The Committee on Philosophy and Medicine has been busy organizing sessions for each of the upcoming APA Division meetings. The panels are taking shape and each promises engaging presentations and lively discussions.

When the Eastern Division meets at the end of December in Atlanta, the Committee-sponsored session will address the issue of "Justice and Defining the Requirements for Health Care in a Decent Society." This is a timely topic that will address issues at the heart of debates related to the Affordable Care Act that are likely to be the subject of lively political attention early in 2013. Committee member Leonard Kahn from the US Air Force Academy will moderate the panel of six speakers—Marcus Arvan from the University of Tampa, Leonard Fleck from Michigan State University, Lilly Frank from Queens College CUNY, J. Paul Kelleher of the University of Wisconsin, Stanford's Govind Persad and Amanda Favia from CUNY's Macaulay Honors College.

In his presentation on a non-ideal theory of justice, Marcus Arvan from the University of Tampa proposes that a just minimum of health care should be determined through a quasi-democratic grass-roots process that respects the collective deliberations of the most disadvantaged. A decent health care minimum may be "different things in different places", as determined by different human needs and values in different societies.

Leonard Fleck from Michigan State University is still trying to sort out which of two possible subjects he will present. One option will be to avoid the language of justice and formulate an argument in terms of "basic" or "essential" or "adequate" or "needed" health care services. His approach avoids the problem of choosing between competing conceptions of health care justice and embraces a contextual perspective that accepts as a fact that different conceptions of justice will be relevant and reasonable in different circumstances. His other option is a presentation on "Parsimonious Care: Does Ockham's Laser Belong in Medicine's Black Bag?" where he will defend the legitimacy of physicians’ role in rationing health care.

Lily Frank from Queens College, CUNY plans to consider how the conception of "health" can be used to determine what is included in and excluded from the basic minimum of health care coverage. Using contraception as her primary example, she will demonstrate how the concept of health can be used to resolve allocation disputes.

J. Paul Kelleher from the University of Wisconsin will ground health-related duties in a more general duty of concern which is owed to others by virtue of their self-disciplined social cooperation under coercive institutions. Kelleher addresses Rawls’s idea of strains of commitment in explaining how some forms of classical liberalism demand health-related duties, and show how his concern-based view explains widely held intuitions about when it is and is not permissible to aggregate smaller health benefits in preference to providing larger benefits to fewer people.
Govind Persad from Stanford University will discuss recent work in law and philosophy on the human right to health. By examining the implications of understanding the right to health care as a right to adequate or maximum care, he will argue that this right is best understood as a right to some form of adequacy.

Amanda Favia from Macaulay Honors College, CUNY, will focus primarily on Amartya Sen’s work on health equity and how it relates to defining a standard for universal access to health care, and will consider whether it is a public or private responsibility to provide the resources necessary for achieving this standard.

The Committee on Philosophy and Medicine will devote its session at the 2013 Central Division meetings in New Orleans to honoring Bernard Gert’s contribution to bioethics. Professor Gert died last December. He was a witty and generous friend and mentor who loved philosophy, teaching philosophy, and philosophic debate. Gert served as a member of this Committee and as its Chair. After his tenure he remained a constant supporter of the Committee’s work and frequently attended the Committee-sponsored APA sessions, adding his distinctive booming voice to the discussions. Bernie was an early leader in the field of bioethics. In collaboration with K. Danner Clouser and Charles Culver, he contributed an original and practical approach to bioethics. Collaborating with other colleagues, Bernie also authored landmark papers that took stands on cutting edge controversial issues and challenged other people’s widely accepted views, most famously, Beauchamp and Childress’s principlism.

The moderator for this session will again be Leonard Kahn, and will include four speakers. Michael Ferry from Stone Hill College will discuss Gert’s view on the lack of competence and contrast his position with the account offered by Paul Appelbaum and colleagues and the one presented by Allen Buchanan and Dan Brock. Michael Nair-Collins will discuss Gert’s views on brain death. I could not resist the opportunity to continue an ongoing debate with Bernie on whether medical ethics is part of common morality or distinct and different from it; so seizing the prerogative of the Chair, I will be one of the panel speakers. Bernie’s daughter, philosopher Heather Gert from the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, will round out the panel. For those who are not familiar with Gert’s work in bioethics, as well as for those who know it well, this will be an occasion to engage with his ideas and share his memory.

At the APA Pacific Division in San Francisco in March, our topic will be “Health Care for Prisoners.” John Kleinig from John Jay College and The Graduate Center, CUNY, and Kenneth Kipnis from the University of Hawaii, and former Chair of this Committee, will address the issue of correctional health services. While Ken will take a theoretical approach to the subject, John’s focus will be legal, centered on Supreme Court cases and specifically aimed at the California penal system. Nada Gligorov from Mount Sinai School of Medicine will explore how evidence from recent scientific studies is revising our notions of free will and responsibility, and how this should direct the focus of services for prisoners to beneficence. Anita Silvers will round out the panel and present some California cases that raise questions about the health care that should be provided for prisoners. The Moderator for this session will be Nancy S. Jecker from the University of Washington.

In addition to these detailed plans, Miriam Solomon and Peter Schwartz are organizing a session for the Central Division 2014 meetings on Intuition in Medicine. Their plan is for the session to take up questions of the epistemology and philosophy of science and the philosophy of action side of philosophy of medicine rather than the ethics side. They plan to focus the session on concerns related to the
judgment and decision making skills of physicians and the role of patients' guesses and intuitions in their choices.