Ph 458 Evidence and Policy

WEEK 10: Loose ends – more on EBM and on Bayesianism

During this course I have often referred to the Evidence Based Medicine movement and I have often cited insights and arguments from the Bayesian approach (to statistics but also to weighing evidence in general). The main aim of the final lecture will be to focus on EBM and on Bayesianism a good deal more sharply than hitherto

We will cover that material in the Seminar too (see questions B and C below) but I would also like to add an additional topic for seminar discussion that I have not had time to cover in the lectures. This is EBM and the law. I suggest we start with that in A.

Reading and Study questions
   A. Discuss the issues raised by Hurwitz's article about evidence-based guidelines and the law – especially by the cases of Daniel Merenstein and 'Helling vs Carey' (Boxes 5 and 4 respectively in Hurwitz).

   Required Reading:
   1. Brian Hurwitz ' Does Evidence Based Guidance Influence Determinations of Medical Negligence?'*BMJ* 2004 (see Moodle)

   B.   How has EBM moved away from a complete preoccupation with RCTs and what problems are there with the position it now (largely) adopts?

   Required Reading
   John Worrall 'Evidence in Medicine and Evidence-Based Medicine' *Philosophy Compass* 2007 (you'll be able to skip big chunks of stuff that we have covered more than once already)
   Michael Rawlins *Harveian Oration* (for both see Moodle – Rawlins was, until recently, head of NICE and so an extremely influential medical policy maker).

   C. **(a)** What are the main features of Bayesianism and what are the main ways in which Bayesian statistics differs from Classical Statistics?
   (b) At least in the orthodox Bayesian approach, prior probabilities are 'subjective'. What exactly does that mean? How problematic, if at all, is the subjectivity of the priors?

   Required Reading
   Colin Howson and Peter Urbach *Scientific Reading – the Bayesian Approach*. 3rd edition. Brief selections available on Moodle.

   Further Reading

   The rest of the Howson and Urbach book (Library)