

# The Journal of the Institute of Medical Ethics

The *Journal of Medical Ethics* was established in 1975, with a multidisciplinary editorial board, to promote the study of contemporary medico-moral problems. The editorial board has as its aims the encouragement of a high academic standard for this developing subject and the influencing of the quality of both professional and public discussion. The journal is published quarterly and includes papers on all aspects of medical ethics, analyses ethical concepts and theories and features case conferences and comment on clinical practice. It also contains book reviews.

## Editorial Board

### EDITOR:

*Raanan Gillon*, BA (PHILOSOPHY), MB, BS, MRCP (UK). Director, Imperial College Health Service, University of London and Deputy Director, Institute of Medical Ethics.

### CONSULTING EDITORS:

*Sir Douglas Black*, Emeritus Professor of Medicine, Manchester University.

*D W Hamlyn*, Professor of Philosophy, Birkbeck College, London University.

### EDITORIAL BOARD:

*Thomas Oppé*, Chairman: Professor of Paediatrics, St Mary's Hospital Medical School, London.

*K M Boyd*, Scottish Director, Institute of Medical Ethics, Edinburgh.

*Alastair Campbell*, Senior Lecturer, Department of Christian Ethics and Practical Theology, Edinburgh University.

*A W Clare*, Professor of Psychological Medicine, St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, London.

*John Dawson*, Head of Professional Division, British Medical Association, London

*Robin Downie*, Professor of Moral Philosophy, Glasgow University.

*A S Duncan*, Emeritus Professor of Medical Education, Edinburgh University.

*C M Fletcher*, Emeritus Professor of Clinical Epidemiology, London University.

*R M Hare*, Professor of Moral Philosophy, University of Florida Gainesville, USA.

*Roger Higgs*, Case conference editor, General Practitioner and Director of General Practice Studies, King's College School of Medicine and Dentistry, London.

*Gerard J Hughes SJ*, Department of Philosophy, Heythrop College, London.

*Margot Jefferys*, Emeritus Professor of Medical Sociology, University of London.

*Ian Kennedy*, Professor of Medical Law and Ethics, King's College, London.

*Professor M C Macnaughton*, President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, London

*David Paterson*, Executive Producer, Science and Features, BBC Television, London.

*Sir Martin Roth*, Professor of Psychiatry, Cambridge.

*Robert Sells*, Director, Renal Transplant Unit, Liverpool Royal Infirmary, Liverpool.

*Elliot A Shineburne*, Consultant Paediatric Cardiologist, Brompton Hospital, London

*Paul Sieghart*, Barrister, Gray's Inn, London.

*Gerald Stern*, Consultant Neurologist, University College Hospital, London.

*Keith Ward*, Professor of Moral and Social Theology, King's College, London.

*R B Welbourn*, Emeritus Professor of Surgical Endocrinology, Royal Postgraduate Medical School, London.

*Eric Wilkes*, Emeritus Professor of Community Care and General Practice, Sheffield University.

*Bernard Williams*, Provost, King's College, Cambridge.

*Jenifer Wilson-Barnett*, Reader in Nursing Studies, King's College London (KQC), University of London.

*Edward Shoter*, Director, Institute of Medical Ethics, *ex officio*.

## Submitting manuscripts for publication

Papers submitted for publication should be sent in quadruplicate to: The Editor, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 151 Great Portland Street, London W1N 5PB. Rejected manuscripts are not returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, or international reply coupon. Papers should be in double-spaced typewriting on one side of the paper only. A total word count is appreciated. On a separate sheet some brief biographical details should be supplied, including the title of the author's present post, degrees and/or professional qualifications, (if any) and any other relevant information.

Four copies of the journal will be sent to authors free of charge after their papers are published. Offprints of individual papers may be bought from Professional and Scientific Publications, Tavistock House East, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR.

In March 1981 the *JME* adopted a simplified 'Vancouver style' for references: details are given in various issues, including March 1986, p55. They are also available from the editorial office. The full text of the 'Vancouver Agreement' was published in the *British Medical Journal* in 1982; volume 284; 1766-70. As the 'Vancouver style' is incompatible with the long established style of references for legal articles, lawyers should use their own standard style, but avoid abbreviations so as to facilitate reference by others. The journal is multidisciplinary and papers should be in clear jargon-free English, accessible to any intelligent reader.

