

a reversion to consequentialist thinking: which seems to be just what the authors give us at this point, despite their own avowed caution about consequentialism.

Here I have briefly touched on some points of criticism of this splendid book; but despite these possibly minor problems, no one should be in any doubt about what a splendid and useful volume it is. I recommend it to anyone seeking a way into the subject.

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## Ethical Issues in Pharmacy

Edited by Bruce D Weinstein,  
Washington, Applied Therapeutics  
Inc, 1996, 323 pages, US\$29.95.

*Ethical Issues in Pharmacy* is the first publication to appear dealing specifically with ethical issues from the pharmacy perspective and comes from a publisher with an established reputation in the area of clinical pharmacy. It has been produced as a resource for pharmacists working within the American health care system and indeed refers to the American Pharmaceutical Association's Code of Ethics for Pharmacists. The book can, however, still provide a useful resource for practising pharmacists within the UK dealing with ethical issues that arise as part of their daily practice.

The book brings together both an understanding of clinical pharmacy and philosophical ethics in suggesting possible resolutions for moral problems in pharmacy and each chapter is written and reviewed collaboratively by experts in these disciplines. The topics covered are those identified as most important by the ethics content committee of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy.

The first part of the book deals with the basic principles involved in ethical issues in pharmacy, each chapter dealing with a different issue, as described below. Each issue is illustrated by reference to hypothetical cases and each chapter ends with a series of discussion questions and references for further reading.

"Is pharmacy a profession?" debates the difference between a profession and a business, how the two are compatible within the role of a pharmacist, and suggests how a pharmacist can develop

his/her professional character and remain ethical in today's complex practice environment.

"The normative principles of pharmacy ethics" are identified as non-maleficence, beneficence, respect for persons, loyalty and distributive justice. This chapter explains and examines the relevance of each principle and discusses how a pharmacist can approach apparent conflict between these principles and between these principles and self-interested inclinations.

"The relationship between ethics and the law" recognises that pharmacists often face situations that raise both ethical and legal considerations and teases out the relationship between the two.

"Ethical decision-making" systematically looks at moral problems using a four-stage approach of gathering facts, identifying values, generating options and finally selecting and justifying an option.

"The countervailing conversation" discusses the practical application of a principle-based approach to ethical issues in pharmacy through a "narrative" technique, involving discussion with the patient, rather than a formal or intellectual method. This accords well with the purposes and goals of pharmaceutical care.

Each chapter in the second part of the book deals with practical situations which may raise ethical issues for pharmacists in their daily practice, including: the relationship between patients and physicians; relationships with the pharmaceutical industry; the right to medication; the right to refuse to fill a prescription on moral or religious grounds; professional responsibilities to incompetent fellow professionals; the impact of the media, and involvement in clinical trials. Again discussion questions and further references are provided for each issue.

Here the differences in how health care is provided in the United States and the United Kingdom become particularly relevant. The different legal and funding situations in each country mean the practical options for action may differ, though the basic ethical considerations will be the same within each system. However, this section still provides useful concepts which must be adapted by the reader to meet the actual situation being considered.

Of particular interest is the chapter entitled "Power and professional responsibility; the social context of pharmacy". It discusses the pharmacist's changing role, recognising the concepts of pharmaceutical care and

emphasising the importance of communication and mediation rather than the practical provision of medicines. Harmonising of pharmacists' ideals and values with their role and with the expectations of others are important if pharmacists are to be empowered in their relationships with fellow professionals and patients.

For pharmacists used to dealing with facts this book is not, at first attempt, easy reading, dealing with concepts and principles which are not easily defined and which take some time to assimilate and understand. Rather than reading it from cover to cover at one sitting, pharmacists should select those areas of particular interest or relevance.

Initially it can be used by pharmacists as a practical resource for issues arising in daily practice, but as the pharmacist develops more familiarity with consideration of ethical issues it will support a deeper consideration of the ethical and moral responsibilities involved in being a pharmacist and what this means for each pharmacist as a member of society and of the health care team.

Clinical ethics is a fast developing, though still immature discipline in this country and pharmacists within primary and secondary care have an important role to play within it. This book will support the debate within the profession which is needed for that involvement to occur. I hope that it will not be so long before a similar work written from the British perspective becomes available.

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## Protection of the Human Genome and Scientific Responsibility

Proceedings of the 1995 MURS-Japan/UNESCO IBC Seminars.  
Edited by M Okamoto, N Fujiki and D Macer, Tsukuba, Japan, Eubios Ethics Institute, 1996, 107 pages (+101 pages in Japanese), £15.

This book contains thirty-one papers from the series of seminars organised by the Japanese branch of the Mouvement Universale de la Responsabilité Scientifiques (MURS) and the International Bioethics Committee of