avoidance of jargon, the doctor's attitude, careful supervision, gadgets such as pill boxes as an aid to memory, enabling patients to express their anxieties and avoidance of conflicting information. The attitude of the doctor appears to be paramount. 'The sympathetic doctor's instructions and explanations are followed, understood and remembered better than those of a doctor who appears cold and uninterested'.

In all, this is a thought-provoking and challenging booklet which will be a great help to all who have to teach medical students and are conscious of their own shortcomings in their dealings with patients. One small quibble is with the use of the word 'compliance' which seems now to have become established in the literature of doctor-patient communication. It is surely more applicable to what a sergeant major tries to achieve with raw recruits. When we are trying to help patients perhaps 'co-operation' would be more appropriate.

The illustrations drawn by John Moll are both apt and funny.

P A ANDERSEN

Medical Responsibility: Paternalism, Informed Consent and Euthanasia

Wade L Robison and Michael S Prichard (Eds).
Humana Press, 1979, 240 pp. \$19.50.

Most of the thirteen papers in this collection were originally presented at a conference on Philosophy, Law and Medicine held in Michigan in 1976. Several have already been published elsewhere. The main topics are: the definition and justification of paternalism, the ethics of experiments on human subjects, non-therapeutic fetal experimentation, and euthanasia. In spite of the book's origins the editors do not regard it simply as another volume of conference proceedings. They intend it as an introduction to medical ethics which will display the common moral concerns underlying apparently diverse problems. Some of the papers, notably Childress's 'Paternalism and Health Care' and Rachels' 'Euthanasia, Killing and Letting Die', would indeed constitute excellent introductions to their topics. Others, for example Gert and Culver's 'The Justification of Paternalism', seem to demand too much

philosophical sophistication for this purpose.

With one exception (Beauchamp's reply to Rachels), the papers are entirely independent of one another, so there is little sense of debate among the contributors. Equally the editors make no serious attempt to show how discussion of the different topics might be linked together. This is a pity, since it would be easy to draw instructive and fruitful parallels. For example, the papers on paternalism and experimentation on human subjects naturally concentrate on questions about self-determination. Is informed consent always required? What does it mean? What are the practical difficulties in ensuring that subjects really do consent? All these questions need also to be raised about proposals to legitimise voluntary euthanasia.

But the papers on euthanasia included in this volume say nothing about these questions. Instead they discuss the difference, if any, between killing and letting die and the definition of death. In themselves these papers are excellent but their inclusion in the present volume does not help the reader to see the common moral concerns underlying diverse problems.

Most of the contributors appear to be professional philosophers and this gives the volume as a whole a certain one-sidedness. Although all the authors have conscientiously illustrated their points with medical examples one sometimes feels that the argument may be getting a little remote from the realities of medical practice.

Thus taken as a whole the volume does not fulfil its editors' ambitions. On the other hand most of the individual contributions do have something worthwhile to say. It is a volume which anyone working in medical ethics will need to consult.

R F STALLEY

Ethical issues in death and dying

Tom L Beauchamp and Seymour Perlin (Eds).
Prentice-Hall Inc, 1978, 368 pages, £6.85.

This book is divided into five sections called respectively: The Definition and Determination of Death; Suicide; Rights of the Dying Patient; Euthanasia and Natural Death; and The Significance

of Life and Death. A short Introduction by the Editors sets the scene for each section and is followed by a number of articles or 'readings', some presumably written for this volume and others taken from the literature, past and present. They are arranged in the form of a debate with brief linking summaries and opposing viewpoints are juxtaposed. This reviewer found the format helpful as through this type of analysis and argument the danger of over-simplification of what are very complex ethical issues is stressed. A good example is the Harvard Definition of Brain Death (or irreversible coma) which at the time of its introduction in 1968 was considered to be unambiguous and straightforward, yet as Veatch and Jonas, among others, indicate, there are problems with this definition and it has required modification in subsequent years. Many are still unhappy with it and its implications.

I liked the section on the 'Rights of the Dying Patient' and I hope that many present and future clinicians will study it. Widely divergent views are expressed on the conflict that may occur between what a doctor views as his professional obligation to treat a patient and the patient's right to refuse treatment. Legally, 'there is the fear that any exception to the sanctity of life cannot but cheapen it' (Hegland), yet 'Human dignity is enhanced by permitting the individual to determine for himself what beliefs are worth dying for'. (Cantor). The section on 'Euthanasia', that most contentious of contemporary issues, includes the familiar arguments about 'active' and 'passive' euthanasia. (Almost inevitably there is a review of some of the issues in the Quinlan case.)

Discussion on the particularly poignant problem of defective newborn infants concentrates on the legal issues involved. Robertson and Fost point out the dangers of physicians claiming the right to act in defiance or ignorance of existing laws. They suggest that we need 'either a set of authoritative criteria describing the limited circumstances in which ordinary care may be withheld from defective newborn infants or a process of decision-making which minimises the risk of abuses or mistakes'. Such processes have been developed but are not enough in themselves without some equivalent change in the law. Fear of the