) or call (713) 798-4714.

Clinical Ethics Consultations

The Center's programs at **Houston Methodist Hospital** and **Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center** continued to serve as cornerstones of compassionate ethics consultation and high-impact education. Many consults involved complex ethical concerns such as patient capacity, treatment refusal and conflict between families and healthcare teams. These topics align with national trends in hospital ethics services and underscore the need for continued training in communication and shared decision-making. Several of our faculty-led initiatives resulted in scholarly publications that expanded the ethical conversation beyond our institution. These works reflect the clinical relevance and academic rigor of our consults, teaching and policy efforts.

Throughout the year, we focused on interdisciplinary learning, ethics integration, building practical tools and engaging in institutional policy development (e.g., new initiatives to identify surrogate decision makers earlier in the care process, in-process do not-resuscitate (IP DNR) orders, and the determination of death) to support more consistent, ethically-grounded clinical decision-making.

Cultivating a vibrant, collaborative community that promotes ethical excellence in healthcare



In addition to this core work, Center and affiliated faculty, contribute to ethics education and consultation efforts at **Ben Taub Hospital**, **Texas Children's Hospital** and the **Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center**, extending our commitment to ethical clinical practice across the Texas Medical Center.



EP3

Ethics, Professionalism & Policy Program

The **EP3 Program** is the Center's cornerstone graduate medical educational initiative, providing Baylor residents with longitudinal curriculum in **ethics, professionalism and health policy**. This year, EP3 strengthened its national profile through a **redesigned, data-driven curriculum** and new partnerships with **Graduate Medical Education** programs across specialties. Key advancements included:

- **Development of new curriculum modules** in Professionalism, Social and Structural Determinants of Health and Implicit Bias, expanding residents' ethical and reflective competencies across clinical contexts.
- **Public release of EP3 educational materials** on the Baylor [Clinician Resources](#) platform, making these high-quality learning tools accessible to clinicians, educators and trainees beyond Baylor.

ET

Ethics Thread

The **Ethics Thread** is Baylor's new integrated approach to teaching ethics during undergraduate medical education. Rather than existing as a separate "ethics course," the ET **weaves ethical concepts into every stage of the medical curriculum**, mirroring how ethics naturally arises in real-world clinical practice.

This year, the Ethics Thread reached new levels of integration through initiatives such as:

- **High-yield Application of Principles to Patients of Yours (HAPPY) Exercises:** short, case-based activities introduced across all foundational clerkships for MS2 students and tailored to each clinical rotation, helping learners apply ethical principles to the patients they see.
- The development of the **Ethics Education Evaluation (EEE) Project** began this year, laying the groundwork for a long-term effort to understand how students perceive ethics topics and measure curricular impact. The project also will provide crucial data to inform future considerations around making ethics training a required component of medical education.





MEP | HPP

Medical Ethics & Health Policy Pathways

The **Pathway Programs** offer students the opportunity to pursue advanced, mentored study in **Medical Ethics** or **Health Policy**. Pathway students complete scholarly projects, engage in specialized coursework and work closely with Center faculty to develop the skills needed to become leaders in their fields.

Highlights include:

- The **Medical Ethics Pathway (MEP)** maintained strong and stable enrollment while refining curricular components for stronger alignment with mentorship and research goals.
- The **Health Policy Pathway (HPP)** welcomed its **largest MS2 cohort to date**, including expanded participation from Temple Campus students.
- This year, **Texas State Senator Molly Cook** (District 15) joined our Health Policy Analysis (MEETH-415) class, giving students the opportunity to delve into real-world health policy impact. **Health Policy Pathway student Srijith Kambala** advanced a resolution on increasing oversight of private equity in the healthcare sector at the Texas Medical Association House of Delegates, an achievement he credited to the training and mentorship he received through the pathway.

EnMed

Integrating Ethics in Engineering-based Medicine

The **EnMed Program**, a collaboration between Baylor, Houston Methodist, and Texas A&M University, trains “physicianeers” skilled in both medicine and engineering. The Center contributes key coursework on the ethical, social and humanistic dimensions of innovation.

