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From the Cradle to Beyond: Ethics of Health Care

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From the Cradle to Beyond: Ethics of Health Care

In this issue, eight poignant ethical works are presented. Been there, done that! Perhaps, but these authors offer discussions and research on ethical decisions that affect us from before birth until long after our passing.

The first five articles and their authors contend that health care professionals should be vigilant to not lose sight of the patients, as an individual or as a whole. The issue begins with a poem by Curi Kim. *Born There* depicts the plight of a patient in Africa cared for while suffering from drug resistant tuberculosis. Her work raises the question, how much of a determinant of health is one's birth geography? Next, applying the theory of Health as Expanding Consciousness, authors Kemker, Goshorn, Sumrall, and Marx, challenge readers to hear the needs of the hearing impaired. In other words, listen to their needs. Too often in diversity training, the focus is limited to ethnicity and culture. Those who have hearing impairment are usually quietly left out, authors contend. From patients whose hearing impairments can lead them to withdraw from society without proper care, to patient-soldiers whose post-traumatic stress disorder can lead them to withdraw from society, as well. This article asks the question, when duty conflicts with professional codes of conduct, which should take precedence? Kelly presents an ethical model which may prove applicable for managing patient-soldier confidentiality when medical treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder is refused. The theory permits independent clinical judgment, while minimizing ethical dilemmas and other ethical/moral ramifications. From the soldier's individual rights to the military's rights as the protector of the other soldiers, the Journal turns to a prominent case involving individual rights vs. another safeguarding institution, the hospital. Although more than two decades have passed, O'Dell reminds us of the impact of the Elizabeth Bouvia case on individual rights, acts of conscience, and the right to die. Given the complexity of the case, O'Dell submits that this case will continue to inform on these issues for decades to come. Finally, concerning patients and the health care they receive, the fifth article asks, does one's context determine one's views on bioethics? This question is addressed by a team of medical students and their advisors from Saudi Arabia. They conclude that the degrees of

paternalistic views held by medical science graduates of three universities were largely attributable to the manner and content of the bioethical teaching and training methods used in the three universities where they studied. Does this research imply that bioethical views are wholly dependent on instruction? I am certain that all of these authors would be interested in your opinion.

Next, this issue turns to discussions of polarizing ethical questions. Michele Battle-Fisher's essay, *Severity of Scope versus Altruism: Working Against Organ Donation's Realization of Goals*, addresses the quantification of incidences of End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). When this public health emergency is quantified by rates, Battle-Fisher, states "that there appears to be less of an incentive to upset rational choice and side with emotion if enlarging health awareness is required to turn the tide of disease." She suggests that a collective empathy toward patients who have ESRD is more likely to emerge if the patient who needs a kidney is personally known to us. While one can argue for use of the scope-severity paradox in reporting public health crises, putting the human face on the condition is certainly warranted. This type of reporting begs for additional research. What difference do you think the reporting of the 'human side' of a disease, the individual story that the public could connect to personally, would make in developing treatments for the disease, in receiving greater amounts of resources for prevention or curing of the disease, or etc.? Next, Relph examines the very idea of personhood, the current concept definitions and their impact on society. What are the criteria that must absolutely be present in order to afford personhood? The author offers a new perspective on defining personhood. Last, ethical issues related to nuclear energy are examined by Xiang and Zhu in *Hard Lessons Learned from Chernobyl and Fukushima*. Although originally presented and marketed as a sustainable energy source that would reduce greenhouse gas emission and produce far less wastes than conventional energy, the authors challenge us to critically rethink the real benefits the world is deriving from the use of nuclear energy. This is especially true in the recent catastrophic events of Fukushima. They implore, and most of us agree that, it is expedient for steps to be taken to improve nuclear safety. A few of the suggestions they give are: enhancing risk management, requiring full disclosure of facts, pushing for open communication with the public, and developing alternative green energies. To conclude, the threat of nuclear accidents is significant enough to be of concern to Earth's inhabitants. I applaud Xiang and Zhu for their suggestions.

I wish to extend a special thanks to all authors and others who shared their scholarship with our journal. You are all invited to visit us on our Facebook page to extend the dialogue. If you have not already, we are always looking for guest reviewers. Please consider becoming a member of our board of reviewers.

Last, a special thanks to Mrs. Laura Hudson, a grant manager from The University of Southern Mississippi for her invaluable help in copyediting and serving as General Manager of the Journal. Also, thanks are extended to Mrs. Jillian Wright for her continual support.

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Editor-in-Chief