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## President's Page

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## President's Page



### *Complexities of Medical Ethics*

Because my term of office will expire shortly, this will be my last opportunity to address you in this fashion. As I write this, our Supreme Court of the United States is reviewing the Missouri abortion law. Interestingly, Mr. Frank Susman, representing Reproductive Health Services, Inc., who wishes to overturn the law's restrictions, pointed out to the court that "it is impossible to distinguish between abortion and contraception when you define abortion as the destruction of the first joiner of the ovum and the sperm." Although it would seem that he has begun reading our literature, he unfortunately, is using this ploy to attack the Missouri law which defines the beginning of life with conception, and maintains that with the popular use of the "pill" and the IUD, acceptance of the Missouri statute would give the state the right to control procreation. Although his premise may be valid, it in no way supports his conclusion. At this time, I do not know nor can I predict how the Supreme Court will act on this issue. However, with the monetary clout, and the increasing political activism of the pro "abortion" forces, I do not see any decision that will help us in our cause and the fight shall go on.

Simultaneously, along with this issue, we are under attack by the euthanasia movement. The *New England Journal of Medicine*, in its March 30, 1989 issue, published a report suggesting areas in which direct killing of the sick and infirm should be permitted.<sup>1</sup> Laying aside its concerns about money and finances temporarily, the May 1, 1989 issue of *Medical Economics* carries an article sympathetic in tone concerning a physician who aids in killing his wife suffering from lung cancer.<sup>2</sup> Our lay

papers have multiple articles sympathetic to euthanasia stimulated by the story of Rudy Linares of Chicago, Illinois, who forcibly disconnected his son from life support systems, allowing him to die. It appears the Society for the Right to Die is mobilizing its forces for a major onslaught to achieve legality for its aims.

The whole field of medical ethics is posing more complex and new problems every day. Our developing sophisticated technology and exploding data bases seem to compound our problems in trying to maintain ethical and moral medical practice as Catholic physicians. We need more than ever a Catholic medical forum in which to get together, to share ideas, to explore our problems, to be exposed to sound ethical teaching, and to reinforce our spiritual values. In my first message to you, the importance of building the membership of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds was stressed. As I see my year as president unfolding, its importance impresses me even more. Help build our society. Bring a new member into our organization. We need what the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds offers more than ever.

— Donald E. McIntosh, M.D.  
President

#### References

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