This year, EnMed introduced:

- **New course design plans adopted across PoM 1-3**, adding clearer objectives, active-learning activities, and assessments to better integrate ethics and professionalism into engineering-focused training.
- **Expanded ethics-focused selectives in PoM 3**, including student-led sessions on interpersonal violence and a pediatric ethics selective developed with Texas Children’s Hospital physicians.
- **Increased small-group seminar opportunities**, driven by strong faculty and clinician engagement and focused on real-world ethical challenges.



Across EP3, the Ethics Thread, the Pathways and EnMed, our educational programs ensure that Baylor graduates not only practice medicine but shape it. Through rigorous training, thoughtful mentorship and hands-on ethical inquiry, we continue building a legacy of leaders equipped to care, question and create with integrity.

New People, Awards and Recognitions



Matthew Shea, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

Matthew Shea earned his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Saint Louis University and completed a Clinical Ethics Fellowship at UCLA. His work focuses on the philosophical foundations of bioethics and ethical issues concerning vulnerable patient populations, and provides clinical ethics consultation at Houston Methodist Hospital.



Jared Smith, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

Jared Smith holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of California, Riverside. His research bridges moral psychology and technology ethics, examining how people make value-based decisions. After completing his Clinical Ethics Fellowship with our Center, he was promoted to assistant professor and provides clinical ethics consultation at Houston Methodist Hospital.



Joshua Mitchell, Ph.D.

Postdoctoral Associate

Joshua Mitchell earned his Ph.D. in Anthropology from Cornell University. His research explores how psychedelics are transforming the way we think about and experience harm and healing. Previous research examined the relationship between addiction and soldiering in Myanmar.



Claire Hoppenot, M.D.

Joint Faculty

Claire Hoppenot, M.D., Assistant Professor of Gynecologic Oncology at the Dan L Duncan Comprehensive Cancer Center, received her medical degree from Jefferson Medical College and completed residency at Northwestern and fellowship at the University of Chicago, including clinical medical ethics training. She contributes to perioperative ethics, decision-making and clinical ethics consultation at Baylor St. Luke's.



Eva Regel, DBE, MBE, M.S.

Joint Faculty

Eva Regel holds a DBE from Loyola University Chicago, an MBE from Harvard Medical School, and an M.S. in Economics. As Bioethics Director at Houston Methodist Hospital, she specializes in humanitarian ethics, moral distress and clinician support in crisis environments.



Stacy L. Auld, M.Div, BCC

Affiliated Faculty

Rev. Stacy Auld, M.Div, BCC, Vice President of spiritual care and values integration for Houston Methodist, is a board certified chaplain with expertise in spiritual care, pastoral ethics and clinician well-being.



Miranda R. Waggoner, Ph.D.

New Scholars

Associate professor, Department of Sociology
Rice University; Faculty scholar, Baker Institute for Public Policy

Research Interests: Social structure and culture in biomedical knowledge production, medical care, and public health practice; gender, reproduction, and inequality; sociology of medicine and science; bioethics; qualitative methods



Fabrizia Faustinella, M.D., Ph.D., MACP

Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine
Baylor College of Medicine; Physician faculty, Sunset Heights Clinic.

Research interests: Healthcare access and disparities in minority populations, patient safety and advocacy, clinical skills education and medical humanities through film and storytelling.



Joey Nichols, M.D., MPH, FAAFP

Founder and family physician, Canopy Family Care
Board-certified in Family Medicine; Telehealth provider across 25 states.

Research interests: Whole-person primary care, telehealth innovation, mental health integration including psychedelic-informed therapy, community health and health policy. As a Health Policy Scholar, he collaborates on ELIPSIS-related research.



Megan Kitts, Ph.D., HEC-C

Graduated Fellow

Assistant professor at Duquesne University affiliated with the School of Nursing and the Center for Global Health Ethics. She received her Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Colorado Boulder and a M.A. in Bioethics from New York University. Megan's research interests include reproductive ethics, specializing in questions related to fertility medicine and reproductive technologies, and clinical ethics.

