

Health Care Partnerships: What's at Stake

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In the currently strained health care environment, Catholic hospitals and facilities have increasingly looked to partnerships to solve service dilemmas caused by financial constraints. Joint purchase of technology and services, co-sponsored integrated delivery networks, and health maintenance organization sponsorship are just a few ways health care organizations are working together to solve economic and service delivery problems. At times, these partnerships involve both Catholic and other-than-Catholic facilities.

The special section in this issue of *Health Progress* evaluates the nuances and moral implications of partnerships between Catholic and other-than-Catholic health care facilities, particularly in light of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' June 1991 revision to the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*. Part Six of the *Directives*, "Forming New Partnerships with Health Care Organizations and Providers," contains important implications for Catholic facilities considering entering into such arrangements.

Ron Hamel, PhD, begins the section with a comparison of the June 2001 revision with the previous 1994 edition, which contained an Appendix on the principle of cooperation. Fr. Kevin O'Rourke, OP, JCD, STM, continues the discussion by first explaining the principle of cooperation and then applying it to a frequently asked question: Is it possible for Catholic health care facilities to cooperate with health care facilities or individuals that provide contraceptive sterilizations?

Fr. Thomas Kopfensteiner, STD, examines the various phases that are entailed in analyzing potential partnerships by analyzing a five-fold process at work behind the structuring of potential arrangements. Closing out the discussion, Peter J. Cataldo, PhD, and John M. Haas, PhD, STL, lay a groundwork of fundamental concepts and present ethical guidelines for evaluating collaborative arrangements.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

As always, we are interested to hear your opinions on the topics we address in *Health Progress*. Letters commenting on our features, special sections, and columns are welcome at hpeditor@chausa.org.