## Notice to subscribers

The *Journal of Medical Ethics* is published quarterly. The annual subscription rates are £29.00 in the United Kingdom and Irish Republic, and £50.00 in all countries overseas. Payment for overseas subscriptions should be made in sterling, payable to Professional and Scientific Publications/JME A/c. Orders can also be placed locally with any leading subscription agent or bookseller. (For the convenience of readers in the USA subscription orders, with or without payment, can also be sent to: Ron Earl, Professional and Scientific Publications, *British Medical Journal*, Box No. 560B, Kennebunkport, Maine 04046. All enquiries, however, must be addressed to the Publisher in London). All enquiries regarding air mail rates, single copies, advertisements, etc, should be sent to: Ron Earl, Professional and Scientific Publications, Tavistock House East, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR.

ISSN 0306-6800

### EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES:

*Dr Anthony Hope*, Oxford *Dr Simon Lundy*, London

TECHNICAL EDITOR:  
*Ann Lloyd*, London.

EDITORIAL SECRETARY:  
*Maureen Bannatye*, London.

### Thematic review and index

The thematic review of past issues appears in the June issue each year and an index to each volume appears in the December issue.

Conclusions and Recommendations, are particularly interesting in view of the controversies aroused by the Warnock Report. Many of the recommendations contained here are similar to Warnock's (for example, concerning the legitimacy of AID children, the need for a licensing authority to supervise the work of AID and IVF centres, etc), but others are at odds with the corresponding Warnock recommendations. In general, the authors place higher value on the family as an institution than did the Warnock Committee and display a much livelier awareness of the possible social dangers of the new techniques.

One weakness of the book is that since its authors are approaching these topics from the standpoint of social scientists, their recommendations for legislative action – which surely must be based on properly ethical considerations, not merely sociological ones – seem devoid of any satisfactory rational support. For example, they concede that experimentation on human embryos is an objectionable practice, since 'the material acting as the subject of the experimentation is a human being at the beginning of its individual development' (p 178); but the practical recommendation which they make concerning this practice is disappointingly feeble:

'The value placed upon human life is so great that experimentation upon human embryos should only be undertaken if it can be shown to be in the public interest.' (p 179.)

But if the embryo is really a human being then surely experimentation upon it is morally wrong regardless of whether it is in the public interest or not? Here, I suspect, the authors' concentration on sociological issues leads them to overlook the crucial moral issues at stake and unthinkingly to adopt a fashionable but extremely

dubious consequentialism on this and some other important issues. But as a social investigation this book is very worthwhile and deserves to be widely read. It is also refreshingly free from the pretentious jargon which sometimes disfigures studies of this sort.

F J FITZPATRICK  
*Education and Research Officer,  
The Linacre Centre for the Study of the  
Ethics of Health Care, London*

## Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy

Bernard Williams, 230 pages, London, £10.95, Fontana and William Collins, 1985.

Moral philosophy can be relevant to a medical readership although it does not deal specifically with the problems encountered in medicine and nursing. This is because moral philosophers can offer discussions of concepts such as harm, consent, quality of life, paternalism and many others which encapsulate the moral problems of medical and nursing practice. But there are also treatises on moral philosophy which, while doubtless admired by professional philosophers, seem to the layman to be remote from the moral problems of ordinary life and professional practice. This book is in the latter category rather than the former. It is simply not true to say, as the cover does say, that 'it does not demand a philosophical training to follow'. The difficulty is not that technical words are used but rather that the argument proceeds at a high level of abstraction from real-life moral problems. It offers a theory about other theories.

The theory it offers has two main strands in it. The first is that the Socratic question, 'How should one live?' is an ethical question as distinct from merely a moral one, and that we

