

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Simon Woods. *Death's dominion: ethics at the end of life*. Open University Press; 2007. Pp 192, ISBN: 978-0-335-21160-9. £19.99 (paperback) Reviewed by J Coggon in *J Med. Ethics* 2007; 33:742.

The reviewer recommends this book highly for its well-researched and clearly explained concepts of care at the end of life. The author has traced the history of end-of-life care from pre-hospice days to palliative care and beyond. The discussion on ethical dilemmas is informative to health care professionals and lawyers with no grounding in philosophy.

Reinhard Merkel, Gerard Boer and Jörg M Fegert, with four others. *Intervening in the brain: changing psyche and society (Ethics of Science and Technology Assessment, Vol. 29.)* Berlin: Springer; 2007. \$99. Pp 536, ISBN 978-3-540-46476-1. Reviewed by JL Bernat in *N Engl J Med* 2007; 357:2095-6.

This book is written by a group formed to study the new and expanding field of neuro-ethics, which deals with the ethical dilemmas that arise as a result of new findings in brain research. They describe the new techniques of brain intervention and then the results of those techniques and the ethical questions they pose.

Perri Klass. *Treatment kind and fair: letters to a young doctor*. New York: Basic Books; 2007. \$24.95. Pp 236, ISBN 978-0-465-03777-3. Reviewed by R Charon in *N Engl J Med* 2007; 357:2096.

Written by a mother who is a physician and addressed to her son as he enters medical school, the book weaves the growth of medicine over the last few years, describes the demands medical training and profession places on individuals, and yet assures him of a sense of fulfilment as he becomes a conscientious doctor.

Bonnie Steinbock, editor. *The Oxford handbook of bioethics*. New York: Oxford University Press; 2007. \$150. Pp 748, ISBN 978-0-19-927335-5. Reviewed by JH Marks in *N Engl J Med* 2007; 357:2094-5.

The book brings together essays on important issues in bioethics. The contributors are mostly philosophers. The book emphasises that in order to grow, the field must incorporate environmental ethics, and include industries besides the usual pharmaceutical and health care organisations.

Lori P Knowles and Gregory E Kaebnick, editors. *Reprogenetics: law, policy, and ethical issues*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; 2007. \$50. Pp 302, ISBN

978-0-8018-8524-2. Reviewed by L Andrew in *N Engl J Med* 2008; 358:204-5.

The book traces the history of in-vitro fertilisation, and the ethical issues and laws in USA governing clinical and research aspects of human embryos.

Davidson R Gwatkin, Shea Rutstein, Kiersten Johnson, Eldaw Suliman, Adam Wagstaff and Agbessi Amouzou. *Socio-economic differences in health, nutrition, and population within developing countries: an overview*. Health, Nutrition, and Population Department of the World Bank, in cooperation with the Government of the Netherlands and the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency; 2007. Reviewed by FC Barros in *Lancet* 2008; 371:19-20.

The book with its 56 individual low- and middle-income country reports gives detailed data within each country of health and nutrition indices of population aggregates by gender, education, income, etc. It is a valuable source of information for researchers and health policy analysts.

***A bitter pill: the risks of carrying out clinical drug trials in developing countries*. Wemos Foundation, Amsterdam; 2008.**

"In this information booklet, the Wemos Foundation describes the risks involved when carrying out clinical drug trials on the inhabitants of developing countries, and puts forward concrete proposals for the improved protection of these vulnerable test subjects.

"The Wemos Foundation is an Amsterdam-based organization contributing to the structural improvement of people's health in developing countries through advocacy."

David Rieff. *Swimming in a sea of death: a son's memoir*. Simon and Schuster; 2008. \$21. Pp 192, ISBN: 978-0743299466. Reviewed by D Johnson et al. in *London Review of Books* 2008; 55(2).

The book is David Rieff's recounting of his experience dealing with his mother's death from a malignancy in 2004. His mother, Susan Sontag, was a renowned writer whose books included *Illness as a metaphor*, written in 1975, after her battle with metastatic breast cancer. In this she wrote about the language that is used to address cancer and death, and the difficulty the health profession had in dealing with death as an inevitable part of life. Yet Susan herself was unwilling to accept the inevitability of death, perhaps as a result of her two encounters with 'end-stage' cancers that she survived against all odds. The book describes her last illness and the effect it had on her son who was a witness to her fight, to the end, to live.