New Staff

Olive Pertuit – Clinical Research Associate

Heather Welty – Clinical Research Associate

Joy Xu – Research Operations Associate

Roberto Alvarado – Communications Specialist

Danielle Pavlicek – Program Management Associate

Justin Mayberry – Senior Research Administration Associate

Awards and Professional Honors



Claire Horner,
J.D., M.A.

received the **Clark Faculty Service Award** from Baylor College of Medicine, honoring her exemplary service contributions that go above and beyond her primary role.



Vasiliki
Rahimzadeh, Ph.D.

was honored with the **Norton Rose Fulbright Faculty Excellence Award** in Educational Materials from Baylor College of Medicine.



Kristin Kostick-
Quenet, Ph.D.

was honored with the **Norton Rose Fulbright Faculty Excellence Award** in Educational Materials from Baylor College of Medicine.



Holland Kaplan,
M.D.

received the **Social Justice Award** at the Section of General Internal Medicine Annual Retreat and was named a 2025 Editorial Fellow at the Journal of General Internal Medicine (JGIM) focusing on medical ethics content.



Joanna
Smolenski, Ph.D.

received a **Faculty Development Award** from Texas A&M University to attend the annual International Conference on Clinical Ethics and Consultation.



Health Policy and Community Engagement

The Center deepened its community connections and broadened its reach through events, partnerships and public scholarship. Some of this work is driven by our Health Policy Program which launched in 2018 to advance public trust in biomedicine and connects academic, clinical and community sectors through research, education and engagement. Together, these efforts reflect the program's growth while also highlighting the Center's broader commitment to building more ethical and inclusive health systems.

Grand Rounds 2025

Jan. 30: The Deadly Sins of American Healthcare

Ezekiel J. Emanuel, M.D., Ph.D.

Vice Provost for Global Initiatives; Diane v.S. Levy & Robert M. Levy University Professor; Co-director, Health Transformation Institute, University of Pennsylvania

March 5: The (In)Capacity to Exclude: Ethics of Excluding Surrogate Decision-Makers

Megan Kitts, Ph.D.

Former Clinical Ethics Fellow, Center for Medical Ethics & Health Policy, Baylor College of Medicine
Assistant Professor at Duquesne University

March 21: Newborn Genomic Screening: Changing Ethical Parameters?

Bartha Maria Knoppers, Ph.D.

Distinguished James McGill Professor Emerita; Founding Director, Centre of Genomics & Policy
McGill University

April 16: Climate and Health on the Front Lines

Cecilia Sorensen, M.D.

Associate Professor, Columbia University; Director, Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education

Sep. 17: Altered States, Altered Stakes: Ethical Considerations in Psychedelic Research

Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D., Lynnette A. Averill, Ph.D.; Amanda Tamman, Ph.D., MSc
Baylor College of Medicine

Oct. 29: What Just Happened? A Recap of the 2025 Regular Session of the Texas Legislature

Brian Jammer, Christi Guerrini, J.D., MPH, Lindy U. McGee, M.D.; Laurel L. Williams, D.O.
Baylor College of Medicine

Dec. 10: “Reviving Organs, Redefining Death? The Ethical Controversy Over Normothermic Regional Perfusion (NRP)”

Adam Omelianchuk, Ph.D., M.A.
Baylor College of Medicine



Health Policy Symposium | April 24, 2025

Theme: Legislating Health: The Appropriate Role of the State in Health Policy



Session 1 — Innovative Medicaid: State-backed Strategies for Better Health

Moderator: Peter Ubel, M.D., Duke Department of Medicine
Speakers: Charlene Wong, M.D., MSHP, Duke Department of Pediatrics; Ryan Van Ramshorst, M.D., MPH, Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Session 2 — The Price of Health: Solutions for Medical Debt and Affordability

Moderator: Laura Petersen, Ph.D., Baylor College of Medicine
Speakers: Peter Ubel, M.D., Duke Department of Medicine; Fumiko Chino, M.D., University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center; Vivian Ho, Ph.D., Baker Institute for Public Policy; Ken Janda, J.D., Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine

Session 3 — Policy in Action: Collaborating with State Legislators for Change

Moderator: Christi Guerrini, J.D., MPH, Baylor College of Medicine
Panelists: Susan Patricia Raine, M.D., J.D., Baylor College of Medicine; Jimmy Widmer, M.D., Baylor Scott & White Health; Doug Abel, Harris County Medical Society

