My recent participation in the 16th Asian Bioethics Conference (ABC16) held by the Asian Bioethics Association (ABA), in Manila, Philippines, strengthened my belief that “birds of a feather flock together.” The socio-cultural similarities among Asian countries make ABA a potentially effective platform for discussing ethics related issues, talking over ideas and sharing efforts for implementing solutions with others. Thereby, the meeting furthers the Association's vision of “providing a forum for intercultural and multidisciplinary dialogue on bioethics.”

This year, the prestigious event with the theme of “Bioethical Challenges and Responses to the New Global Knowledge Economy” was hosted by St. Paul University, Quezon City and De La Salle University, Manila, in partnership with the Philippine Ministry of Health, EUBIOS Ethics Institute and the American University of Sovereign Nations.

The ABC16 provided an opportunity for interaction and dissemination of ideas for social workers, researchers and educators in bioethics from Asian countries, including Turkey, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Korea, Taiwan and Japan. Participants from these regions were joined by colleagues from some non-Asian countries like Mexico, Nigeria, Malawi, New Zealand, Australia and Italy to deliberate and discuss ethical concerns with each other.

International participants discussed matters related to national policies, social issues, and topics concerning environment, education and research in bioethics. As the Vice President of the ABA from Pakistan, I was invited to present a paper and attend the board meetings of the ABA for planning out the next two years of activities. The paper I presented highlighted the need for a contextually relevant ethics curriculum for the undergraduate medical curriculum in the region. My colleague, Dr. Aamir Jafarey, faculty of the Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, SIUT, Karachi also participated from Pakistan. Dr. Jafarey, who is a past president of the ABA, presented a report on research ethics from Pakistan. Both these papers were well received by the participants.

An extremely impressive aspect of the conference was the simplicity maintained during the five day event. It was heartening to see that from the conference venue to the guests' food and lodging facilities, all arrangements stayed constant to the vision of moderation, without jeopardizing comfort. This commendable restraint clearly showed the ethical approach chosen by the organizers of this conference.