

this section is so subjective that the arguments supporting prenatal diagnosis and selective termination of affected pregnancies are merely posed, then immediately dismissed. Any discussion is so biased as hardly to merit being described as such; rather, the book constitutes a constant and unashamed diatribe against the use of prenatal diagnosis in any form other than as a therapeutic means of identifying treatable disorders.

It is unfortunate that the book is published at a time when the abortion laws in this country are undergoing radical, liberal revision, since a discussion of the imminent changes to the 1967 Act has not been included. Indeed, the author's early remark that 'it is ... quite possible that before the end of this century we shall see many of the more liberal laws (concerning abortion) repealed or amended restrictively' is, in retrospect, rather far from the truth. One might be forgiven for construing it as wishful thinking.

VIRGINIA N BOLTON

*Senior Embryologist/Honorary Lecturer,  
Assisted Conception Unit,  
Department of Obstetrics and  
Gynaecology, King's College School of  
Medicine and Dentistry,  
University of London.*

## Loss and Bereavement

Bridget Cook and Shelagh G Phillips, 90 pages, London, £6.50, Austen Cornish Publishers Limited in association with The Lisa Sainsbury Foundation, 1988.

It is understandable that a journal of medical ethics should select for review, publications with an obvious focus on ethical issues. Although this book does not lay claim to such a focus, I am pleased that the attention of readers of this journal is being directed to it. Of course, any text dealing with human crises must encompass ethical issues or dilemmas, either explicitly or implicitly. Professional carers specifically, confronted with human beings in grief for whatever reasons, must be aware of the ethical foundations on which the caring process is based. The two authors clearly demonstrate such awareness. Their sensitivity to the bereaved person's rights, dignity and individuality permeates the text throughout.

The book makes an important contribution to the understanding of loss in its widest sense to include not only death, but also events like the loss of status, of a relationship, of a faculty or of material possessions. The reader is taken right through the complex process of the loss experience and the subsequent grief. Available literature and the authors' personal experiences are used as signposts. The resulting volume achieves an admirable balance between generalisable practical guidelines and most careful attention to individual needs and problems. For example, two flow charts, taken from *Which Books 1986* simplify the practical arrangements after death and in relation to the funeral, which bereaved people often find so bewildering. They are excellent general guidelines. The constant emphasis on the need for individual assessment as a basis for appropriate after-care demonstrates the importance of individual differences.

A reading list for the bereaved and a list of useful addresses are added benefits.

Although there seems to be a distinct decrease in the taboo surrounding death in Western society, there remains a good deal of confusion, anxiety and fear. This clear, informative, sensitive and well presented publication provides valuable help for those who attempt to care for bereaved persons.

LISBETH HOCKEY

*Research Consultant,  
Flat 2, Silverknowes House,  
1 Silverknowes Road, Edinburgh 4*

## Ethics and Human Values in Family Planning

Z Bankowski, J Bazelatto, AM Capron, 308 pages, Geneva, 20 SFR (UK price unstated), Council for International Organisations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS), 1989

This book is derived from the XXII CIOMS Conference held in Bangkok in 1988. However, in comparison with many similar volumes of proceedings from multi-disciplinary conferences its layout has been arranged to state first, an objective, second, the material for deliberation and finally such consensus as was derived. The material is not laid out succinctly and in some respects this is a difficult volume to follow. However, once the reader has begun to

find his or her way through the contributions it does become a very readable and very original book.

The phrase 'family planning' encompasses a wide range of activities in reproductive medicine including abortion, sterilisation, treatment and research into infertility and prenatal diagnosis - the whole field of reproductive medicine. The book commences with full coverage in the first six pages of the remarks made at the opening of the conference. These serve to underline the WHO's concern with the issues facing family planning worldwide and the need to find a common ground amid the wide range of medical, sociological, philosophical, religious and political factors influencing the provision of reproductive health care globally. These remarks are echoed in the keynote address by Dr Anne Maclaren. Apart from re-stating the conference objective, this contribution is an excellent introduction to the material discussed elsewhere. Two subsequent sections of the book examine from two different perspectives, the spectrum of issues under consideration. First, four chapters deal with ethical, cultural and religious, scientific and legal perspectives. Each of these is written by acknowledged experts in their own field who have chosen language easily understandable by colleagues in other disciplines. The following section examines the same complex array of issues from a regional point of view with chapters dealing with Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America, Asia and Oceania and finally the Middle East. Most of these concentrate on historical and demographical factors that modify or are modified by cultural and religious settings, an aspect of the problem that is often overlooked in less internationally orientated works. Such consensus as was derived is enumerated, first in the reports of six working groups that dealt with family planning and health services, family planning methods, infertility, prenatal diagnosis and research in fertility and infertility. Further consolidation of views is given in a series of reflections of the conference from the perspectives of an ethicist, a lawyer, a bio-medical scientist, a social scientist, a health-policy maker and a lay person. In view of the thoroughness with which this topic is explored, I can thoroughly recommend this book to anyone involved in reproductive medicine either internationally or in any setting that could be vaguely construed as multicultural.