Session 4 — Pioneering Psychedelics: Insights from the Texas Ibogaine Initiative

Moderator: Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D., Baylor College of Medicine
Speakers: Bryan Hubbard, Americans for Ibogaine; Logan Davidson, Texans for Greater Mental Health; Lynnette A. Averill, Ph.D., Baylor College of Medicine

The Baruch A. Brody Lecture in Bioethics

Feb. 3: This year's event was an in-person panel presentation, "The Powerful and Perpetual Impact of Baruch Brody's Work on the Current Field of Bioethics." The panelist speakers were Larry McCullough, Ph.D., distinguished emeritus professor, Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy, Baylor College of Medicine; Susan Miller, M.D., MPH, John S. Dunn chair in general internal medicine, Department of Medicine, Houston Methodist Hospital; and Samuel Reis-Dennis, Ph.D., assistant professor, Department of Philosophy, Rice University. Moderator: Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D., Baylor College of Medicine.



Bioethics Intensive Course

April 7-11: Hosted a multi-state, virtual intensive course with 22 participants from five states covering fundamental bioethics topics and advanced clinical ethics skills.



Developing Issues in Bioethics & Society (DIBS)

One-hour speaker series featuring formal presentations and conversations on emerging ethical challenges in medicine and society.

Feb. 20: Narrative and Ethics
Martha Montello, Ph.D., Harvard University

May 14: Consent as Friction
Nikolas Guggenberger, LL.M., J.D., Ph.D., University of Houston Law Center

Aug. 13: Improving Perioperative Informed Consent
Claire Hoppenot, M.D., Baylor College of Medicine

Nov. 19: Medical Racial Capitalism: Exploitation, Extraction, and Carcerality in American Medicine
Jennifer James, Ph.D., MSW, MSSP, University of California San Francisco

Breakfast with a Bioethicist

Informal series that invites engaging conversations on current issues in bioethics over coffee.

Jan. 28: Joseph J. Fins, M.D., MACP, Weill Cornell Medicine

Feb. 21: Khara Ramos, Ph.D., Dana Foundation

Nov. 17: Govind Persad, J.D., Ph.D., Colorado Law



In collaboration with the **Office of Community Engagement and the Department of Dermatology**, the Center partnered on a health equity-focused program featuring **Dr. Tiffany Mayo**, associate professor and director of the Clinical Research Unit at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. The collaboration, supported through **Dr. Faith E. Fletcher**, brought together ethics, community engagement, and clinical education, drawing on her national leadership roles with [The Hastings Center for Bioethics](#) and as a current [Greenwall Foundation](#) scholar. A Baylor alumna known for her leadership in structural and cultural competency, Dr. Mayo presented “Patient-Centered Dermatology: A Holistic Approach to Hair and Skin Health,” highlighting holistic approaches to meeting the needs of patients with hair and skin conditions.



Internship program: This summer, the Center welcomed **19 interns from nine universities**, representing fields such as neuroscience, psychology, public policy and medical humanities. Students were placed across research, clinical ethics and administrative tracks, working with faculty mentors on projects spanning AI in healthcare, neuroethics, psychedelic research, health equity and digital decision-making.

The cohort also included students from the **Dana Foundation Neuroscience & Society Program**, who explored cutting-edge questions at the intersection of neuroscience, ethics and society under the guidance of Center faculty. Through **Journal Clubs, Lunch & Learns and hands-on mentorship**, interns gained multidisciplinary exposure and are preparing to engage with the broader academic community, through a combination of presenting their work and attending leading national and international meetings.

Learn more: [Bioethics and Health Policy Research & Clinical Ethics Internship](#)



Future Events

We're excited to host a dynamic lineup of events in 2026.



