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[Book Review of] *A Bioethical Perspective on Death and Dying: Summaries of the Literature* by Information Planning Associates

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A Bioethical Perspective on Death and Dying: Summaries of the Literature

Information Planning Associates

Information Planning Associates, Inc., P.O. Box 6318, 5632 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20015. 88 pages, \$8.95 (paper).

Death and Dying is a special supplement of the monthly journal *Bioethics Digest* containing all of the abstracts in thanatology which appeared in the first twelve issues of the digest. The abstracts are grouped in the following eight major sections with appropriate subsections: attitudes toward death; death education; definition and determination of death; euthanasia: (a) ethical and philosophical considerations and (b) policy and legislation; involuntary euthanasia: (a) children and (b) the Quinlan case; care of the dying; bereavement; and suicide.

The publication has some very definite positive features such as: 1) the writing of the abstracts is lucid and concise; 2) the sources are extremely varied: newspapers, journals of law, medicine, psychology, philosophy and religion; edited readers, textbooks, and convention papers; and 3) the choice of readings dealing with the multiple facets of the Karen Ann Quinlan case are well-balanced. However, there are two flaws which are glaring. One, there are no addresses given with the bibliographical data which would save the reader time and energy in obtaining a copy of the complete article cited. The other is the uselessness of the author index. A title index, if an index is warranted (questionable), would have more value.

Weighing the positive and negative elements, this particular publication would serve well as a source book in preparing courses in death education whether it be for the undergraduate or graduate levels, for continuing education, or for in-service training. For those individuals who are more intensely involved in bioethical problems or have a broader grounding in bioethical issues or in bioethics the *Digest* itself may be more valuable, in the sense that each issue covers a spectrum of problems. A cautionary word is in order. Abstracts can be abused by having them substitute for the knowledge of the content and the nuances of that content gained by reading the original sources. This unintentional tendency can be accelerated by the shortness of time and the inaccessibility of the original material. This, however, distorts the true value of the abstract as a reference tool and would distort the value of this publication in particular.

— Peter H. Beisheim

Dying and Death: A Clinical Guide for Caretakers

David Barton, M.D., Editor

The Williams and Wilkins Company, 428 E. Preston St., Baltimore, Md. 21202, 1977. xvii + 238 pp., no price given.

This collection is intended to inform and assist professionals caring for terminal patients in a hospital environment. The editor (associate clinical professor of psychiatry, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine) and seven contributors address medical, psychological, social, ethical and personal issues from the per-