

Book reviews

Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine

Arras J, Hunt, R, eds. Second edition. Palo Alto, Mayfield Publishing Company, 1983. \$18.95.

This second and much revised edition of a volume which first appeared in 1977 is a richly varied collection of predominantly American work in medical ethics. Contributors include political theorists, lawyers, journalists and theologians as well as doctors, nurses and philosophers. Their differing perspectives offer often conflicting views about many of the more important ethical issues in contemporary medicine. A healthy balance of viewpoints on particular issues and of medical specialisms, is achieved and the editors' detailed commentary both unifies and adds interest to the volume.

The editors' introductory essay, *Ethical Theory in the Medical Context*, provides the philosophical layman with some conceptual tools and offers an ethical framework in terms of which the discussions of ethical problems that follow may be considered. Two approaches, one basically act-utilitarian, the other basically Kantian, which focus on consequences and respect for persons respectively, are outlined.

Part one addresses questions about the ethical foundations of health care. Considerations of alternative models of the relationships between health-care professionals (basically doctors and nurses) and patients, are followed by contributions addressing themes such as autonomy and paternalism, consent, and truth-telling, which are of recurring and general importance throughout health care. Finally some possible conflicts of role and responsibilities are examined.

The remainder of the volume addresses some major issues with parts two, three, four and five focusing on abor-

tion, euthanasia and the care of the dying, experimentation on human subjects and human genetics respectively. Given the wealth of material that is already collected on these topics it is perhaps surprising that the editors should devote a whole section each to abortion and euthanasia, while subsuming issues such as resource allocation under the broad heading of Social Justice and Health Policy.

The format and scope of the volume are worthy of praise. It brings together problems from the bedside and problems about matters of policy in a coherent way. The editors' substantial introductions relate the positions adopted by authors of individual papers and consider their arguments, making frequent reference to the ethical approaches outlined in the introductory essay. Issues are introduced through short case-studies before being pursued in more reflective and theoretical papers; in this way the non-medical reader is frequently brought into immediate contact with the 'sharp end' of the issues. The juxtaposition of case-studies alongside theoretical papers offering often conflicting analyses helps to give much of the volume the flavour of a dialogue. An important feature is the challenge to the 'individualism' exemplified in medicine by codes such as the Hippocratic Oath with its emphasis on the good of the individual patient. Several sections in the parts on Experimentation on Human Subjects, and Social Justice and Health Policy, for example, focus on the conflict between the rights and welfare of individuals and the good of others. The editors invite the reader to consider the ethical significance of the psychological, social and economic context of medicine.

Perhaps it is because all of the contributions have been drawn only from previously published work that important areas have been omitted. For example, a consideration of the ethical implications of the affluent life style

and sophisticated medical facilities enjoyed by most people in the rich world while people in the Third World are deprived of basic medical care and even the bare essentials for human existence, would have been an important addition. Considerations of ethical issues in mental health are notably absent as are considerations of different conceptions of health and illness and the significance these have for the ways in which health care is organised, for example whether prevention or cure is emphasised. Despite such omissions, however, the volume is a useful source which, as a result of thoughtful editing, makes a considerable contribution to the development of a coherent conceptual and ethical map of the territory covered by journals such as the *Journal of Medical Ethics*. The detailed introductions to individual parts could stand on their own as introductions to many of the main areas of concern in the ethics of medicine. The lists of supplementary material and other resources in bioethics, along with the introductory material before each part, compensate to some extent for the lack of an index. *Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine* is to be thoroughly commended to teachers, practitioners and students of philosophy as well as of medicine and other health-care professions.

GAVIN J FAIRBAIRN
Child and Family Unit, Oldham and
District General Hospital

Science and Ethical Responsibility

Lakoff S A, ed. Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1980. £10.50

This book consists of the proceedings of the US Student Pugwash Conference held in 1979 in San Diego. An offshoot of the increasingly geriatric Pugwash