Medical Ethics & Health Policy Grand Rounds Series

- **Jan. 21, 2026 • 12-1 p.m. (CST)**
“Integrating Food Security into Clinical Care”
Featuring **Michelle Lopez, M.D.**, and **Claire Bocchini, M.D.**
Access: Virtual event — [Register](#)
- **March 18, 2026 • 12-1 p.m. (CST)**
“Managing Challenging Patient Interactions: Strategies for Handling Difficult and Abusive Behavior”
Access: Virtual event — Registration coming soon

The Baruch A. Brody Lecture in Bioethics

- **Feb. 4, 2026 • 12-1:30 p.m. (CST)**
“AI in Medicine: Opportunities and Legal and Ethical Challenges”
Featuring **I. Glenn Cohen, J.D.**
Access:
In person: Cullen Auditorium, Baylor College of Medicine — [Register](#)
Virtual livestream: [Register](#)

Bioethics Intensive Course

- **April 13-17, 2026**
Access: More information at [Bioethics Intensive Course](#)

Health Policy Symposium

- **April / May 2026**
Access: Registration coming soon

Publications

Throughout 2025, Center faculty, researchers, fellows and collaborators contributed to more than **80 publications**, essays and scholarly papers, advancing research, reflection and public dialogue at the intersection of ethics, medicine and policy.

Many of these publications also informed presentations and panel discussions at leading academic gatherings such as the **American Society for Bioethics and Humanities Annual Meeting, the International Neuroethics Society, Society for Neuroscience** and Grand Rounds at other institutions, further extending the reach and impact of our scholarship.



Selected Highlights

The American Journal of BIOETHICS



Reflecting on Principlism: Explaining, But Not Guiding, Clinical Ethics Analysis

The American Journal of Bioethics

Adam Omelianchuk, Ph.D., M.A.; Joanna Smolenski, Ph.D.; Holland Kaplan, M.D.; Matthew Shea, Ph.D.; Jared Smith, Ph.D.; Trevor Bibler, Ph.D.; Claire Horner, J.D., M.A.; Janet Malek, Ph.D.



PLOS ONE

A peer-reviewed, open access journal



A landscape analysis of psychedelic retreat organizations advertising online

PLOS One

Logan Neitzke-Spruill, Ph.D.; Caroline Beit, B.A.; Jill Robinson, M.A.; Nikita Singh, B.A.; Srijith Kambala, B.A.; Rishi Ramesh, Ph.D.; Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.

JOURNAL OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

Forensic investigative genetic genealogy and public trust

Journal of Forensic Sciences

Christi Guerrini, J.D., MPH; Jill Robinson, M.A.;
Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.

NEJM AI

Dual Public Health and Regulatory Dilemmas of “Relational” Artificial Intelligence

The New England Journal of Medicine AI

Nicholas Peoples, M.D., M.Sc., M.S.; Jennifer
Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D., M.A.

AJOB

Empirical Bioethics

‘Why Do You Ask?’ Revisiting the Purpose of Eliciting the Public’s Moral Judgments About Emerging Technologies

AJOB Empirical Bioethics

Jared N. Smith, Ph.D.; Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D., M.A.

Genetics in Medicine

An Official Journal of the ACMG

Family genetic risk communication and reverse cascade testing in the BabySeq project

Genetics in Medicine

Stacey Pereira, Ph.D.; Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.

NEURO ETHICS

Privacy in Perspective: Research Participants’ Priorities and Concerns Related to Sharing Data Generated in Human Neuroscience Studies

Neuroethics

Christi Guerrini, J.D., MPH; Jill Robinson, M.A.; Mary
Majumder, J.D., Ph.D.; Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.

American Journal of TRANSPLANTATION

Ethical controversies in organ procurement: A national survey on public perceptions of thoracoabdominal normothermic regional perfusion

American Journal of Transplantation

Trevor Bibler, Ph.D.; Jill Oliver Robinson, M.A.;
Adam Omelianchuk, Ph.D., M.A.; Amy McGuire,
J.D., Ph.D.; Savitri Fedson, M.D., M.A.

JAD

Journal of Alzheimer's Disease

JAMA[®]

The Journal of the American Medical Association

Dilemmas in diagnosing Alzheimer's disease: The peril and promise of self-fulfilling prophecies

Journal of Alzheimer's Disease

Janet Malek, Ph.D.; Jill Robinson, M.A.; Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D., M.A.; Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.

My Final Respects

Journal of the American Medical Association

Faith Fletcher, Ph.D., M.A.

