

The text is well-referenced, and suggestions for further reading are given at the end of each chapter.

In conclusion, this book would be a welcome addition to medical and nursing libraries, and, although aimed specifically at nurses, medical staff who maintain a holistic approach to care should also find this book both interesting and informative.

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## Ethics in Nursing: the Caring Relationship

Verena Tschudin, 151 pages, London, £7.95, Heinemann Nursing, 1986.

This book was published at a time when the nursing process (a system of individualised care comprising assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of care) had been established throughout most hospitals and in the community. The concept of nurses being in partnership with their patients, together with the increasing utilisation of medical technology, has therefore led nurses to focus upon ethical aspects of their work.

By writing this book, the author assists the nurse to gain insight into matters pertaining to nursing ethics. The first chapter sets the scene in terms of the role of the nurse today. In the second chapter, the author delves into the specific nature of the caring relationship as it affects nursing. Her arguments are well supported with valuable references.

Chapter three is devoted to the exposition of ethical theories. The author contrasts morality with ethics, and proceeds by describing the normative (prescriptive) and descriptive approaches to ethics as allied to health care. The ethical theories of consequentialism and non-consequentialism are explored together with their implications for decision-making in nursing. The case of prescribing oral contraceptives without parental consent for girls under the age of 16 is highlighted. The author completes the chapter by discussing the five principles of ethics which are applicable in many nursing situations.

The book continues by raising the topics of values, attitudes and beliefs. The author emphasises that not only

should nurses be aware of their own values, they should also understand and respect their patients' values in order for effective care to be undertaken. An overview of some professional Codes is included in the book, but it is noted that these Codes are limited in their scope to protect nurses in specific stated situations.

Detailed discussion of certain areas of ethics are put forward in the following chapters of this book, including nurses' rights and responsibilities, patient advocacy, accountability and loyalty to peers and patients. Conflicts that may arise pertaining to these areas are expanded upon.

Ethical decision-making, and the steps that the nurse must take in order for this process to happen are described in depth in the final chapters of this book. The nature of ethical dilemmas is put forward.

Overall, this book should serve to raise nurses' consciousness of the ethical issues that are constantly being met within a framework of the giving of individualised care. Nurses, especially those at the 'sharp end', ie, the bedside, will be able strongly to identify with these ethical issues.

*Ethics in Nursing* may be strongly recommended, certainly for nurses, and also for those interested in all aspects of medical and nursing ethics.

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## Human Embryos: The Debate on Assisted Reproduction

C R Austin, 183 + vii pages,  
Oxford, £6.95, Oxford University  
Press, 1989.

Inasmuch as any meaningful discussion of medical ethics must be grounded in the science and practice of the matter discussed, the first merit of C R Austin's book is that it provides that knowledge. (His competence in the field is amply evidenced by, *inter alia*, the eight volumes on *Reproduction in Mammals* which he edited with R V Short for Cambridge University Press). His first chapter gives a concise and illustrated description of the transmission of life from the formation of the gametes, egg and sperm, through fertilisation and cleavage to embryogenesis and fetal growth, with

indications of the hazards encountered on the way. His second chapter outlines the scope of variations, encouragements and diversions made possible by human intervention, with timely corrections of popular misunderstandings of 'genetic engineering', gene therapy, cloning, hybrids, chimaeras and the like. Two chapters follow on the reasons for infertility and on ways of overcoming it. A fifth chapter, on ethics and law, examines some of the ethical and pseudo-ethical objections brought against infertility treatment and pre-embryo research, and reflects on what the law might reasonably be expected to contribute to the assurance of good practice.

The facts are not presented without comment and interpretation, and the book is the better for it. Other commentators' theories on 'when life begins' (a biological question too often dressed up as an ethical question) are fairly stated; and this makes Austin's own speculation the more interesting. His words are so compact, and exactitude so necessary, that they should be quoted:

'Almost the whole of the embryo *manifestly* develops into the placenta, etc, and no one can deny that, with only a small fraction becoming (eventually) the fetus. So the sequence can be stated rationally as follows: a very small part of the ovary (an oocyte, in fact) becomes an embryo, and a very small part of the embryo (the disc or plate) becomes the fetus. The inference is clear: the embryo should be regarded as an organ, like the ovary, and as such is not entitled to the respect due to something destined to become a person. The embryonic and fetal parts are easily distinguished, a notable fact being that the fetal component grows much faster than the embryo-placental component' (p18).

After rehearsing the scientific and logical difficulty in insisting on the term 'embryo' for the early conceptus during cleavage, Austin adds:

'By an alternative system, an embryo originates as a very small part of a pre-embryo, and co-exists with the pre-embryo as the latter differentiates into placenta, etc, prior to becoming a fetus' (p20).

On this basis of biological fact the chapter on ethics can discuss the attribution of 'personhood' and of human rights to the pre-implantation embryo. The understandable wish to do so can rest only on an imagined and