

The Journal of the Society for the Study of Medical Ethics

The *Journal of Medical Ethics* was established in 1975, with a multi-disciplinary editorial board, to promote the study of contemporary medico-moral problems. The editorial board has as its aims the encouragement of a high academic standard for this developing subject and the influencing of the quality of both professional and public discussion. The *journal* is published quarterly. The *journal* includes papers on all aspects of medical ethics, analyses ethical concepts and theories and features case conferences and comment on clinical practice. It includes book reviews and details of lectures and symposia on issues raised by the practice of medicine.

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Papers submitted for publication should be sent in triplicate to: The Editor, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, Tavistock House North, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9LG. Rejected manuscripts are not returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, or international reply coupon. Papers should be in double-spaced typewriting on one side of the paper only. On a separate sheet a brief entry for 'Contributors to this issue' should be supplied, containing the title of the author's present post, degrees and/or professional qualifications, and any other relevant information.

Four copies of the *journal* will be sent to authors free of charge after their papers are published. Offprints of individual papers may be bought from The Publisher, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, Tavistock House East, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR.

In March 1981 the *JME* adopted a simplified 'Vancouver style' for references: details are given in various issues including December 1982, p 218. They are also available from the editorial office. The full text of the 'Vancouver Agreement' was published in the *British Medical Journal* in 1982; Volume 284; 1725/1814. As the 'Vancouver style' is incompatible with the long established style of references for legal articles, lawyers should use their own standard style, but avoid abbreviations so as to facilitate reference by others. The *journal* is multidisciplinary and papers should be in clear jargon-free English, accessible to any intelligent reader.

Notice to subscribers

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Thematic review and index

The thematic review of past issues appears in the June issue each year and an index to each volume appears in the December issue.

Hardly any histories of lesbian mothers and their children are on the record. But they are amongst us and they deserve the same care from professional carers as do other mothers and their children.

There are, too, gay men who parent and there are lesbian women and gay men who, though not biological parents themselves, are necessarily involved in child-care by virtue of their partners' parenthood. And there are men who donate semen for the insemination of women who take on themselves the responsibility of conception in order to exercise their right to reproduce and to bring up children. None of the considered and intricate planning undertaken by all these people is mentioned in the vast literature about the family, either in professional or popular publications. Hardly any of this material finds its way into discussions and seminars about family policy, about education, about poverty and so on.

In addition, cruel and heartless lobbying from powerful religious and political quarters – aimed against the human rights of adult homosexual women and men – is ongoing, despite its lack of scientific objectivity. Such pressure is also richly funded. The onus is therefore on the rational, well-informed and compassionate professionals in our caring institutions to consider how they will respond to those of our number born to homosexual parents. Removing the right to reproduce is both immoral and impractical. Neglecting the need of parents for normal support is both discriminatory and cruel. Removing their children from the natural custody of their parents – merely on grounds of the parents' sexuality – is a monstrous interference, with consequences for the children which are no better than the fate of children who are unwanted by their natural mothers. What is needed is education, not legislation.

There are no data – scientific, psychological, or social – which could support the thesis that homosexual

people should not have the right to reproduce and to bring up their children. There are only differing opinions and prejudices, which are not capable of sustaining the rigorous intellectual analysis upon which any given body of knowledge must rest. Hitler didn't like homosexuals. Or the handicapped. Or Jews. His answer was to attempt to exterminate them. Our cruelties are not so extreme. What we do is simply to ignore groups of people whose existence troubles us.

I submit, humbly but confidently, that using an argument to exclude adult people from parenthood which is based solely on the definition of an individual's sexual practice, is untenable and uncivilised. Adult people have in their gift the right to dispose of their own reproductive potential as they themselves think suitable. And the rest of us share, all of us, in the responsibility to care for all those committed to parenting and for the children for whom they care.

References and notes

- (1) Hanscombe G E, Forster J. *Rocking the cradle*. London: Peter Owen, 1981 and Sheba Feminist Publishers, 1982.
- (2) Green R. Sexual identity of 37 children raised by homosexual or transexual parents. *American journal of psychiatry* 1978; 6: 692–697.
- (3) See project comparing the psychosexual development of lesbians' children with that of single non-lesbians' children, undertaken by Michael Rutter, Susan Golombok and Ann Spencer, of the Institute of Psychiatry in London. Not all the data is yet published – to my present knowledge – but see reference (1) 85–87.
- (4) In February of this year the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of a lesbian mother retaining custody of her two daughters. The case made newspaper headlines, not least because such rulings have been so rare.
- (5) Identity and details withheld.
- (6) Identities and details withheld.

Readers' responses invited

The editorial board welcomes suggestions about topics readers would like to see in the journal and is happy to receive constructive criticism of its contents. Please write, as succinctly as possible, to the Editor.

to be forthcoming, it is necessary for physicians, clergy and other interested persons to enter into dialogue and to explore together their different but complementary ministries. If we take seriously the relationship between religion and health implicit in our language, then representatives of both realms must see each other as allies in the service of the whole person. Anything less would be both bad religion and bad medicine.

