**The 1,335th Meeting of the Brighton and Sussex Medico-Chirurgical Society took place on 2nd April 2015 in the Audrey Emerton Building:**

Professor of Clinical and Biomedical Ethics at BSMS, **Bobbie Farsides** gave a lecture entitled:

**Removing vulnerabilities: The ethical case for clinical research involving children and young people.**

Professor Farsides gave an account of her work as Chair of the Children and Clinical Research working party of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics. The working party was established in 2013 and their report will be published on 14th May 2015.

Professor Farsides pointed out that up to now children have been considered as a vulnerable group and thus have been protected, to a large extent, from involvement in clinical research. This has had the pernicious effect of leaving children exposed to treatments that are not evidenced based in their age group.

The role of the working party was to see how research in this so called ‘vulnerable’ population could be promoted. The aim was to develop an ethically sound model for protecting children **through** research rather than protecting them inappropriately **from** research.

Children and young people were intimately involved in the report through activities including stakeholder meetings, blogging, and school visits. The work was extended internationally at a conference in Malawi and through contacts in Kenya.

The working party formed the view that research with children is essential, we should not apologise for it; however it is imperative that research is carried out **with** children and not **on** children.

Children from a very early age can take an active role in their own lives, aided by their parents or carers who normally act as their chief advocate. Peer groups can also play a part.

The principal requirements to protect against feeling vulnerable are:

Knowledge and understanding

Respect

Control

Appropriate treatment

Attention.

In practice this means taking account of the following in the research process:

Research priorities, study design, ethical governance, conducting research and, crucially, dissemination and feedback to and from the subjects of research.

It is intended that the working party report will lead to greater involvement of children and young people in the design and conduct of research projects. It is understood that all research involves an element of risk but ultimately it is hoped that including this group in research will lead to better clinical practice.

Professor Farsides’ views were endorsed by paediatricians in the audience.

There was a lively question and answer session and the meeting closed at 7.40pm.