Book Reviews

What Price Mental Health? The Ethics and Politics of Setting Priorities

Phillip J. Boyle and Daniel Callahan, eds.

Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC, 1995, 243 pp., $45 (hardcover)

THIS BOOK IS THE OUTCOME OF A TWO-year project on Priorities in Mental Health Services undertaken by the Hastings Center, Briarcliff Manor, NY. Funded by the MacArthur Foundation, the project brought together an interdisciplinary group of clinicians, scholars, and public health services. As Gerald Grob's essay on the history of mental health services shows, our country has expressed its changing attitudes toward mental health and mental illness through a series of contrasting approaches to treatment. This book, edited by Philip J. Boyle and Daniel Callahan, attempts to make sense of the variety of approaches and to propose recommendations that might guide public policymakers today.

The book's overall focus is provided by Boyle and Callahan, codirectors of the project, who summarize project conclusions in the preface. This summary, which consists of 12 brief statements, identifies the book's specific overarching themes. These themes are drawn out more fully in the coeditors' chapter, "Minds and Hearts: Priorities in Mental Health Services." Curiously, however, we are told in the preface that "the report and its conclusions. . . are solely those of the project's codirectors" (p.vii). To this extent, the project seems to have been unsuccessful in reaching consensus even among the project participants—not a good sign for an enterprise that seeks eventual consensus within society as a whole.

The book consists of a series of essays loosely held together by the framework provided by the codirectors. These essays range from pure history to analysis of public policy to philosophical discussion of theories of equity and justice. All the authors appear to share several general assumptions: that healthcare resources are limited, that current distribution of resources involves covert priority setting, and that it would be better (whether medically, politically, or ethically) if priority setting were conducted more rationally and openly.

Given these assumptions, the essays address how priorities should be set. Some authors focus on the processes a local community or state might use to develop coherent and publicly acceptable priorities for allocating treatment resources. Other authors tackle difficult conceptual, philosophical, and ethical questions: Should the focus be on treating mental illness or on promoting mental health? How should treatment effectiveness be assessed, particularly in comparing acute conditions with chronic illnesses? Is it better to focus public resources on treating a small number of severely ill persons or a larger number who are less seriously affected?

The book consistently supports the

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I Tell You a Mystery: Life, Death, and Eternity

Johann Christoph Arnold, Plough Publishing House, Farmington, PA, 1996, 155 pp., $12 (paperback)

Every human faces vulnerability, illness, aging, and dying. The author, a senior elder of the Bruderhof, a Christian community movement, draws on stories of people he has known and counseled to demonstrate how suffering can be given meaning. He addresses the question of how to maintain hope in our current culture of isolation and, through faith, find comfort and strength. In addition to his human stories, the author includes meditations on universal themes such as despair, faith, and grief.

Good Care, Painful Choices: Medical Ethics for Ordinary People

Richard J. Devine, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1996, 242 pp., $14.95 (paperback)

Writing for students, discussion groups, pastoral ministers, healthcare professionals, and the general public, the author introduces key current medical-moral issues. The five sections of the book cover basic moral concepts, such as personhood and conscience; questions concerning the beginning of life, such as handicapped newborns and *in vitro* fertilization; ethics involved in organ transplants and genetics; end-of-life concerns, such as advance directives and euthanasia; and social health issues, such as healthcare access and reform.

So You've Been "Integrated": Now What? Opportunities for Physicians Practicing in Managed Care Systems

Richard E. Thompson, MD, American College of Physician Executives, Tampa, FL, 1996, 94 pp., $38 (paperback)

What is the role of the practicing physician/physician executive team in an integrated system? Writing in an easy, informal style, the author discusses organizational, clinical, and patient-care roles for practicing physicians in integrated systems and offers guidance to physicans who may wonder what lies ahead. Chapters cover choosing an organizational role, the characteristics of sought-after practicing physicians, using practice guidelines, and the participation of practicing physicians in management.

position that mental health is inextricably linked with physical health. As a result, authors advocate that priorities be set simultaneously for the treatment of physical and mental health conditions, that they be established by similar criteria and procedural mechanisms, and that they be viewed equally when distributing public resources. At the time the project group was meeting, the Clinton plan for a national healthcare program was under discussion. The book commends the Clinton plan for its mandate on mental healthcare coverage, but criticizes the president's plan for setting more stringent limits on the treatment of mental health problems than on the treatment of physical conditions.

