Law in Victoria’s Medicine and Law Conference 2010

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The Law Institute of Victoria’s Medicine and Law Conference 2010 took place in Melbourne in January, amidst soaring temperatures, the annual appearance in shorts of Victoria’s male population, and of course the tennis. This two-day event focuses on the important and growing area of medical law, with significant contributions from a wide range of relevant perspectives – patient, physician, lawyer, insurer, legislator, researcher, policy-maker, and coroner. Speakers utilised a variety of presentation formats with participants, mostly professionals working in the medicolegal field, encouraged to participate.

Professor Loane Skene of Melbourne University’s Faculty of Law outlined her inspiring predictions for the impact of stem cell research on the future of disease management, coupled with a comprehensive review of the law and policy surrounding genetic research to date. A panel discussion and workshop on challenges facing Australia’s aging population raised critical questions for medical and legal professionals dealing with capacity, guardianship and elder abuse. Advice aimed at practicing healthcare professionals was outstanding in quality and practical relevance, including a powerful presentation entitled ‘Saying Sorry Safely’ by Dr Liz Mullins and an informative discussion of the hidden liabilities for healthcare professionals arising through ‘Private Practice in Public Hospitals’ by David Goldberg and Bill O’Shea. These and a number of other sessions offered a wealth of information and prompted further thought-provoking discussions.

As a student studying both Medicine and Law, the event was especially valuable to improving my insight regarding the possible applications of my dual degree, areas of particular interest or importance to my future career personally, and particular aspects of practice which may be relevant to my choice of electives later in my degree. Considering the limited opportunities to gain practical understanding, mentors or experience in the medicolegal field through the University or either of my courses, it was of extreme benefit to my understanding of possible career outcomes available with this degree to be able to learn from people working in my area of interest about critical issues, their experiences and contributions, and to have the chance to interact and ask my own questions about their careers at this conference.

I can only once again thank the Law Institute of Victoria for the warm welcome extended at the 2010 Medicine and Law Conference to students, and most highly recommend it to everyone undertaking a Med/Law degree, as well as to medical practitioners in general and especially lawyers or doctors with an interest in medicolegal issues. This is a golden opportunity to gain understanding of practical opportunities from medicolegal experts, as well as a chance to network, acquire knowledge relevant to practice, and develop insight into the critical points of interaction between Australia’s legal system and its healthcare system.

See you there next year!