

End of Year Ethical Considerations: 2015

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End of Year Ethical Considerations 2015

As we end 2015, ethical issues continue to make national and international news. Top of the news is the international refugee plight. Should countries close their borders to desperate families fleeing political turmoil and threats of physical harm? If a terrorist from a certain religious group engages in an act of violence with resultant mass loss of life, is it morally right for the country to close its borders to all other persons from that religious group, regardless? Or, like the Ebola outbreak, should international border blocks be raised especially when there are so many other contagious diseases that result in exponentially greater loss of life than Ebola? Readers are urged to study these and other rising ethical issues so as to inform the debates.

In the *Online Journal of Health Ethics (OJHE)*, there were 31,966 downloads of articles for 2015. Ethical Issues that most interested readers included: 1) *The Ethics of Nuclear Energy: Hard Lessons Learned from Chernobyl and Fukushima*, 2) *Do You See Me? Ethical Considerations of the Homeless*, 3) *Health Beliefs of Muslim Women and Implications for Health*, 4) *Ethical Issues in Modern Day Dental Practice*, 5) *Managing Peanut Allergies in School*, 6) *Family Planning and Population Control in Developing Countries*, 7) *Withholding and Withdrawing Life Support: Moral Dilemmas, Moral Distress, and Moral Residue*, 8) *Nursing Ethics Across the Curriculum*, and 9) *Disaster Ethics and Healthcare Personnel*. While these articles represent a broad spectrum of ethical inquiry, the number one concern appears to be survival as evident by the number of downloads for the nuclear energy article.

I taught an undergraduate ethic's class this semester. Students were asked to bring in ethical headlines for class discussion. Issues which continue to emerge were: abortion rights, sexuality rights, rights of neonates, response to sport's injuries, right to die, organ procurement, and research with vulnerable populations, to name a few. A new topic discussed was natural remedies v. pharmaceuticals. Are we duly informed of the benefits of natural approaches to health? I suspect that as more people embrace natural measures, greater demands will be placed on providers to offer alternatives to traditional treatment modalities. Should patients be given a choice in their healthcare treatments? While we may argue that herbal products, essential oils and other alternative and complementary methods are not FDA approved, as people experience relief with little to no side effects using natural substances, the pressure will increase to be open to possibly a new paradigm of healing arts. The overarching conundrum is, who owns the healing arts?

In this last OJHE issue of 2015, Dr. Alta and Takeem Ragland of Saint Louis University (USA) present an ethical and legal analysis to adjudicate the controversy regarding individual v. public rights in face of the spread of communicable disease such as the Ebola and the Disneyland measles outbreak. Specifically, they discuss the metaethical theory of emotivism. Readers will find this article extremely helpful in deciphering national and individual responses to communicable disease threats. Article two, *Generational Conflicts Among Vietnamese Americans in Health Care Decision Making*, Dr. Nguyen, attempts to inform health care

providers of cultural nuances which contribute to the high mortality rate among Vietnamese Americans. It is a moral responsibility for health care providers to provide culturally appropriate care to all patients. Looking futuristically, Peter Bison presents research in article three which enables readers to make a decision regarding the morality of xenotransplantation procedures. Readers are urged to read this article and register your decision on our *Facebook* page. In article four, *The Ethics of Place: Differences in Ethical Perspectives Among Urban, Suburban and Rural Physicians*, Dr. Wickersham and colleagues examine the ethics of perspectives of physicians based upon their practice geography. The conclusions reached provides insight in ethical decision making of physicians. Last, Dr. Izzak Williams' article: *Is Administrative Discharge an Archaic or Synchronic Program Practice: The Empirical Side of the Debate*, provides a candid and frank revelation of the national practice of administrative discharge (AD) or expulsion of patients with substance use disorders. When patients with substance use disorders are administratively discharged from program because of various infractions, is it *right* to release them to life without assistance because they *broke the rules*? Williams' work informs of the scarcity of data and standardized protocols in the discharge of patients who are impaired. Work is needed in this area.

Last, I wish to thank all reviewers, authors and copy editors who work to make this journal available. Special thanks are also extended to The University of Southern Mississippi for hosting the journal on the Aquila platform free of charge to all readers, and to Mr. Josh Cromwell for his role as OJHE manager and webmaster. You are urged to share the journal on your Facebook page and other social medial portals and outlets. Mucho thanks for sharing **your** scholarship with us!

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

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Editor

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