The chapter that describes the development of the Oregon Health Plan, particularly its incorporation of mental health services, is superb. This chapter provides a concrete example of public processes and philosophical debates that are presented more abstractly in other chapters. Its authors, all involved in the public policy process in Oregon, show that it is possible to integrate the expertise of professionals and the values of the community, to balance the acute needs of a few with the less acute needs of many, to identify publicly acceptable measures of effectiveness, and to consider costs without disrespecting human values. The success of the citizens of Oregon in reaching public consensus on the allocation of public resources is impressive and encouraging.

Readers who are neither public policy buffs nor philosophers will find much of this book rather difficult reading. At various points authors assume that readers are familiar with John Rawls's work, with other theories of justice, and with philosophical debates on the allocation of resources. Even the nonphilosophical essays are conceptually dense and overwhelmingly abstract.

The book as a whole could have benefited from the inclusion of case studies involving specific mental health conditions or patients. Such scenarios would have illuminated the abstract questions posed by various authors, and making the issues more compelling. Note, for example, a series of excellent case studies that illustrate the difficulty of defining "medically necessary treatment" in psychiatry, published in the Hastings Center Report at about the same time this book was in production (James E. Sabin and Norman Daniels, "Determining 'Medical Necessity' in Mental Health Practice," vol. 24, no. 6, pp. 5-13).

This book is a good first step toward an essential but elusive goal: establishing and implementing publicly shared priorities for treating mental health conditions. But it is only a first step. Others who can accept its assumptions and its broad but well-argued conclusions must carry the discussion further if the project on Priorities in Mental Health Services is to bear fruit.

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Making Moral Choices: An Introduction

Rev. Mark Miller, CSsR

AS HEALTHCARE BECOMES EVER MORE complex in both its organization and its delivery of direct patient care, so too do the attendant moral and ethical issues. To deal with this growing complexity, healthcare institutions everywhere have established ethics committees, while professional caregivers attend seminars and courses to increase their knowledge of ethical decision making. Yet it is the average citizen, ultimately, who actually makes healthcare decisions.

Rev. Mark Miller, CSsR, has written *Making Moral Choices* to help average people, especially young adults, make sound moral decisions. Yet the book can also be used by professionals and others

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who work in a healthcare setting. Through the six chapters of this short book, Fr. Miller provides theory in clear, simple language and then illustrates his point with examples from everyday life, especially from healthcare.

The first chapter introduces ethics and morality, including a discussion of ends and means and the factors and process involved in human choice. Natural law and human freedom are covered in the second chapter, along with civil and Church laws and regulations. The third chapter defines conscience and relates it to personal choice. Most of this chapter describes the formation of conscience through the acquisition of appropriate knowledge and development of character. Chapter 3 also includes a section on human feelings and their impact on conscience.

In chapter 4, Fr. Miller discusses six parallel patterns that people use in moral reasoning (moral arguments, case studies, stories, analysis of motives, example, and the voice of authority), noting that each can be useful but none is absolute.

Particularly valuable is chapter 5, on the social context in which individual choices are made. Here Fr. Miller reflects on the deep, often subliminal, influence of the dominant culture of our society. The sections on social justice and social sin are especially thought provoking, but topics often neglected in medical ethics discussions.

The final chapter considers the faith dimension of moral decision making. Fr. Miller emphasizes that efforts to exclude religion and faith from the public debate on morality are themselves based on a kind of faith, even if that "faith" is atheism.

Although it is intended for the general reader, this book could be useful for members of healthcare ethics committees who need to step away from exclusive concern about particular ethical issues. Fr. Miller's book offers a means for committee members to reflect on their own moral decision-making approach and that of the patients and families whom they serve. The questions for reflection and some of the exercises that follow each chapter will stimulate dialogue in ethics committee (despite occasional references to "your school").

The book could also be a useful tool in values education among healthcare facility staff, including nonprofessionals, who are often aware of decisions being made, but puzzled as to their rightness or wrongness. Pastoral caregivers will want to have extra copies of this book on hand for patients, residents, or family members who want to reflect more deeply on the choices facing them.

The author's ecumenical outlook makes the book appropriate for persons of any faith. The briefly annotated reading lists that follow each chapter offer guidance for further education in moral decision making.

One unfortunate aspect is the way Fr. Miller formulates the principle on withholding or withdrawing medical treatment. His use of the phrase "when a person is dying" could easily cause confusion in this otherwise clear discussion of a key ethical issue.

On the whole, however, *Making Moral Choices* is a straightforward, simply expressed, beautifully designed, and well-organized book. It is inexpensive and adaptable to a wide audience—both healthcare professionals and the general public.

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