
Robert Roger Lebel

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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," "Regula-
tion, 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


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

February, 1978 83
and reflections are distilled in this remarkable little book. In this unimposing volume she describes the best of genetic counseling: how it should be done for maximum services to the families who seek this kind of assistance.

Kelly emphasizes the process, in particular certain phases of it which she (rightly) perceives to be of central importance. Thus, a large part of the book is devoted to the follow-up letter and follow-up visit. Chapter five is almost entirely given to a lengthy annotated transcript of the dialogue in such a visit — allowing the reader to reflect on the dynamics of interchange between counselor and family as the latter only gradually come to understand the full implications of what they have been told about their genetic condition.

The style of counseling (chapters seven and nine) is discussed with an eye toward contributions from the fields of crisis intervention and guidance. Kelly enunciates what is now fairly orthodox teaching: that it is best for the genetic counselor to always fully inform, humanly support, and ruthlessly avoid imposition of her own biases in the decision-making which belongs to the family and only to the family.

Dealing with Dilemma is probably the best discussion of the genetic counseling relationship that has yet come to print. It is highly recommended both for seasoned clinical geneticists (who will profit by reading it) and for neophytes (for whom it should be required reading in any relevant course of studies). Although her aim is directed toward the functioning of larger, more complex clinical operations, the individual practitioner will also find this book full of insight and challenge.

— Robert Roger Lebel, S.J.
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**This Curette for Hire**

_Eugene F. Diamond, M.D._

*ACTA Foundation, 4848 N. Clark St., Chicago, Ill. 60640, 1977. 140 pp., $3.95.*

Although the title of this book by Doctor Diamond suggests it is yet another treatise on the abortion issue, its scope is very much broader. A look at the table of contents makes this evident and it is seen that it addresses many of the pressing and, indeed, burning issues in bio-ethics and social mores — fetal experimentation, contraceptive sterilization, infanticide, euthanasia, violence in society, informed consent, sex therapy and juvenile promiscuity. In addition to this sad litany of immorality and man's inhumanity, there are a couple of penetrating essays on justice in the fee structure and the alleged shortage of doctors.

It is Doctor Diamond's thesis that in recent times the physician has become a scapegoat, a modern folk villain responsible for escalating costs of health-care, and the target of unscrupulous malpractice lawyers no less than of the bureaucratic socialistic planners. He dates much of this malaise — the forced estrangement between the public and the medical profession — to the decade of the 1960's when the profession in the U.S. first began to show an official inclination to follow in the footsteps of the doctors in Hitler's Germany by abandoning its age-old prohibition against abortion. When the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the American Medical Association embraced the abortion philosophy, medicine became a killing profession as it had been prior to the