

processes. In view of the fact that biology and social studies teachers were contacted it is but natural that animal experiments were the prime concern. The next most telling issues concerned in vitro fertilization, surrogate motherhood, prenatal diagnosis, abortions, use of pesticides, genetic engineering and genetic manipulation in plants and animals.

Use of animals in behavioral experiments as well as in dissections is encountered in almost two-thirds of the schools from which replies were received. The concerns voiced were similar, whether the primary objective of education was achieved with animal experiments, whether animals could be substituted by inanimate objects, whether observation in nature can replace the experiments or a facility to return the animal to nature could be implemented.

A touching response was that it is sad to use any kind of creatures for experiments, but the strength of the opinion weakened for animals of lower order, from invertebrates downward to plankton. The concern for vertebrates is more than that for invertebrates, and lesser still for the lower order invertebrates.

Whereas it was deemed acceptable to carry out genetic manipulation for increasing the yield of cash crops and increase the yield of milk in cattle, respondents frowned upon attempts to harvest the rich genetic pools of tribals of Afro-Asian nations. Perhaps optimal practice of bioethics will finally imply treading the middle path of attempting to do the best for the most rather than striving for the unattainable ideal.

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**A handbook of the Department of Anatomy**, Seth G. S. Medical College, Parel, Mumbai. Anonymous, Department of Anatomy, Seth G. S. Medical College, Parel, Mumbai 400012. 1997 p 128.

Paperback.

Most of us are troubled by doubts and depression as we witness the general decline in standards of teaching and the shenanigans of those in charge of private medical colleges. This book offers solace and hope for here is a department attempting to build on past experience and extend its capabilities in a pioneering effort at imparting a clinical orientation to undergraduate anatomical education.

The preface emphasises: "...An understanding of the basic sciences is essential to a complete understanding of disease. Pathology and clinical medicine, in their turn, improve one's perception of the basic sciences. Each elucidating the other, they are inextricably linked in a glorious, ever-expanding circle..The handbook is designed to serve as a compass rather than a road map...It lets (the student) know what is most relevant to later study.."

Dr. S. M. Bhatnagar sets the pace by emphasising the relevance of anatomy to the medical student and to the doctor. Dr. M. L. Kothari talks of the joy of studying anatomy and travelling along the road that will serve both the student and his future patients without fail. Dr. Lopa Mehta, head of the department, succinctly discusses the 'how' of learning the subject, emphasising the use of both parietal lobes by an inquisitive mind that takes nothing for granted.

The next chapter provides a brief history of the department with thumbnail sketches of the various helmsmen from Dr. R. P. Koppikar to M. L. Kothari.

Subsequent chapters introduce the reader to the anatomy of the department of anatomy, its faculty, courses offered, the academic calendar, dissection schedule, description of diagrams to be drawn by each student in their journals and list of recommended texts.

The student is then told of the system of evaluation followed by the department. The top three levels consist of 'May know', 'Desirable to know' and 'Must know'. Those ignorant of items grouped under

'must know' are deemed to have failed. They may have stumbled in understanding fundamental concepts (level four) or, indeed, have no concept at all (level five).

The appendix lists the syllabus prescribed by the University of Mumbai.

Why are we reviewing a book on anatomy in a journal on ethics?

First of all, the volume sets a moral tone throughout. Consider this statement under 'Evaluation': "The maximum attention is paid... to provide such a *milieu* wherein students feel mentally and physically free to have independent thinking, healthy interaction amongst peers as well as with teachers and find their own self-confidence, self-reliance and creative potentials. To sum up, the student cultivates a healthy attitude towards life in general, and towards other human being and life forms..." Lofty ideals, indeed, to be heartily applauded.

Secondly, the department has travelled far beyond its mandate. Let me provide an example. It has established a library of images - x-ray films, computerised tomographic and magnetic resonance images and sonographic studies that help the candidate link what has been seen in the dissection hall to that seen in the living individual in the wards of the hospital.

The department also provides financial aid to needy students through donations from individuals, trusts and private funds in addition to that offered by the Municipal Corporation.

Finally, by guiding the student thus, with understanding and empathy, the volume sets a precedent that needs to be emulated by other departments in the same institutions and those in other institutions.

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## Euthanasia

There is a long tradition of welcoming death as a positive good: call no man happy, said the lawgiver Solon, till he dies, he is at best fortunate.

And Francis Bacon, who achieved more philosophical detachment in his *Essays* than in his shady financial dealings, wrote famously of the absurdity of the fear of death. 'Men fear death as children fear to go into the dark.'

- Theodore Dalrymple in *So little done*