

SPOTLIGHT ON EVENTS

VA Day at PRIM&R

The VHA Office of Research Compliance and Assurance (ORCA) sponsored "VA Day" at the Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research organization (PRIM&R) conference, "Practical Perspectives on Protecting Human Subjects," last October. National Center for Ethics staff member Robert Pearlman, MD, MPH, gave a presentation about the Center and the concept of integrated ethics programs. He also discussed the availability of Center consultations on ethical issues in human subjects protection that are unresolved after local review and discussion. Other speakers discussed issues of special concern to VA researchers and Institutional Review Boards (IRBs).

Ethical and Legal Challenges for the New Millennium Discussed at AMSUS Meeting

The 107th Annual Meeting of the Association of Military Surgeons of the U.S. (AMSUS) was held November 2000 in Las Vegas, NV. William Nelson, PhD, of the National Center for Ethics and CDR James Fell, USNR, organized a four-hour meeting entitled *Ethical and Legal Challenges for the New Millennium*. The session consisted of four presentations and a large group discussion. More than 120 attendees participated in sessions on emerging ethical, legal, and patient safety issues that affect federal health care providers including VHA and branches of the military. Participants expressed an overwhelming interest in more ethics programs at future AMSUS meetings.

VHA National Hepatitis C Virus Symposium

The VHA National Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Symposium took place December 13, 2000, in New Orleans, LA. This symposium was presented by EES in cooperation with the VHA Centers of Excellence in Research and Education for Hepatitis C. Kenneth Berkowitz, MD, FCCP, a Medical Ethicist with the National Center for Ethics, gave a talk entitled 'Ethical Considerations in the Diagnosis and Management of Hepatitis C.' Dr. Berkowitz emphasized the importance of developing Integrated Ethics Programs throughout VHA to assure that decisions with clinical and/or organizational impact consistently reflect core VHA values. Clinical and organizational ethics apply to Hepatitis C in several important areas, including: HCV patient privacy and confidentiality; protections for patients involved in Hepatitis C research or quality improvement activities; honesty throughout all aspects of the Hepatitis C program including screening, treatment, quality improvement and research; avoiding impropriety in VHA relationships with pharmaceutical companies; fairness in the allocation of VHA resources; and avoiding ethnic and gender disparity in Hepatitis C research and treatment programs. Dr. Berkowitz suggested strategies for approaching these difficult

challenges and provided information about Ethics Advisory Committees and other ethics resources for VHA staff.