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Devising an Ethics of Technology

“Things are in the saddle, and ride mankind,” wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson of the early machine age. What might that philosopher say about an age in which technology increasingly dominates the practice of medicine? Do things now ride health care?

James F. Drane, PhD, our guest editor for this issue, has put together a special section dealing with the question of technology and ethics in health care. In the section's lead article, Drane argues that unrestricted technological development threatens our planet and he calls for a dialogue out of which an ethics of technological limits might grow. Such an ethics, in Drane's view, should be rooted in the Catholic tradition of Natural Law.

Responding to Drane's call, Courtney Campbell, PhD, discusses the traditional Protestant view of technology, and Rabbi Elliott N. Dorff, PhD, does the same for the traditional Jewish view. Daniel Callahan, PhD, takes a slightly different approach to the issue, pointing out that, whatever else might be said about it, a thoughtless attitude toward medical technology could well bankrupt U.S. health care.

WANTED: "HUMAN ELEMENT" ARTICLES

Regular *Health Progress* readers know that the last page of each issue features one of two departments, "Final Say" or "The Human Element." Articles appearing under the first headline typically deal with some prominent *issue* in the Catholic health ministry. "Human Element" articles, on the other hand, usually describe a personal *experience*, often clinical, that happened to someone involved in Catholic health care.

In recent years, we've received far more articles about issues than experiences, so we've published far more "Final Say" than "Human Element" pieces. We're not complaining about that, but we are fond of articles about personal experiences and would like to see more of them. If you have a story that you think might fit, consider sending it to us.