Journal of Medical Ethics

Journal of the Institute of Medical Ethics

Bioethics as an emerging moral tradition and some implications for adversarial cooperation

Journal of Medical Ethics

Matthew Shea, Ph.D.

PSYCHIATRIC CLINICS OF NORTH AMERICA



Toward Human-Centered Digital Health Interventions

Psychiatric Clinics of North America

Kristin Kostick-Quenet, Ph.D.; Eric Storch, Ph.D.

Genetics in Medicine

An Official Journal of the ACMG

Toward Ethical Provenance Tracking: The GA4GH Model Data Access Agreement (DAA)

Genetics in Medicine

Vasiliki Rahimzadeh, Ph.D.

PEC

Patient Education and Counseling

Impact of personalized risk scores on shared decision making in left ventricular assist device implantation: Findings from a qualitative study

Patient Education and Counseling

Holland Kaplan, M.D.; Kristin Kostick-Quenet, Ph.D.; Benjamin Lang, M.D., MPH.; Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby, Ph.D., M.A.

Media Mentions and Other News

Our faculty's voices continue to shape national and international dialogue through major media outlets, podcasts and public forums.



Highlights

nature



[23andMe Plans to Sell Its Huge Genetic Database](#)

Nature

Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.



[23andMe Bankruptcy: Uncertainty, Caution, and a Call to Action \(Parts 1 & 2\)](#)

Bill of Health Blog, Harvard Law School Petrie-Flom Center

Christi Guerrini, J.D., MPH, and Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.

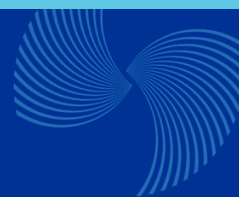
The New York Times



[A DNA Technique Is Finding Women Who Left Their Babies for Dead](#)

The New York Times

Christi Guerrini, J.D., MPH



The Hastings Center *for* Bioethics



[I See Bioethics in Almost All Aspects of Life Now](#)

The Hastings Center News

Faith Fletcher, Ph.D., M.A.

Medscape



YOUR PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ETHICS DECISION-MAKING
AND INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD MANAGEMENT

Features on AI Ethics & Incarcerated Patient Care

Medscape and Medical Ethics Advisor
Holland Kaplan, M.D.

hello HOUSTON

Interview on the Center for Humanities-based Health AI Innovation (CHHAIN)

Hello Houston – Houston Public Media
Vasiliki Rahimzadeh, Ph.D.

Digital Presence & Public Engagement

Our digital platforms continue to expand the reach of our work, connecting thousands of readers and followers with timely insights in ethics and health policy. We invite you to stay engaged with the Center by following our social channels for news, events and opportunities, and by reading and contributing to our **PolicyWise** blog, where faculty, staff and partners share perspectives that shape public dialogue.



Read or contribute to PolicyWise

Follow us:



Stay connected and join the conversation



Who We Are and What Drives Us

Faculty

On Sep. 26, our core and select joint faculty gathered for the Center's annual faculty retreat focused on "Making Meaning through Connection & Creation." The quotes below capture the spirit of our work and the values that shape how we see the world.



"Passion is that moment when everything you are and everything you've learned comes together as a gift to someone else. This field and this group in general is about new knowledge, helping people, making difficult decisions, teaching — a lot of it is about someone else"

Dr. Mary Brandt

Distinguished Emeritus Professor
Joint Faculty, Center for Medical Ethics
and Health Policy



"Connecting with people and talking about ideas — that's what energizes me."

Dr. Jennifer Blumenthal-Barby

Cullen Professor of Medical Ethics,
Center Associate Director



"Greatest privilege to generate new knowledge and new information. I feel so lucky at the fact that we get to do that."

Dr. Vasiliki Rahimzadeh

Assistant Professor



"I'm a talker—but early in my fellowship, it was a leap to feel confident speaking with clinicians, patients, and families. The stakes felt so high, and I didn't want to say the wrong thing. Over time, I've learned to use that ease with conversation as a strength—connecting with people about medical issues and frustrations while staying grounded in professional relationships."

