



04 January 2023¹ – The WHO Collaborating Centre on Bioethics, hosted by the Centre of Bioethics and Culture (CBEC), Pakistan, and the Division of Science, Information and Dissemination at the Regional Office, jointly held a webinar on 12 and 13 December 2022 to discuss scientific and ethical challenges in human reproduction in the Region. More than 60 participants attended the webinar from different countries of the Region. Professor Farhat Moazzam, Chairperson of the CBEC, and recipient of the prestigious Founders Award of the Hastings Center, inaugurated the event.

The webinar focused on the ethical, social and religious dimensions of artificial reproductive technologies in the Region. Emerging ethical issues in genomic sciences, genetic research and potentially therapeutic interventions linked to gene editing, were also highlighted.

During the 2 days, a number of other relevant topics were also covered, including the work of bioethics WHO Collaborating Centres hosted by institutions in the Region; the opinions of Muslim scholars and fuqaha regarding modern reproductive technologies; the experience of artificial reproduction in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon and Pakistan; dealing with consanguinity in Pakistani society; and the human genome editing framework, and challenges and advances in genetic counselling in Pakistan. The closing remarks were presented by Dr Arash Rashidian, Director of the Division of Science, Information and Dissemination.

Notable speakers included Professor Gamal Serour (Al-Azhar University), Professor Sadiya Pal (South Asian Federation of Obstetricians and Gynecologists), Professor Saghar Salehpour (Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences), Dr Ahmed Mandil (WHO), Dr Thalia Arawi (Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Programme), Professor Aamir Jaffery (CBEC), Dr Salman Kirmani (Aga Khan University), Dr Emmanuelle Tuerlings (WHO), Ms Fizza Akbar (Aga Khan University) and Ms Sauleha Shekhani (CBEC). The panel discussions were moderated by Professor Farhat Moazzam and Dr Natasha Anwar.

The webinar concluded that more research and discussions are needed to better understand this area, which is of significant public health importance in the Region.

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