



Briefing

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EDITOR

The need for advocacy has never been more apparent; the inadequacies of our healthcare and social systems become more obvious every day. In just the past two months studies have found that one in six Americans lacks access to primary health services; the average person over 65 pays 17 percent of income annually for health expenses not covered by Medicare; 16.6 percent of the population, including 8.4 million children, were uninsured in 1990; medical prices increased 7.9 percent in 1991 while the consumer price index rose 3.1 percent. Social problems such as homelessness, initiatives to legalize euthanasia, drug abuse, and pollution threaten our well-being.

All these issues call on Catholic providers, because of their commitment to the common good, to be advocates. In an article in our special section, Ann Neale stresses the challenge of two particular issues: healthcare reform and euthanasia. She says providers cannot "safeguard the rights and dignity of those needing healthcare . . . without assuming an advocacy role." She goes so far as to say that Catholic providers *must* engage in advocacy to justify participating in a healthcare delivery system that is "grossly inadequate."

Other articles in the section demonstrate how Catholic organizations are carrying out their mission through advocacy. Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital, St. Louis, is an example of a provider that, working with its sponsor and other organizations, has mobilized grassroots efforts on behalf of those who need a voice—poor women and children.

Wisconsin hospitals' efforts to preserve tax-exempt status encourage hospitals to contribute to their community. And the Catholic Health Corporation, Omaha, has instituted a systemwide program to advocate on the national level for a just public healthcare policy.

But advocacy is not only the responsibility of organizations. Sr. Mary Roch Rocklage, RSM, envisions advocacy as a personal commitment of those in the healthcare ministry to the Church's values and social justice teachings. Her article cuts to the heart of the matter: Advocacy is upholding what we say we believe in.

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LEGAL UPDATE

Christopher L. White explains the requirements of the bloodborne pathogen standard of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The regulations, which went into effect March 6, 1992, have significant cost and operational implications.

AUTHOR KUDOS

Emily Friedman's *Health Progress* article "Making Room in the Marketplace" (December 1990) has been chosen for the American College of Healthcare Executives' recommended reading list.

CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSEMBLY

The theme of CHA's annual assembly—reform of the healthcare system—is timely, given the problems our nation is facing. With a new format, the meeting, June 14-17, promises to be essential for every leader in Catholic healthcare. See pp. 25-32 for details, and plan to attend.