Dr. Jared Smith

Assistant Professor



"The part I like most about working in the Center and in academic medicine is it allows you to work in so many different capacities. Working across projects keeps me motivated and alive. This is why I love bioethics — you can work across topics and different types of people, always learning more."

Dr. Faith E. Fletcher

Associate Professor

Internships and the Next Generation

Each year, we're proud to welcome a diverse and talented cohort of interns and pathway students who embody the future of ethics, medicine and health policy. The quotes below highlight our impact and what makes our programs meaningful and unique.

Interns

"Hearing experts from areas of research I didn't know existed opened my eyes to how ethics underlies all fields and decisions."

"It's definitely a one-of-a-kind program — it opened my eyes to new ways of thinking about science and humanity."

"It was a valuable opportunity to dive deeper into neuroethics — exploring how neuroscience, technology and philosophy intersect in ways I didn't know were possible."

"Coming from a background in medical humanities and a passion for patient-centered care, I've found this research to be a real source of inspiration — knowing that I can use my time and energy to contribute to a project that may shape the next generation of healthcare technology."

"This experience helped me see how curiosity, collaboration and compassion can coexist in research."

Medical Ethics & Health Policy Pathway Students

"The Health Policy faculty are outstanding — it's a privilege to learn from leaders so passionate about real-world policy impact."

"They do a great job exposing us to a wide variety of policy issues at multiple levels — it's one of the most engaging experiences I've had at BCM."

"Discussion-based lectures make for great learning. The program is well organized, and the faculty are truly passionate about what they teach."

"I appreciate how Ethics supplements my clinical learning with discussions of the dilemmas we may face in practice."

"They do a great job giving us practical clinical ethics experience — the guidance for developing our project ideas has been so helpful."

"Loved the clinical ethics rotation — it was incredibly helpful for understanding the nuances of ethical decision-making."

Students also emphasized the value of mentorship and structure, noting the clear expectations and support that help them translate complex health policy topics into actionable projects.

Our Legacy through the Years

Over four decades, the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy has grown from a small academic initiative into one of the nation's leading bioethics research centers — a vital part of Baylor's 125-year legacy of learning and leading.

1982

Founding & Formation

- Center officially founded as a joint initiative of Baylor, Rice University and the Institute of Religion; Leon Jaworski Chair established.
- Early programs expand philosophical, legal and clinical foundations for the emerging field of bioethics.

1993

Education & Ethics Leadership

- **Medical Ethics Pathway** launched, becoming one of Baylor's longest-standing educational pathways.
- **1999** – Clinical ethics consult services formally established at Baylor St. Luke's and Houston Methodist, setting a national standard.

2012

A New Era of Growth

- **Amy McGuire, J.D., Ph.D.**, appointed director, catalyzing major growth in research and national visibility.



2014

- Launch of the **EP3 Program** and Clinical Ethics Fellowship, expanding ethics training across UME and GME.
- **2016 – Health Policy Program & Pathway** established, strengthening multidisciplinary policy engagement.
- **2019 – Inaugural Baruch A. Brody Lecture**, honoring the Center’s founding legacy and expanding public outreach.

2023

Innovation, National Presence & New Frontiers

- **Ethics Thread (ET) introduced**, fully integrating ethics across the medical school curriculum.
- **2023–24** – Major new programs launched, including **ELIPSIS** (psychedelics ethics) and **Health Policy Grand Rounds**.
- **2025** – National visibility grows through landmark work in **AI ethics, neuroethics and psychedelics research**, marking one of the Center’s most expansive years.

A legacy built across decades, shaped by visionary leaders, groundbreaking scholarship and an enduring commitment to ethics in medicine.



Continuing the Legacy

Thank you for reading our annual report and for being part of our journey. In a year that marked Baylor College of Medicine's 125th anniversary and our first-ever Give Big Day, your support helped us exceed our goals and deepen our impact.

Whether through research partnerships, attending our events, sharing our work or giving generously, your engagement strengthens our mission and helps shape the future of ethical leadership in medicine.

We're grateful for your continued collaboration and invite you to keep building this legacy with us.

Join our community: [Stay up to date with the latest news.](#)

Support our work: [Give to the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy.](#)

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CENTER FOR
MEDICAL ETHICS
& HEALTH POLICY