KENNEDY FOUNDATION GIVES $1,350,000 TO ESTABLISH INSTITUTE FOR BIOETHICS AT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religious thinkers will join social and physical scientists and physicians in the world's first institute organized to conduct coordinated research into the ethical and scientific aspects of human reproduction and development.

Robert J. Henle, S.J., President of Georgetown University, told a news conference today that the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation has given Georgetown a $1,350,000 grant to establish the Joseph and Rose Kennedy Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Bioethics. The Institute will be located in a new addition to the Children and Youth Center at Georgetown Hospital.

Unique in its purpose of combining ethics and science, the Institute will pioneer in the development of a new field of joint research which the Institute's founders have named "bioethics." Describing this new field of research, Father Henle said:

"Throughout scientific history fields of study have changed their perspective when the original discipline was inadequate to the effective pursuit of truth. Chemistry developed a subspecialty of biochemistry, physics, biophysics. I am quite certain that bioethics will assume the same importance to mankind as these other fields."

In the course of its bioethical investigations the Institute will study such complex contemporary questions as:

- Do the parents of a Mongoloid child have the duty to keep the child alive when its life is threatened by disease?

- Does a married couple have the right to reproduce if there is a good chance that their offspring will be defective?

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What is the physician’s obligation to keep an aged patient alive whose condition is agonizing and hopeless?

Who gets the use of artificial kidney machines when there are so few available and so many whose lives depend on them?

What are the ethical issues involved in the creation of test tube babies?

Although there are groups presently doing research in various aspects of the life sciences, social policy, and ethics, Father Henle said, "The Kennedy Institute will be unique in its introduction of ethicists into laboratories, clinical areas, operating and delivery rooms where the life and death decisions involving both science and ethics are daily being made."

In addition to its research programs, the Kennedy Institute will establish the first comprehensive Information Center for Bioethics. The new Information Center will maintain a library and continuous survey of world literature in science and theology. Experts on the staff will provide the most current information on bioethical questions to scientists, students, clergymen, and others faced with vital decision making in this area.

The Kennedy Institute will focus on the specialty of perinatal medicine which deals with human life from before conception to the period of hospital care after birth. The Institute's facilities will be especially open to the poor and others in the Washington area who have the greatest need for such comprehensive clinical services. Already a leader in perinatal medicine, Georgetown has recently attracted new faculty who will work in the Institute: Dr. A. Elmore Seeds, M.D., Professor of Obstetrics and John J. P. Schruefer, M.D., Associate Professor of Obstetrics, both of whom have come to Georgetown from Johns Hopkins; and Dr. Jeanne Clair Ridley who comes to Georgetown from her post as Chairman of Demography at Columbia University.

With a Board of Advisors comprising some of the most distinguished scientists, theologians, and humanists from the United States and abroad, the Institute will be guided by such notables as Joshua Lederberg, Ph.D., Nobel Laureate...
and Professor of Genetics, Stanford University School of Medicine; The Rev. Fr. Bernard Haring, C.S.S.R., Professor of Moral Theology, the Pontifical Lateran University, Rome; Professor Jacques Monod, Nobel Laureate, and Director of the Pasteur Institute, Paris; Professor R. Paul Ramsey, Harrington Spear Paine Professor of Religion, Princeton University, America's most prominent Methodist ethicist; and Leo Joseph Cardinal Suenens of Belgium.

Dr. Andre E. Hellegers, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Georgetown University Medical Center, has been appointed as the first Director of the Kennedy Institute. A native of the Netherlands and educated in Britain, France and the United States, Dr. Hellegers has specialized in obstetrics and physiology and was an associate professor at Johns Hopkins University Medical School from 1962-1967. He served as a member of both Pope Paul's and President Johnson's Population Commissions and is past president of the Society for Gynecologic Investigation and of the Perinatal Research Society.

Father Henle said that the Kennedy Foundation grant will provide $1,000,000 toward the construction of three new floors to be added to the Children and Youth Center. In addition, the Foundation will provide $350,000 to support a program of research scholars in ethics who will work in the Institute for a period of one to four years.

