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## Letters to the Editor

Catholic Physicians' Guild

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# Letters to the Editor

## Three Errors

### To the Editor:

Thank you for publishing a fine journal. We enjoy reviewing each edition. In the May 2000 edition, I noted with pleasure the article by Fr. Joseph Howard entitled "A Review of Richard Coleson's 'The Glucksberg & Quill Amicus Curiae Briefs: Verbatim Arguments Opposing Assisted Suicide'." May I point out three errors and omissions in the article?

First, we are very pleased that my piece is being cited, but were surprised to see no citation to the source of the "Verbatim," either in the text, or in the reference section at the end. Of course, my *Verbatim* is found in *Issues in Law & Medicine*, Vol. 13, No. 1, Summer 1997, pages 3-102.

Second, I was "staff counsel" for the National Legal Center for the Medically Dependent & Disabled, Inc. I do not "represent staff counsel."

Third, Fr. Howard states on page 38 that "It is both alarming and tragic that the Attorney Generals (sic) for both Washington and New York have had to institute litigation against physicians claiming a constitutional right to assist their patients in committing suicide." But physicians, terminally ill patients, and organizations favoring assisted suicide were the ones that sued the states of Washington and New York challenging the constitutionality of those states' statutory bans on

assisted suicide. It may be a small point to a layman, but to those familiar with these cases it detracts from the credibility of the article. May I suggest that manuscripts dealing with legal issues be reviewed by a lawyer before publication?

*Linacre Quarterly* is a good and worthy publication. More careful editing would make it even more so. Thank you.

– **Richard E. Coleson**  
Terre Haute, Indiana

## Kudos

### To the Editor:

The words of Jesus to Thomas Aquinas, "You have written well of me, Thomas...", can be adapted, "You have written well of me, Basil", for the "Faith of a Psychiatrist" by Basil Jackson in the May, 2000 issue of *Linacre Quarterly*.

May the Lord multiply health professionals with his insights.

– **Fr. Robert Buholzer**  
Stoughton, Wisconsin

## 60 Minutes

### To the Editor:

I am a retired physician and a 55-year member of the Catholic Medical Association (CMA) having presided over the Cleveland chapter of the Linacre Society. I am continuing to function as a member of the Ethics Committee of a local Catholic

institution, St. Augustine's Manor.

I am enclosing a copy of a document which we recently received regarding a proposed segment to be aired by "60 Minutes" in the near future. You may be familiar with their intent.

If the segment leaves such impressions as listed, we Catholic physicians should be insulted and indignant. Health services rendered by Catholic hospitals and medical personnel have a magnificent record of devotion to the sick, the poor, and persons of all faiths.

Our moral conventions are beyond reproach. We have always rendered reproductive services, but never counter-reproductive services.

My suggestion is that we as a group and individually register a strong protest to CBS and its advertisers. Secondly the Catholic Bishops of America should be informed of this attack and encouraged to take action. It is noteworthy that this is only another facet of the medias' attack on Christian morality and doctrines.

Impressions that may  
be left by the  
"60 Minutes" segment:

- Catholic hospitals are blameworthy because they do not provide certain elective procedures associated with "reproductive services."
- It is wrong for a hospital to exclude some services
- Access to certain services – especially abortion and sterilizations – is inappropriately restricted for many women because they are not offered by Catholic hospitals.
- Mergers between Catholic hospitals

and other hospitals are increasing, "threatening" access to certain "reproductive services."

- An increasing number of communities have only a Catholic hospital to serve them, leaving women "without access" to certain procedures.
- Catholic health care is growing and becoming more dominant in the U.S.
- Catholic hospitals are "imposing" their morality on communities.
- Catholic hospitals are interfering in the physician-patient relationship or otherwise "imposing" their morality on physicians, nurses, or other caregivers.
- Catholic hospitals do not provide rape treatment.
- Catholic hospitals should not be eligible for public funding or reimbursements if they refuse to provide abortions, sterilizations, or other specified procedures.
- The Church is injecting itself inappropriately into health care.
- The Vatican is injecting itself inappropriately into health care.
- Because health care is consolidating and changing so rapidly in the U.S., it may no longer be possible for Catholic hospitals to exist and carry out their mission.

–Peter J. Corrigan, M.D.  
Westlake, Ohio

### Financing Health Care

#### To the Editor:

Dr. Todd Salzman (*Linacre Quarterly*, August 2000) proposed that a universal health care financing system created by Enthoven and

Kronick "defends the common good as developed in Catholic social teaching." He argued that this scheme developed in the late 1980s would give everyone access to "efficient managed care," because a "public sponsor" would pay for 80% of plans which meet "federal standards."

He failed, however, to comment on the fact that consolidating economic control of medical care in the hands of secular governments has led to widespread use of medical funds to kill the most vulnerable members of society – unborn children, and recently in Oregon, anyone with a life-threatening illness. For too long, those proposing seemingly progressive economic solutions to the problem of health care for the poor have neglected to include in their proposals protections for the poorest and most powerless of us all – those about to be born and those about to die.

It is not possible for Catholic social teaching to be furthered by sacrificing the lives of the most vulnerable to gain an ideal of economic distributive justice. It is not possible to further the "common good" by handing increasing economic control over the practice of medicine to "public sponsors," which do not value human life. It is time for Catholic health care reformers to withhold endorsement of medical-economic systems that fail to protect the rights and very lives of the weakest members of society. To do otherwise is to attempt to do good by doing wrong, something which both faith and reason tell us is impossible.

– **N. Gregory Hamilton, M.D.**  
**President, Physicians for  
Compassionate Care  
Portland, Oregon**

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