

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Welcome to our Third Regional Bioethics Conference held by the SHBPP, a yearly conference held to commemorate Global medical ethics Day, established by the WMA back in 2003 to highlight and promote the presence of ethics in medicine. This year's conference is about the ethical controversies surrounding stem cell research. This research is now on the fore front. It offers great promise for understanding basic mechanisms of human development and differentiation, as well as the hope for new treatments for diabetes, spinal cord injury, Parkinson's disease, myocardial infarction and now autism, to mention but a few. However, human stem cell research also raises sharp ethical, religious and political controversies that we cannot, and indeed should not, ignore. Such issues need to be addressed along with scientific challenges in order to ensure that stem cell research is carried out in an ethically appropriate manner. I am very happy to see so many colleagues from the Arab world joined today for that purpose along with the expertise of our Western colleagues. For although Stem Cell research is developing at a rapid pace in the West, it is equally taking place in the Arab World, the cradle of medicine, science and ethics. I wish us all a fruitful conference.