

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 ever-developing subject and the enhancement of 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.

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Papers submitted for publication should be sent in **quadruplicate** to: The Editor, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, c/o Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, 14 Prince's Gardens, London SW7 1NA. 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. **The preferred maximum length of papers is 3,500 words – absolute maximum 5,500** (including references). 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 December 1986. 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 try 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

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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.

- in moral philosophy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978: 55.
- (10) See reference (9): 59.
- (11) Crisp R. A good death: who best to bring it? *Bioethics* 1987; 1:74.
- (12) See reference (2): 66.
- (13) Ludmerer N. Commentary on: Twycross R G. Debate: Euthanasia a physician's viewpoint. *Journal of medical ethics* 1982; 8:93.
- (14) Christie R J, Hoffmaster C B. *Ethical issues in family medicine*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986: 29.
- (15) Jones G E. The doctor-patient relationship and euthanasia. *Journal of medical ethics* 1982; 8:195-198.
- (16) Gillon R. [editorial]: Euthanasia, withholding life-prolonging treatment, and moral differences between killing and letting die. *Journal of medical ethics* 1988; 14:116.
- (17) See reference (2): 63.
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News and notes

National Conference on Ethics Committees

A conference entitled Keeping Ethics in Ethics Committees will be held on April 5th and 6th this year at the Hershey Hotel, Philadelphia, Pa. The sponsors are the College of Physicians, The Hastings Center and the Delaware Valley Ethics Committee Network.

Registration details from Philip Boyle, Associate for Medical Ethics, The Hastings Center, 255 Elm Road, Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510. Telephone: (914) 762 8500; Fax: (914) 762 2124.

must *never*, in *any* circumstances or for *any* reason, lie, more conducive, or less, to the welfare of mankind in general than a system which admits at least some lies in some circumstances to be at least permissible? Berkeley holds, by implication, that 'Thou shalt not lie, *ever*' is *obviously* the only admissible principle. He is not obviously right. Of course Berkeley is not alone in this respect; his near kinsmen, the Utilitarians, were also inclined to suggest that, once their theory were accepted, then solution of 'the particulars' would be simple, or at any rate much simplified; even Kant fell victim to the corresponding illusion. Moral philosophers, it seems, are strangely reluctant to recognise that even a quite clear and simple-looking ethical *theory* will not magically simplify the sometimes insolubly complicated, convoluted dilemmas of moral practice.

Finally, Berkeley was surely wrong in the particular instance, in relation to which he deploys his general theory. His particular object in *Passive Obedience* is to argue that established political authority must not be resisted – that that is a precept of morality, and that it

means, accordingly, that *no* political authority may *ever* permissibly be resisted, in *any* circumstances. On his own view, he should have been able to make this clear 'without much difficulty', and indeed he claims that he has actually done so. But if we set the case out clearly – if we see him to be committed to maintaining that a system of principles, which includes an absolute prohibition against offering resistance, ever, to any political authority however wicked or sanguinary or oppressive, is more conducive to the welfare of mankind than would be a system which allowed such resistance to be sometimes at least permissible – then the merit of his argument looks rather more than doubtful. Perhaps, even here, it is not simply and completely obvious that his contention is wrong. But at any rate it is not, as on his own view it ought to be, just obviously right.

Geoffrey Warnock was Principal of Hertford College, Oxford from 1971 to 1988 and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University from 1981 to 1985.

News and notes

Newsletter from IME

As part of its development programme the Institute of Medical Ethics (IME) is producing a quarterly newsletter for members. Membership of the IME is available (cost £10 pa, students £5) by application to Dr R West, General Secretary of the Institute of Medical Ethics, c/o the Department of Child Health, St George's Hospital Medical School, Blackshaw Road, London SW17 0RG.

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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.