reaching universal solutions more implicitly. On the other hand, her evident empathy for, and involvement with, her interviewees are exemplary, whether as a health care professional (she has a nursing background) or as a social scientist.

The book overall is a very interesting way of projecting some of the multitude of personal and social ethical issues arising out of the AIDS pandemic, from a North American standpoint; many of the issues travel well, however. The author's skilful eliciting and selection of these simple and direct expressions of the human conflicts arising from this epidemic will be thought-provoking for people who want to understand it better, whether they are familiar with the issues or not and whether they are health care workers, ethicists or lay people.

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Ethics in obstetrics and gynecology

Edmund D Pellegrino and David C Thomasma, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, 278 pages, £30.00

Human *in vitro* fertilisation: a case study in the regulation of medical innovation

J Gunning and V English, Aldershot and Vermont, Dartmouth Publishing Co, 1993, 219 pages, £35.00

The area of reproductive medicine is one of particular importance for ethics, because the arrangements surrounding sex and reproduction have always been central to social order and convention, and are often surrounded with mystique, taboo and religious and social significance.

In most societies, family, household and kinship relations are all bound up with these basic biological functions, and these, of course, are the underpinning of economic and ultimately political order. So the

serious treatment of these issues in relation to recent scientific innovation in reproductive technology is to be welcomed.

Ethics in Obstetrics and Gynecology is a helpful book for those working in these areas, addressing itself essentially to professionals, but also of interest to the concerned general reader. In addition, it will be a useful source of comment and argument for those whose main interest is in the legal aspects, and although written within the context of American law, the principles involved are of equal interest to European and British legal theorists, who are also under a pressing necessity to reach consensus on a number of contentious issues in the area of reproductive medicine.

The book covers a wide range of topics including contraception and abortion, embryo selection and destruction, IVF and surrogacy, prenatal diagnosis and its consequences, HIV infection, uterine cancer, the premature infant, and issues surrounding childbirth itself, including the controversial issue of court-ordered caesarean deliveries.

The conflict that some of these issues generate between the patient and the person responsible for his/her health-care is a central focus for the authors, who recommend as a solution prevention and, where this is impossible, techniques of crisis management based on a virtues approach. This is in contrast to the more familiar approach which has become current in medical ethics literature, where a utilitarian ethic is set against a morality of inflexible principles, and the student is left with the impression that there is no ethical certainty – that relativism rules. Pellegrino and Thomasma argue for rather more conviction than this, proposing and seeking to justify a framework for ethical medicine based on the virtues of self-effacement, self-sacrifice, compassion and integrity. Underlying these are the broader ethical principles of beneficence and respect for autonomy.

Where a number of philosophers writing on the subject, in particular, of abortion, have taken up a position with very serious practical implications on the basis of abstract discussion of the notion of personhood, these authors who, perhaps because they represent a fruitful collaboration between a medical ethicist and a practitioner who is in day-to-day contact with patients, take seriously the concept of the fetus as a patient – and

thus an object of moral concern. The interests and involvement of other family members too, in particular fathers, are also given a weight that they have conspicuously failed to be granted in the current literature.

Human in Vitro Fertilisation has more limited aims. Written primarily with UK interests in mind, but providing a useful summary of the legal position in various other countries, it records the ethical debate surrounding the development of IVF technology from the earliest researches of Robert Edwards, Patrick Steptoe and others, to the birth of Louise Brown in Oldham in 1978, and beyond this to controversies generated by the latest reproductive technologies. This throws an interesting light on the extent to which current practices have gone far beyond what the original pioneers believed would be ethically permissible.

The authors document the setting up of ethical bodies in both the USA and Britain, and interestingly record one of the earliest submissions of Edwards to the USA Ethics Advisory Board in which he wrote: 'We feel strongly that any ethical decision about such work should be the responsibility of the patient, the doctor and the funding organization' (page 18).

This notion that these were private decisions has long been abandoned, as the public implications of private decisions have become apparent. Gunning and English have supplied a text which documents this shift, in particular describing the creation of the Voluntary Licensing Authority in Britain, the reasons for the commissioning of the Warnock Report, and subsequent legislative concerns and developments.

Readers of both these volumes will gain a broader and more informed view of many important issues which have yet to be resolved.

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Xenotransplantation

Edited by Dr C Cooper, E Kemp, K Reemtsma and D J G White, Berlin, Springer-Verlag, 1991, 555 pages, DM420 hb

This book addresses the issue of transplantation of organs between species with the purpose of saving human lives by sacrificing animals.