The Committee on Philosophy and Medicine has undergone changes in membership over the last year. Leonard Kahn (Air Force Academy), Rosamond Rhodes (Mt. Sinai Hospital), and Sandra Woien (Regis University) were appointed to the committee and began their service on July 1, 2010. Fritz Alhoff, Loretta Koppelman, Kevin McDonald, and John Lizza’s three-year service on the committee ended on June 30, 2010. Rosamond Rhodes succeeds John Lizza at the new chair.

At the last Eastern Division Meeting in New York, the Committee sponsored a session on “Health Care Reform” that featured talks by Lawrence Brown (Columbia University), Daniel Callahan (The Hastings Center), Norman Daniels (Tufts), and Leonard Fleck (Michigan State). Rosamond Rhodes chaired the session. Laurence Brown’s caution about the political uncertainty about whether reform would actually take place turned out to be right on the mark, as we watched the drama unfold in the months following the meeting. There was some good discussion of the fragility of the political consensus, the amount of compromise in the current plans, and their feasibility. Unfortunately, Norman Daniels was unable to attend the session. He did send written remarks, which were read.

At the Central Division Meeting in Chicago, James Lindemann Nelson organized and chaired a session on “Rethinking the Ethics of Vital Organ Transplantation.” Franklin Miller (National Institutes of Health) presented his collaborative work with Robert Truog (Harvard University) on the question of whether to revise the “dead donor rule” to expand the pool of potential organ donors. (Robert Truog’s humanitarian work in Haiti prevented him from participating in the session.) Daniel Brudney (University of Chicago) and Joan McGregor (Arizona State University) provided commentary.

At the Pacific Division Meeting in San Diego, the Committee collaborated with the Society for Philosophy and Technology to sponsor a session on “Neuroimaging Techniques and Human Nature.” The session examined how advances in neuroimaging may affect or alter our understanding of human nature. Inmaculada de Melo-Martin chaired the session, which featured talks by Fabrice Jotterand (UT Southwestern Medical Center) and Robert Rosenberger (Georgia Institute of Technology). Patricia Churchland (University of California–San Diego) and Mark Cohen (University of California–Los Angeles) were also scheduled to talk at the session, but unforeseen circumstances prevented them from participating.

Continuing its collaboration with the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities, the Committee will sponsor a one-hour session on Beauty and Disability at the next annual ASBH
meeting on October 21-24, 2010 in San Diego, California. Judgments of beauty sometimes are thought to discriminate against people, including those with physical or mental disability. At the same time, most people value beauty (however that may be understood) in their lives. How does such aesthetic valuation relate to moral valuation? Also, how ought one to balance these values in addressing disability? Loretta Koppelman will chair the session that will feature talks by Anita Silvers (San Francisco State) and Sara Goering (University of Washington) and commentary by Bonnie Steinbock (University of Albany, SUNY). The Committee plans to reprise this topic for a longer session at the next Eastern Division Meeting in Boston in December, 2010.

At the 2011 Central Division Meeting, the Committee plans to sponsor a session on Potentiality at the Beginning and End of Life. Speakers include Bertha Alvarez Manninen (Arizona State University), Jason Eberl (Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis), David Hershenov (University at Buffalo), and John Lizza (Kutztown University of Pennsylvania).

It has been an honor and pleasure to serve for the last three years as Chair of the Committee on Philosophy and Medicine. I would especially like to thank my colleagues on the Committee whose intelligence and generosity of spirit have made my job easy and exciting. The editors of the Newsletter on Philosophy and Medicine, Mary Rorty and Mark Sheldon, have done excellent work in expanding the content of the publication and providing a forum for cutting edge work in the field. Over the last three years, the Committee has tried to encourage philosophers working on more theoretical issues in metaphysics, ethics, and social and political philosophy to turn their attention to some of the more practical concerns that occupy bioethicists and philosophers of medicine. At the same time, the Committee has tried to encourage those on the front lines of bioethics and philosophy of medicine to reflect on how the more theoretical considerations might help to analyze and solve some of the difficult problems that arise in the practice of medicine. Hopefully, this work continues. The Committee is in good hands.