ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BIOETHICS

Prospectus

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An Encyclopedia for the Field of Bioethics

Some of the recent advances in biomedical technology have created specific ethical dilemmas, such as those related to the prolongation of life and the allocation of scarce medical resources. Other developments have raised more fundamental moral questions, such as whether man should do all that the biomedical sciences enable him to do. However, many of the fundamental moral problems concerning health and disease, quality of life, human reproduction, death, etc.—the ethical questions surrounding medicine and the life sciences—have been part of the human condition for a very long time and have been discussed by many of the world’s great philosophers, religious teachers, scientists, and physicians.

Recently there has been a noticeably expanded interest in cross-disciplinary studies of the ethical and social implications of the biomedical sciences. These studies in bioethics have been pursued through a more intensified exchange of ideas and principles among moral and religious philosophers, biologists, and physicians. Important contributions have also been made to the developing field of bioethics from the social and behavioral sciences, as well as from the field of law. At the same time, more attention is now being given to the history of the humanistic aspects of health and science.

The important literature dealing with bioethics in every period of history can be found among the writings of philosophers, theologians, biomedical and social scientists, physicians, lawyers, and scholars from other disciplines. The constantly growing body of recent literature has appeared in disparate journals, in codes of medical and professional ethics, and in volumes of collected essays. The establishment of several specialized journals in the area of bioethics has also given witness to the vitality of the field. The proliferation of
these studies and the demand for further inquiry in biomedical ethics makes it all the more desirable and necessary to have a basic educational and reference work which will make available to serious students, various professionals, and the larger, interested public an integrated source of knowledge of the principal ideas and issues in the field of bioethics.

**Aims and Purposes**

The aim of the *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* is to present in a concise and comprehensive way the present state of knowledge of the ethical aspects of the biomedical sciences, health care, and the health professions. An attempt will be made to synthesize, analyze, and compare the positions taken on the concepts, principles, and problems of bioethics, in the past as well as in the present, to indicate which issues require further exploring, and to point to anticipated developments in the ethics of biomedicine. The purposes of this work will be to stimulate original thought, assist in ethical decision-making, encourage further studies and new viewpoints in bioethics, and thus to assist the development of this field of study. To achieve these aims and purposes, the *Encyclopedia* is being developed according to a multidisciplinary and international plan.

**Scope**

As the term "bioethics" would indicate, the *Encyclopedia* will include not only the topics customarily associated with medical ethics—the value problems which arise in the relationship between physicians and patients—but will extend beyond these limits to embrace the value questions, the moral issues, and the social implications which arise in connection with the biomedical sciences, health care, and the various health professions. Some of the principal areas covered in this work will be:

- Bioethics: philosophical analysis of basic concepts
- Medical ethics: international and intercultural aspects
- The medical profession: its ethos and ethics
- History of medical ethics
- The codes and ethics of various health occupations
- Social policy issues in medical ethics
• Health care distribution
• Allocation of scarce medical resources
• Human experimentation
• Rights of patients: informed consent, confidentiality, etc.
• Eugenics
• Genetic screening and genetic counselling
• Genetic diagnosis and genetic therapy
• In vitro fertilization
• Values in human sexuality
• Fertility control and abortion
• Population: ethical dimensions and policy perspectives
• Environment and pollution
• Behavior control
• Drug use, abuse, and dependence
• Mental health: values, therapies, institutions
• Life support systems
• Organ transplantation
• Aging
• Death and dying

Contributors

Leading scholars from all parts of the world are being invited to make contributions to the Encyclopedia. Authors will be from the fields of ethics, the biomedical sciences, the health professions, psychology, sociology, anthropology, law, political science, economics, demography, history, philosophy, and religion. In each case, however, they will address themselves to the ethical and social aspects of their respective topics. All entries will be original, signed articles.

Readers

The Encyclopedia of Bioethics is designed to be useful and informative to scientists, physicians and health care professionals; to educators, students, and counsellors; to people in public life, lawyers, judges, and legislators; to those involved in policy-making such as in government and health care administration; to molders of opinion such as journalists, popular writers, and commentators; as well as to the larger, interested public. It will serve a wide range of institutional and special libraries.
Subject Treatment

The average article will be 3000 words in length, though the length of the articles will range from 250 to 10,000 words. Articles will be supplemented by selected bibliographies of both primary and leading secondary sources.

Scientific data, the "state of the art" of medicine and health care, and other technical information will be presented only insofar as they are necessary for explaining or illustrating the ethical issues. In some instances, an entry will be made up of several composite articles in order to achieve an accurate, multidisciplinary discussion of the ethical question.

As a general rule, contributors are being asked to synthesize significant ethical viewpoints from a variety of ethical traditions, rather than to settle arbitrarily differences of opinion or articulate a purely personal view. However, the aim is not just to offer summary abstracts of accepted ethical positions taken by philosophers, theologians, scientists, physicians, sociologists, lawyers, and others. The implications of these major positions should also be pointed out, and various methodologies compared and contrasted, so as to encourage ethical reflection on the part of the reader. In some cases, authors are being asked to contribute fresh syntheses in creative essays, particularly in areas that have been notably neglected in bioethical studies.

Since the Encyclopedia will contain no separate biographical entries, authors of historical and topical entries are being asked, where it seems suitable, to include the names and contributions of those figures who have exerted a significant influence on the ethical principles pertinent to the life sciences and medicine.

Publication

The Encyclopedia will be approximately 1,250,000 words in length. It will be published by The Free Press, a Division of the Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., publisher of the Encyclopedia of Philosophy and the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. The planning stage of the Encyclopedia of Bioethics began in July 1972, and a 1976 publication date is anticipated.