Book review

Medical Experimentation: Personal Integrity and Social Policy. Clinical Studies, vol 5. Charles Fried. Edited by A G Bearn, New York, D A K Black, London, and H H Hiatt, Boston. Publisher: North Holland Publishing Company, Amsterdam and Oxford. Elsevier Publishing Co. Incorporated, New York. Pp 172 excluding index, 177 including index.

Professor Fried has presented certain aspects of human medical experimentation very lucidly and logically in this book. As he acknowledges in the course of the essay, most aspects of human experimentation have been widely discussed by authors before him, but your reviewer has found it fascinating to see how a legal expert comes to grips with the moral, social and practical aspects of human experimentation. He stresses the cardinal feature of the inviolability of human rights, and emphasizes beyond doubt the significance of free and informed consent. He has argued the case for and against the

basic dilemma of many doctors and scientists, between research that has direct diagnostic or therapeutic benefit to the patient or individual as opposed to research that benefits the community at large with minimal benefit to the individual.

The main argument is based on the merits, demerits and limitations of randomized clinical trials. (I presume that Professor Fried accepts that progress in medicine is desirable and necessary.) Why he has concentrated on the nature and implications of the randomized clinical trial is because of the claims that a randomized clinical trial is the best and only scientific way of evaluating new or old therapies but he does not mention the ethical dilemmas in experiments on human subjects, notably the biological and genetic.

The author has refrained from commenting upon the ethical problems pertaining to minors, mentally subnormal or disordered persons. I am sure that an author of Professor Fried's vision could have given clearer legal guidance on the ethics

of experiments on minors and subnormal subjects. This is an aspect of human experimentation that requires urgent appraisal.

Finally I must return to Professor Fried's introduction where he states that: 'It is striking that much of what concerns us has not been dealt with directly in court decisions or legal codes, although some quasi-legal sources like the Nuremberg Code and the Declaration of Helsinki and some administrative material, official bodies like the Department of Health, Education and Welfare Policy on Protection of Human Subjects come closer.' In Britain the situation is very much the same, as the Medical Research Council and the Royal College of Physicians, London, have formulated codes of practice on the ethics of human experimentation. These codes widely accept the basic formulations on ethics as laid down by the Declaration of Geneva of the World Medical Association.

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R V Short

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R Y Calne

Tissue for transplantation
Tam Dalyell, MP

The donor doctor's dilemma
Bryan Jennett

Ethical aspects of donor consent in transplantation
John Mahoney

Copies can be obtained from the publisher, *Journal of medical ethics*, Tavistock House East, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR

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Priscilla Demetrius
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