

Methods in Medical Ethics

Jeremy Sugarman, MD, and Daniel P.
Sulmasy, MD, OFM, eds.

Georgetown University Press, August 2001, 314
pp., \$39.95 (paperback)

IN THIS COLLECTION, EDITOR-PHYSICIANS Sugarman and Sulmasy are promoting methodological excellence in various systems of ethics research. Their book encourages something more than *multi-disciplinary* approaches; they offer a vision of actual *interdisciplinary* discourse.

Medical ethics, a subdivision of bioethics, is not a discipline in its own right but a field of interest to many disciplines. The editors point out that the methods that influence medical ethics "derive from the humanities and the social sciences, including anthropology, economics, epidemiology, health services research, history, law, medicine, nursing, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and theology" (p. vii). The contrib-

utors want readers to know the difference between scholarship and chaff in American ethical research and analysis.

The book is an assemblage of 16 engaging chapters by 24 U.S.-based writers, including the editors. By design the contents are not exhaustive. For example, art and literature are not specifically considered because they do not create generalized abstract knowledge, explanations, or predictions.

Presentations are divided into three main sections: overview, methods, and relationships and applications. Chapters 3 through 13 each take a disciplinary perspective: philosophy; religion and theology; professional codes; legal methods; casuistry; history; qualitative, ethnographic, or experimental methods; quantitative surveys; economics; and decision science. Writers describe each discipline's research interests, techniques, strengths, and limitations and conclude with notes on resources and training. The last two chapters, about physician-assisted suicide and genetic testing, demonstrate how interdisciplinary dialogue enhances the definition

and resolution of difficult issues or cases.

Sugarman and Sulmasy assembled this project because they could find nothing like it on the market. They wanted something for graduate students, scholars, clinicians, and editors that both exposes and evaluates current research tools. They proceed in such a way that readers will understand the poverty of any discussion that unwittingly overlooks available contributions. In fact, one can sense the contributors' joy as they address the reader. Each is happy for the chance to tell the reader what makes his or her own interests special and indispensable to the field. Professional enthusiasm keeps position statements lively without being overstated.

I have several reasons to recommend this book. First, the book's design and contents support the conversation between quantitative and qualitative research at several levels. Chapters may emphasize one or the other, but with an eye to complementarity. Experienced teachers point out common mistakes (whether by construction or interpretation) made by those untrained in particular disciplines. Second, the collection consciously deals with the impact of modern scientific research and the evolving rights of patients and research subjects. Third, after the September 11 hijackings and attacks on New York City and the Pentagon, we need to examine the possibility of ethics. We have a new experience from which to view the post-modern critique that denies the validity of any shared (or shareable) foundational moral theory.

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BOOK BRIEFS

Elder Care: A Six Step Guide to Balancing Work and Family

John Paul Marosy, *Bringing Elder Care Home Publishing, 2002, Worcester, MA, 82 pp., \$14.95 (soft cover)*

Pressed for time, anxious about their own aging, and often raising children, over 25 million Americans are feeling the elder care and work squeeze. Suddenly, they must deal with the demands of work, family, and the pressing health and personal care needs of an elderly relative. With this new role thrust upon them, many older caregivers find themselves totally unprepared and lacking any significant help from others. In *Elder Care: A Six Step Guide to Balancing Work and Family*, author John Paul Marosy offers a balanced solution to this predicament. Starting with a statement of four principles of effective caregiving, he provides the reader with an easy-to-use, step-by-step approach to creating a personal action plan. Marosy gives the caregiver the tools (useful checklists, tips, and simple-to-complete forms) needed to cope. Developed with the input of national experts in nursing, elder law and family caregiving, this book provides immediate help via carefully selected toll-free numbers and websites; suggestions for handling communication in the workplace; guidance on making the most of programs and benefits offered by the employer; references to learn about legal rights under the Family and Medical Leave Act; and a resource guide with definitions and descriptions of key programs and services.