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Book Reviews

Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine

Robert Hunt and John Arras

Mayfield Publishing Co., 285 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto, Calif. 94301, 1977. 524 pp., \$9.95.

Ethics in Medicine: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Concerns

Stanley Joel Reiser, Arthur J. Dyck, and William J. Curran, Editors

M.I.T. Press, 28 Carleton St., Cambridge, Mass. 02142, 1977. 679 pp., \$40.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

For a number of years medical ethics has, without a doubt, been one of the "hottest" areas in philosophy. Undergraduate courses in the field are now taught at an enormous number of schools, and an increasing number of medical schools or nursing programs offer elective or required courses.

To fill the need for texts in this area, the publishers and editors have rushed to our rescue. At least a half dozen books in this area have appeared in the last year. Reiser et al.'s *Ethics in Medicine* and Hunt and Arras' *Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine* are two recent attempts to fill this ever-expanding need.

Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine begins with a 45 page "mini-course" titled "Ethical Theory in the Medical Context." This introduction is intended to provide a minimal background in ethics for those who have no previous acquaintance with the field. Considering the limitations imposed by spatial restrictions, it accomplishes its goal adequately. Criticizing it for its weaknesses must be regarded as carping, especially since this single essay method of presenting introductory ethics in minimal space seems to be clearly preferable to the alternative method of using brief selections from the classical ethical works.

The body of the work consists of five sections covering the standard areas of medical ethics: the delivery of medical care, genetics, abortion, euthanasia, and informed consent. In addition, there is a section on behavior control and psychosurgery. Unfortunately, the articles provided are somewhat uninspired. Even as one quite well read in medical ethics, it is nonetheless disappointing for me to find that of the 36 selections in this text only three are new to me. More important to a person considering this for adoption as a text, however, is the quality of the selections. In general, they must be regarded as between good and very good. None is really a waste of space and a large number are the best possible choices to represent their respective positions. These include James Rachel's "Active and Passive Euthanasia" and Garvin Klusky's "Health Care, Human Rights and Government Intervention: A Critical Appraisal."

Ethics in Medicine, edited by Reiser et al., is a truly massive work. Looking as weighty and impressive as the typical medical school textbook, it is perhaps twice the length of Hunt and Arras' text. This enormous size must be regarded as necessary, however, since this book attempts to do so much more than the other. The subtitle "Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Concerns" provides the essential clue. This book is *not* really a textbook in medical ethics.

In their eagerness to produce a work that will reflect what they describe as the "interdisciplinary character of medical ethics," the editors have perhaps gone totally overboard and substantially slighted the fact that medical ethics is, after all is said and done, a branch of ethics. The pamphlet advertising this text describes the three editors as "a physician/historian, a lawyer and an ethicist." The order of this listing is an excellent indication of the relative emphases in this work.

The "basic ethics" section of this book follows the alternative format that I mentioned earlier: selections from the classical writers. While this is probably not theoretically inferior to the single essay method, it clearly requires more from the instructor while not offering any significant compensating advantage.

In addition to sections on abortion, genetics, the delivery of medical care, euthanasia, and informed consent, the editors have chosen such topics as "Ethical Dimensions of the Physician-Patient Relationship Throughout History," "Regulation, Compulsion and Consumer Protection in Clinical Medicine and Public Health," "Truth-Telling in the Physician-Patient Relationship," and brief sections on "Population Policy" and "Fetal Experimentation." In general, (excluding the criticism given above) the articles chosen are excellent.

The advertisement sent to professors on behalf of *Ethics in Medicine* describes it as an invaluable reference work. It surely is that; no less than a third of the 103 selections in this work were new to me and all were interesting. If you want to have your library purchase a copy of a work on medical ethics this may well be the book. (Certainly only a library can afford the hardcover version at \$40 a copy.) Yet, it seems more important that a work intended as a textbook in medical ethics concentrate on ethics than that it contain articles that would pleasantly surprise the person who would teach such a course.

Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine, on the other hand, is clearly intended and well-suited for use in a medical ethics course. For those students who might not be sufficiently prepared for a course based on Gorovitz et al.'s outstanding *Moral Problems in Medicine*, this is probably the text of choice. The articles are easily comprehensible and highly provocative. Even the typical grade-oriented pre-medical student would be hard-pressed to maintain his total "What's in it for me?" attitude while reading such interesting material.

— Lewis Silverman

Dealing with Dilemma: A Manual for Genetic Counselors

Patricia T. Kelly

Springer-Verlag, 175 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10010, 1977. 143 pp., \$7.50.

The special medical services which come under the title "genetic counseling" have grown both in complexity and in demand over the last two decades. In the loosest sense, genetic counseling is as ancient as mothers- and fathers-in-law, who from time immemorial have pronounced judgment on the origin of good and bad traits in their grandchildren. But as a medical specialty, the discipline of clinical genetics came into existence rather suddenly at the end of the 1950's.

Academic human geneticists had begun systematically to open their doors for genetic consultations at least twenty years earlier, but the direct involvement of trained physicians and their particular modes of perception is quite recent.

Patricia T. Kelly is an experienced genetic counselor, having worked for years at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. Her experiences