would all do better to concentrate on the 'ethical' and drop the 'moral'. The trouble with the working out of this theme however is that the sphere of the ethical is left vague, and morality with its obligations, which we would be better without (p 174), is liable to reappear disguised as the ethical with its 'shoulds'. The second strand is that 'The resources of most modern moral philosophy are not well adjusted to the modern world' (p 197). The case for this is not really made out, and readers of this journal will appreciate that within its pages at least there is some moral philosophy which does sometimes succeed in adjusting to the moral problems of the modern world. Nevertheless, there are many excellent discussions in the book of such matters as objectivity and relativism (chapters 8 and 9). The general conclusions are negative, although sometimes this stems from a humility about what can be achieved by moral philosophy, and an admiration for what has been achieved by science. But the pessimism about the relevance of moral philosophy to the modern world was more apt in the period 1950–70. Nowadays many philosophers have tried to apply their analytical skills to problems in medicine, politics, the environment and so on. Indeed, Williams himself was entirely appropriate as the Chairman of the Government Committee on Obscenity and Film Censorship, and of course Mary Warnock chaired another famous committee. Both of these were attempts to adjust moral philosophy to the modern world. No doubt there is still room for improvement in moral philosophy, but the improvement does not require a distinction between the ethical and the moral or another conception of rationality, but rather some homework on what scientists, doctors, economists etc actually say.

R S DOWNIE  
*Professor of Moral Philosophy,  
Glasgow University*

### Cecily Pembroke

Would the person who sent us a case study about Cecily Pembroke please write to the Editor. It arrived without any covering letter and our detective work is not up to the task of tracing its author(s).

Editor

## Medical groups

---

### ABERDEEN MEDICAL GROUP

Dr Elizabeth Russell, Department of  
Community Medicine, University of  
Aberdeen

### BIRMINGHAM MEDICAL GROUP

Mr R Sawers, Birmingham Maternity  
Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Medical  
Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham  
B15 2TG

### BRISTOL MEDICAL GROUP

Mr Nigel Pearson, 5 Brookfield Road,  
Cotham, Bristol BS6 5PW

### CAMBRIDGE MEDICAL GROUP

Mr Patrick Doyle, Department of  
Urology, Addenbrooke's Hospital,  
Hill's Road, Cambridge

### DUNDEE MEDICAL GROUP

Dr David B Walsh, Consultant in  
Biochemical Medicine, Ninewells  
Hospital, Dundee

### EDINBURGH MEDICAL GROUP

Mrs Maureen S Macmillan,  
Nursing Studies Research Unit,  
12 Buccleuch Place,  
Edinburgh EH8

### GLASGOW MEDICAL GROUP

Professor K Calman,  
Postgraduate Dean,  
University of Glasgow,  
Glasgow G12 8QQ

### LEEDS MEDICAL GROUP

Mr Bob Wright, Charge Nurse,  
23 Woodhill Gardens, Leeds  
LS16 7DD

Dr Steve Conway, Registrar/Lecturer,  
Department of Paediatrics,  
Clarendon Wing, Leeds General  
Infirmary

### LEICESTER MEDICAL GROUP

Dr Liam Donaldson, Department of  
Community Health, Clinical Sciences  
Building, Leicester Royal Infirmary,  
PO Box 65, Leicester LE2 7LX

### LIVERPOOL MEDICAL GROUP

Dr John Gosney, Department of  
Pathology, Royal Liverpool Hospital,  
Prescot Street, Liverpool 3

### LONDON MEDICAL GROUP

Mrs Diana Cookson, Room 68,  
Tavistock House North, Tavistock  
Square, London WC1H 9LG

### MANCHESTER MEDICAL GROUP

Dr Mary Lobjoit, Student Health  
Centre, Crawford House,  
Precinct Centre, Oxford Road,  
Manchester M13 9QS

### NEWCASTLE MEDICAL GROUP

Dr David Gregory,  
Department of Family and  
Community Medicine, The Medical  
School, Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 7RU

### OXFORD MEDICAL FORUM

Dr Andrew Wood,  
MRC Clinical Pharmacology Unit,  
Oxford

### SHEFFIELD MEDICAL GROUP

Mr David Watmough, Flat 3,  
16 Beech Hill Road,  
Broomhill, Sheffield S10 2SB

### SOUTHAMPTON MEDICAL GROUP

Dr R Grimble, Department of  
Nutrition, Medical and Biological  
Sciences Building, Bassett Crescent  
East, Bassett, Southampton SO9 3TU

Medical groups associated with the Institute of Medical Ethics have been established in British university teaching hospitals. Each academic year they arrange programmes of lectures and symposia on issues raised by the practice of medicine which concern other disciplines. Although these programmes are addressed primarily to medical, nursing and other hospital students they are open to all members of the medical, nursing and allied professions. There is no fee for attendance. Lecture lists are available by direct application to the appropriate co-ordinating secretary named above. A stamped addressed A4 envelope would be appreciated.

