Bioethics Department at SickKids – Student Opportunities in Paediatric Bioethics

Introduction

The Bioethics Department at SickKids is keen to offer a range of opportunities to students interested in paediatric bioethics. We use the term students in a broad sense to include anyone who wishes to pursue such a learning opportunity, including practising Health Care Professionals. The Department is able to accommodate 3-4 individuals each summer and 2-3 over a more extended period throughout the year.

Eligibility:

We accept students from the traditional bioethics-feeder disciplines, including philosophy, medicine, nursing, social work, law, religious studies, as well as other clinical, humanities and social science disciplines.

Student opportunities include:

1. Electives/Selectives – individuals registered in corresponding university programs
2. Practicums – individuals registered in corresponding university programs
3. International observerships in Paediatric Bioethics
4. Volunteer studentships – over the summer
5. Volunteer studentships – throughout the academic year

Electives and Selectives are arranged via collaboration between the Director of the student’s University Program, the Director of the Bioethics Department, and the trainee.

Practicums are arranged via collaboration between the Practicum Director, the Director of the Bioethics Department, and the student.

International observerships in Bioethics are arranged through the office of International Education. Contact Lara Pietrolungo at lara.pietrolungo@sickkids.ca.

Each elective, selective, practicum, observership, or volunteer studentship, is designed to meet the needs of the student, their home department and the Bioethics Department at SickKids.

Volunteer Studentships:

The volunteer studentship in the summer or academic year is centered on a project in paediatric bioethics. The focus of the project is derived from a discussion between the student and a member or members of the Department in a mutually exploratory way to integrate the student’s interest with the range of interest/expertise within the Department or beyond (when appropriate). Students must be proficient in conducting interdisciplinary literature reviews and, with Bioethicist mentorship, have a strong likelihood of completing scholarly work of
sufficient quality to be regarded as worthy of a commentary (or more) for publication, ideally by the end of the studentship.

By exposure to the activities within Department (see below) students are encouraged to undertake additional reviews of literature in support of ongoing projects or consultations.

Students receive formal and informal mentoring, supervision and feedback. Summer students have bi-weekly feedback meetings and feedback discussions for year round volunteers are set with their supervisors at mutually agreed upon intervals.

**Departmental activities:**

Students spend most of their time in the Bioethics Department. This is to encourage interaction with faculty members and participation in *ad hoc* meetings and other educational or research activities. The more time a student spends in the Department, the more they are likely to complete a paper and corresponding academic poster, and the greater the range of additional experience that can be enjoyed.

The supervisor(s) work with the student to develop a commentary/paper and an academic poster for display at the SickKids Bioethics Week Poster Display and the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics (JCB) Research and Awards Day.

Students may attend Bioethics Staff Meetings on the first and third Tuesday morning of each month, during which members of the Department review bioethics consultations and educational, policy and research activities they are involved with that week. Attendance at the Staff Meetings is not mandatory.

Students also attend Friday Bioethics Department Academic Rounds where an issue relevant to Paediatric Bioethics at SickKids is discussed in depth. A student may also attend one Research Ethics Board meeting and a research skills class for other SickKids summer students. Volunteer students will not accompany bioethicists to Bioethics clinical consultations with patients, families and staff.

Students are immersed in the academically rich and diverse community of bioethics practice at SickKids and at the JCB in Toronto. When appropriate, students may have the opportunity to meet experts in their field of interest, outside of the members of the Bioethics Department. This would be facilitated by the student’s Bioethics supervisor. Students are encouraged to attend seminars and events relevant to their areas of interest at both SickKids and the JCB.

**Hours:**

Summer students commit to volunteer for 14-30 hours per week; those volunteering during the academic year commit to 5-10 hours per week. Students and volunteers are expected to commit to a minimum of 200 hours in total. To maximize the quality of the Studentship experience, the majority of work will take place in the Bioethics Department – 525 University Avenue, 8th floor, suite 845.
Students need to fulfill SickKids requirements for hospital volunteers – vaccinations up to date, vulnerable sector police check.

Unfortunately there is no financial remuneration available for studentships in the Bioethics Department. Thus these opportunities have to be categorized as volunteer positions. We recognize that many students will need income from employment elsewhere during this period and so time commitments are readily negotiated and flexible.

**Selection Criteria:**

Primary selection criteria include:

1. the applicant’s **skills, ability, interest and training** to successfully complete a scholarly project in paediatric bioethics

2. **description of a project** in paediatric bioethics that meets the training level and interests of the student and the needs of the hospital/Department

3. the **availability of a supervisor** from within the Bioethics Department.

Priority is given to students who have completed or are enrolled in graduate studies in Bioethics and who have excelled in Bioethics, philosophy, or health law classes.

We aim to make the studentship as relevant and complementary as possible to the student’s professional goals and objectives.

**Application process:**

Summer studentship applications due February 15th 2019.

Fall/winter/longer term volunteer position applications are due: July 1st 2019 for the Fall term; November 1st 2019 for the Winter term (2020).

Subject to capacity, applications for both studentships and volunteer positions may also be accepted on a rolling basis.

Send an email to Randi Zlotnik Shaul – Director Bioethics Department randi.zlotnik-shaul@sickkids.ca with (1) a copy of your CV, (2) a writing sample, (3) names of 2 referees that could speak to your readiness for such a role and (4) a letter describing:

(a) why you are interested in a volunteer studentship with the Bioethics Department at SickKids

(b) your background in Bioethics to date

(c) topics in paediatric bioethics that you would be interested in researching and writing about during a studentship. Ideally topics would be ones about which you have already done some preliminary study.
Potential candidates will be contacted for an in-person or telephone interview with 2 members of the Bioethics Department.