

Medical Ethics

Congratulations (on the production of *Medical Ethics*). I know how much courage and decency it takes to fight for some degree of moral order in health care. It would certainly be much easier and advantageous to close the eyes and not be 'trouble-makers'.

The situation in Hungary is quite similar: immoral human experiments, discrimination (between) patients, lack of information, unethical medical practices without any punishment, over- and under-treatment, bribes both by drug companies and patients and highly immoral solidarity among the medical profession even at the slightest suspicion of negligence but, on the other hand, the degradation of colleagues in front of patients, etc. (We too, have) committees and panels with hardly any 'outsiders' (making it impossible to exercise) and any public control. Hospitals and other health care institutes are not only run in secrecy but in many cases as prisons where physicians' ORDERS must be obeyed and no complaints tolerated.

I consider your journal interesting, honest and affirmative. I could even notice a definite improvement: the August-October 1994 issue, for example, is remarkably attractive, systematic and easily readable. There is a question in this issue: 'Could we sensitise such groups to issues in medical ethics?' My opinion is that the answer is yes. It can be done with the help of the media. In my efforts to fight against highly immoral practices, in most cases I have the backing of TV, radio, daily newspapers and journals. There are some decent people among them who are willing to take chances for some legitimate causes.

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(Dr. Blasszauer trained in law. Over the past 15 years he has been teaching ethics at the Medical University of Pecs. Dr. Blasszauer invites honest and dedicated doctors in practice to lead seminars and bring their everyday experiences to class rooms. He is the international coordinator on corruption for the International Association of Bioethics He has kindly sent us reprints of his papers in English entitled *Hypophysis scandal*, *Institutional care of the elderly*, *Post-socialist health care — an aimless transition?* and *Medical ethics committees in Hungary* **Editor**)

'When medicine went mad...'

I would very much appreciate a copy of 'When medicine went mad. Bioethics and the holocaust.' Could you kindly arrange to send it to me by Value Paid Post?

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(We regret we do not have copies of this book for distribution. If readers require photocopies of one or more chapters from this book for their personal use, we can send this on payment of the cost for photocopying and postage. We are sending Dr. Reddy a photocopy of the table of contents for his referral and will supply him photocopies of selected chapters. Should you need the entire volume, please ask your local bookseller to order it from the publisher: Humana Press, Totowa, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Readers interested in the subject may also wish to correspond with Ms. Helen Bamber, Secretary, Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, 96-98 Grafton Road, London NW5 3EJ, England. This address was kindly provided by Dr. Joan Wyatt of Leeds, England. Another invaluable resource person on this subject is Dr. Ruth Macklin, the donor of this book. She can be contacted at the Department of Bioethics, Division of Epidemiology and Social Medicine, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, 1300 Morris Avenue, Bronx, NY, 10461, U.S.A. **Editor**)

Keyhole surgery

You have been doing an excellent job of publishing *Medical Ethics*.

May I point out to you a small 'viewpoint' article by Dr. N. H. Antia, which appeared in *The Lancet*¹? Could you reproduce it in the journal?

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1. Antia NH: Keyhole surgery. *Lancet* 27 August 1994, pages 596-597.

(Dr. Antia's essay is indeed thought-provoking. He analyses the cost-benefit ratio of keyhole operations and questions their relevance in India. We strongly second Dr. Shrotri's commendation of this essay to all our readers. We are unable to reproduce it for want of space. **Editor**)

Hospitals become slaughter houses

Will you, please, permit a sick, lone crusader of 80 to voice some deeply felt hurt?

Painful incidents in various hospitals and nursing homes all over India have exposed the utter negligence and callousness of individuals supposedly belonging to a noble profession. There are scores of examples where, through sheer negligence, simple tubectomy, vasectomy and other sterilisation procedures have left young persons paralysed for life or sent to lifelong coma to die slowly in agony. No

relief or compensation of any kind is given to these helpless victims or their relatives by the erring surgeons or the hospitals.

Will we ever see an end to the two factors at the root of this tragic situation: the endless greed of medical doctors and the powerlessness of the figurehead state and central medical councils?

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