PRESIDENT

**Sir Douglas Black**, MD FRCP

VICE PRESIDENTS

**Professor A S Duncan**, DSC MB ChB FRCSF  
FRCOG FRCPE MD (Hon)

**Professor G R Dunstan**, MA DD LID (Hon) F

**Professor R B Welbourn**, MA MD FRCS

GOVERNING BODY

**R D Catterall**, CBE FRCPE

**Allan Chappell**, CIPFA, (*Treasurer*)

**Professor Anthony Clare**, MD MPhil MRCP

**Professor Sir Cyril Clarke**, KBE MD FRCP F

**Colin Currie**, BSc MB ChB MRCP

**Sir John Donne**

**C H Edwards**, FRCP

**Professor C M Fletcher**, CBE MD FRCP

**Professor T W Glenister**, CBE TD MB BS P

**Roger Higgs**, MA MB MRCP

**Professor Bryan Jennett**, MD FRCS

**Professor Ian Kennedy**, LLM

**David Layton**, MBE MA

**The Earl of Limerick**, KBE MA CA

**Stephen Lock**, MA MB FRCP

**Professor John Mahoney** SJ, MA DD

**Professor Thomas Oppé**, CBE FRCP DCH  
(*Chairman*)

**A R Peacocke**, MA DSc

**Robert Sells**, MA FRCS

**Paul Sieghart**

**Professor R B Welbourn**, MA MD FRCS

**Richard West**, MD FRCP DCH DObst RCOG

**Jenifer Wilson-Barnett**, SRN DipN BA MSc  
RNT FRCN

**Director**

Edward Shotter, BA

**Deputy Directors**

Kenneth Boyd, MA BD PhD (*Scottish Director*)

Raanan Gillon, BA (Phil) MB BS MRCP

Richard Nicholson, MA BM DCH (*Editor*,  
*IME Bulletin*)

**Honorary**

Brenda

Donal

Doria

Patric

Peggy

Diana

Maur

# Institute of Medical Ethics

The Institute of Medical Ethics is a centre for research, education and information. It is financed by grants from charitable bodies, government sources and members' subscriptions.

It was established as the Society for the Study of Medical Ethics, and is an independent, non-partisan organisation for the multi-disciplinary study of medico-moral issues raised by the practice of medicine.

The institute aims to influence the quality of both professional and public discussion of medico-moral questions; to promote the study of medical ethics; to ensure a high academic standard for this developing subject; to encourage a multidisciplinary approach to discussion of the consequences of clinical practice; to stimulate research in specific problems, and to remain non-partisan and independent of all interest groups and lobbies.

The institute undertakes research on medico-moral questions, sponsors a major educational programme and provides an information service for members.

Two reports, *The Ethics of Resource Allocation in Health Care* by Kenneth Boyd and *Dilemmas of Dying* by Ian Thompson, were published, by the Edinburgh University Press, a few years ago.

So far this year a report on the ethics of clinical research investigations on children, *Medical Research with Children: Ethics, Law and Practice* by Richard Nicholson, has been published by the Oxford University Press. Later this year two more reports will be published: *Life Before Birth – the Search for a Consensus on Abortion and the Treatment of Infertility* by Kenneth Boyd, Brendan Callaghan and Edward Shotter, and the *Pond Report on Teaching Medical Ethics* by Kenneth Boyd.

The institute derives from the London Medical Group, a student group for the study of issues raised by the practice of medicine which, since 1963, has arranged a comprehensive programme of lectures and symposia on medico-moral issues raised by the practice of medicine. Similar groups associated with the institute have been established in university teaching hospitals at Aberdeen, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford, Sheffield and Southampton.

Membership of the institute is open to all those who work in the medical and allied professions or who have an interest in medical ethics. Members receive a monthly briefing on current developments, the *Bulletin of the IME*. The quarterly *Journal of Medical Ethics* is available by separate subscription.

Institute of Medical Ethics  
Tavistock House North,  
Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9LG

IME Publications  
151 Great Portland Street  
London W1N 5PB

Tel: 01-387 8132

Tel: 01-580 5282