The core of ethical experts is already at work in temporary headquarters at the Kennedy Institute. Distinguished scholars who have already accepted posts as Kennedy Research Scholars are Reverend Bernard Haring, Professor of Moral Theology, Lateran University, Rome; Father Charles Curran, President, American Society of Christian Ethics; Leroy Walters, Ph.D., Mennonite Minister and ethicist; Richard McCormick, S.T.D., President of the Catholic Theological Association; Philip Schmitz, Ph.D., of Germany, a medical ethicist; and Enda McDonagh, S.T.D., one of Great Britain's outstanding ethicists. Additional Protestant and Jewish theologians and moralists will be added as appointments to the faculty of the Institute are accepted.
Senator Edward M. Kennedy, President of the Kennedy Foundation, said, "Human life is too precious and the decisions regarding it too important to leave to any one group of specialists - doctors, lawyers, scientists, political leaders, or theologians. That is why this new Institute is bringing together men and women skilled in every discipline concerning human development - to begin to look at the issues more broadly and humanely - to develop a decision-making process based on full knowledge of the facts and to translate this knowledge into the best possible care of women and their children born or yet to be born."

Commenting on the establishment of the Institute, Senator Walter Mondale said, "The Kennedy Foundation should be commended for making such studies possible at an American university. Since so many ethical problems are arising with the introduction of new technologies, I have urged that emphasis on these matters be made part of medical education."

W. D. McElroy, President of the National Science Foundation said, "The Kennedy Foundation is to be applauded for having the vision to make such interdisciplinary work possible on a permanent basis in a university setting."

Dr. Matthew F. McNulty, Jr., Vice President for Medical Center Affairs at Georgetown, noted, "The Kennedy Institute will have the capacity to review, assess and report on alternative choices and their long range impact on many of the vital social-scientific issues of today and the future."

Describing the scope and emphasis of the new Institute, the director, Dr. Andre E. Hellegers, said: "The Institute will stress the problems of human development in the stages preceding birth. We hope through our research to understand better what causes certain disabilities, such as mental retardation, and how to prevent them. We will emphasize throughout our entire program the preventative as well as the curative aspects of medical care."

The bioethics program, he said, "will bring expertise to the new and growing ethical problems in medicine today." As examples, Dr. Hellegers cited -more-
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problems dealing with genetics engineering, transplantation, and the use of extraordinary means to prolong life. The Institute will develop curricula leading to the establishment of a sub-specialty in bioethics and perinatal medicine.

In addition to the permanent scientific staff, ethicists and theologians of various denominations from around the world have accepted invitations to spend from one to several years at the center, addressing themselves to ethical problems confronting men and women who for the first time in human history will have the power to make choices affecting the genetic evolution of mankind itself.

In its service aspect, the Institute will provide optimum clinical care for mother and child. "Since the center will have the most sophisticated tools for analysis of fetal welfare before birth," Dr. Hellegers said, "we want to provide care to patients who will have the greatest need for these services. This means the poor and others especially bereft of health, education or personal competence."

Care of the fetus will extend logically into care of the newborn. The Institute will provide the first comprehensive perinatal center in the United States dealing with all aspects of human procreation from before conception to care of the newborn.

Research and teaching programs at the Institute will include: genetics, developmental biology, fetal physiology, developmental psychology, community high-risk obstetrics, fetal medicine, pregnancy failure investigation, sociology and demography, interdisciplinary seminars, and bioethics.

The Institute is designed for easy accessibility to all research and clinical services of the Georgetown University Hospital and the total medical center. The site for the Institute will permit contiguous location to the hospital maternity wing, labor and delivery suites, neonatal nursery, and intensive care nurseries and related facilities.

It is anticipated that the Institute will have 25 faculty members when it opens, with an enrollment of 43 pre- and post-doctoral candidates who will be accepted for study from major universities throughout the world.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Andre Hellegers will be available today (Friday) to answer further questions about the Kennedy Institute. His phone is 625-7803.