Neuroscience, National Security, and Human Research Ethics

Jonathan Moreno, PhD
Director, Center for Biomedical Ethics
Emily Davie and Joseph S. Kornfeld Professor of Biomedical Ethics
University of Virginia

To view pictures of the event, please click here.

May 20, 2005
4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

The Faculty Club
College of Physicians & Surgeons
630 West 168th Street
New York, NY 10032

The Center for Bioethics was honored to present our Third Anniversary Distinguished Lecture featuring Dr. Jonathan Moreno, who is the Director of the Center for Biomedical Ethics at the University of Virginia. Dr. Moreno offered a stimulating lecture that addressed the national security establishment's support of research at the intersection of neuroscience and national security. Dr. Moreno suggested how applied science can play a decisive role in changing the face of armed conflict by enhancing, muddling, or erasing memory; monitoring crowds for individuals whose brain patterns correlate with aggressive behaviors; or controlling weapons from afar merely with thoughts. In addition, Dr. Moreno explained that the national security establishment, more specifically the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), is interested in enhancing soldiers' capacity to go without food or sleep, and even to heal their own injuries.

Dr. Moreno effectively argued that such advancements present tough ethical questions which society needs to address. This lecture presented the audience with some challenging and provoking questions about the dangers of such information falling into the "wrong hands," and whether such knowledge is needed for the government to protect society. The ensuing discussion addressed what kinds of ground rules can be set for science and states. Ideas about personal identity and liberty were brought up as well. The audience nearly filled the room and included medical, psychiatric, and legal professionals, bio ethicists, students, researchers and friends of the Center.