

21–23, 1983. One hopes that some of the dangers of shifting clinical decision-making away from the bedside into a committee-room, especially when financial considerations loom large, will have been clearly spelled out.

American medicine is finally beginning to realise that resources are *not* unlimited. Given that there is now little or no hope for a national health-insurance system, one can expect that the next ten years will see intense competition between old and new systems of health-care. Already in California there is open competition for state and industrial contracts between individual hospitals and newly-created groups of health-care providers offering a wide range of coverage at all kinds of prices. In the open market the buyer must always beware. Is there a difference between

buying health care (or 'sickness care') and buying other goods and services in a free economy? We can expect many years of very costly conflicts in America.

References

- (1) A definition of irreversible coma, Report of an *ad hoc* Committee of the Harvard Medical School to examine the definition of brain death. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 1968; 205: 337–340.
- (2) Towers B. Irreversible coma and withdrawal of life support: is it murder if the IV line is disconnected? *Journal of medical ethics* 1982; 8: 203–205.
- (3) Ross J W, Towers B and Winslade W J. Ethics committees: a turn for the worse. *Möbius* 1983; 3(3): University of California Press (in press).

News and notes

Workshop on ethical issues

The Hastings Center, Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences, is holding a workshop on Ethical Issues in the Health Professions and the Biomedical Sciences at Vassar College (75 miles north of New York) from June 19–24.

The purpose of the workshop is fourfold: To bring together those from a variety of different professions and disciplines within health care to examine key issues in biomedical ethics; To allow those from the same profession within health care to work together in a systematic fashion on significant moral issues within their own area; To enhance the knowledge and analytical skills of those concerned with the teaching of ethics in health care and the biomedical sciences; To provide ideas, techniques, and topics to those

concerned with establishing courses or programmes on ethics within the health professions and biomedical sciences.

The workshop is meant to serve health care professionals, teachers, government officials, university professors, and others who want to examine the social and ethical impact of medicine and the biomedical sciences.

The workshop fee is \$300 in addition to room and board charges.

Application forms can be obtained from Workshop on Ethical Issues in the Health Professions, The Hastings Center, 360 Broadway, Hastings-on-Hudson, New York 10706, USA. Telephone: 914/478-0500.