



Erika Blacksher, PhD, named fourth John B. Francis Chair in Bioethics

FOCUS ON CLASS, RACE AND HEALTH IN AMERICA

The Center for Practical Bioethics in Kansas City has named Erika Blacksher, PhD, as the new John B. Francis Chair in Bioethics. Dr. Blacksher will formally assume her position on September 1, 2020. She succeeds the esteemed Richard Payne, MD, who worked tirelessly throughout his career to eliminate racial disparities in end-of-life care and chronic pain. Dr. Payne died unexpectedly in 2019 having served as the Chair for six years.

Population Health

In announcing Blacksher's appointment, John Carney, President and CEO, called her "an incredible population health scholar and bioethics researcher, whose contributions to the broader field of healthcare are critically important in this time of global health crisis. She is a pioneer in the emerging field of population health ethics and has developed her skills and scholarship through the authentic lived experience of those she seeks to serve. She is passionate about this work, and we can't wait for her to get started in KC," he said.

Blacksher is leaving her faculty position at the Department of Bioethics and Humanities at the University Washington School of Medicine where she has spent the last decade writing, teaching and researching. She will become the fourth John B. Francis Chair, which was established in 2006 with a gift of the Francis Family Foundation honoring the memory of John Francis, a former

Chair of the Center's Board of Directors and retired Board Chair of Puritan Bennett, a manufacturing company founded by John Francis' father, Parker B. Francis. The company made ventilators and artificial respiratory supports and was issued the first patent in the U.S. for artificial ventilation. John's insights into the ethical concerns raised by such devices was prescient, and his support for the Center fostered mutual respect.

"I am thrilled to have this opportunity to direct my energies on population health ethics with focus on issues of class, race, and health in America, at a time of declining U.S. life expectancy and widening educational disparities," said Blacksher in accepting the position. "The Center's a 35-year history of doing community-engaged bioethics is a perfect place to continue my practical work in deliberative democracy."

Return to Kansas City

Blacksher and her husband Tom Knittel, a well-known architect to many in this region, have family and friends in Kansas City, a place they called home and where from 1998 to 2001 she served as deputy director of the Center's Community-State Partnership initiative. Upon returning to the area, she will take a volunteer appointment as Research Professor at the Department of History and Philosophy of Medicine at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City. However, her arrival will be delayed until travel and health safety can be assured. Blacksher's current research examines ethics issues raised by health inequalities, population health policies and how to engage populations burdened by health disparities.

Dr. Blacksher will present the free **26th Annual Flanigan Lecture on August 17, 2020** via Zoom as a way for the Center to re-introduce her to the area. Registration will be available through the Center's website in the near future.