References

- (1) Leff S, Leff V. *From witchcraft to world health*. New York: Macmillan, 1956.
- (2) Haggard H W. *Mystery, magic and medicine – the rise of medicine from superstition to science*. New York: Doubleday, 1933.
- (3) Genesis 1:1. *The Bible*.
- (4) Genesis 1:28. *The Bible*.
- (5) Psalm 24:1. *The Bible*.
- (6) Crawford R. You are dangerous to your health: the ideology of victim blaming. *International journal of health services* 1977; 7:663–680.
- (7) King W L. *In the hope of nibbana*. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1964.
- (8) Matthew 25:40. *The Bible*.
- (9) Soni R L. Buddhism in relation to the practice of medicine. In: Millard D W, ed. *Religion and medicine* –3. London: SCM Press, 1976: 135–151.
- (10) May W. Code and covenant or philanthropy and contract? In: Reiser S J, Dyck A J, Curran W J, eds. *Ethics in medicine – historical perspectives and contemporary concerns*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1977: 65–76.
- (11) Micah 6:8. *The Bible*.
- (12) Outka G. Social justice and equal access to health care. *Perspectives in biology and medicine* 1975; 18:185–203.
- (13) Pellegrino E D. *Humanism and the physician*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1979.
- (14) Psalm 8:5. *The Bible*.
- (15) Sevensky R L. Religion and illness: an outline of their relationship. *Southern medical journal* 1981; 74:745–750.

Contributors to this issue

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Lectures and symposia

Tuesday 4 October

LMG symposium: PREPARATION FOR NUCLEAR WARFARE. 6 pm, Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham

Thursday 6 October

LMG symposium: INFORMED CONSENT IN CHILDBIRTH: DO PROFESSIONALS TAKE TOO MUCH FOR GRANTED? 5.45 pm, Guy's Hospital

Monday 10 October

NMG: NHS V PRIVATE MEDICINE. 7 pm, New Lecture Theatre, Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle

Tuesday 11 October

LMG symposium: CONGENITAL ABNORMALITIES: WHOSE BABY SHALL LIVE? 5.45 pm, King's College Hospital

Wednesday 12 October

SMG: ABORTION. Early evening. Medical School, Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield

Thursday 13 October

LMG symposium: SEX THERAPY ON THE NHS: ARE THERE MORAL OBJECTIONS? 5.45 pm, The London Hospital

Monday 17 October

MMG: THE ETHICS OF *IN VITRO* FERTILISATION. 5.30 pm, Lecture Theatre 3, Medical School, Oxford Road, Manchester

Tuesday 18 October

LMG symposium: CHILDREN IN TERMINAL CARE. 5.45 pm, The Middlesex Hospital

Thursday 20 October

LMG symposium: DRUG DISASTERS: AN INEVITABLE RESULT OF PROGRESS? 5.45 pm, Royal Free Hospital

Saturday 22 October

AMG: OUR PRIDE AND JOY - A DAY CONFERENCE ON ASPECTS OF INFERTILITY. 9.45 am, Foresterhill Medical School, Aberdeen

Tuesday 25 October

LMG symposium: PROFESSIONAL SECRETS: NO PLACE IN THE BRAVE NEW MEDICAL WORLD. 5.45 pm, St Bartholomew's Hospital

LMG inaugural lecture: TREATMENT OF PATIENTS WITH TERMINAL MALIGNANT DISEASE. 5.45 pm, Clinical Sciences Building, St James's University Hospital, Leeds

Thursday 27 October

LMG symposium: ECT: CAN THE NURSE OPT OUT OF CONTROVERSIAL TREATMENT? 6 pm, St George's Hospital

DMG: ALTERNATIVES TO THE MEDICAL RAT RACE. 5.30 pm, Lecture Theatre 1, Ninewells Hospital, Dundee

OMF: CONTRACEPTION IS A MALE CONSPIRACY. 8.30 pm, Green College, Woodstock Road, Oxford

Monday 31 October

MMG: DRUGS - FOR PATIENTS OR PROFIT? A CONFLICT OF OPINIONS. 5.30 pm, Lecture Theatre 3, Medical School, Oxford Road, Manchester

Tuesday 1 November

LMG symposium: SCHIZOPHRENIA: DOES THE PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSIS EXIST? 5.45 pm, St Mary's Hospital

Thursday 3 November

LMG symposium: NEW SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES: WILL THEY CHANGE HUMAN BEHAVIOUR? 5.45 pm, St Thomas's Hospital

Monday 7 November

NMG: DRUGGING THE THIRD WORLD. 7 pm, New Lecture Theatre, Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle

Tuesday 8 November

LMG symposium: INTELLIGENCE AND THE SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED. 5.45 pm, University College Hospital

Wednesday 9 November

SMG: BREAST CANCER. Early evening. Medical School, Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield

Thursday 10 November

LMG symposium: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: ISN'T IT TIME TO THINK AGAIN ABOUT ABORTION? 6.30 pm, Westminster Hospital

Tuesday 15 November

LMG symposium: THE MEDICALISATION OF NORMAL LIFE CRISES. 6 pm, Charing Cross Hospital

Thursday 17 November

LMG symposium: MADNESS OR ECCENTRICITY: HOW SOCIETY REACTS TO UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR. 5.45 pm, Guy's Hospital

OMF: SMOKING AND HEALTH – WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY. THE ETHICS OF PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE. 8.30 pm, Green College, Woodstock Road, Oxford

Saturday 19 November

MMG: ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE WORKSHOP. 11 am, Lecture Theatre 3, Medical School, Oxford Road, Manchester

Tuesday 22 November

LMG symposium: THE CAUSES OF ALCOHOLISM. 5.45 pm, King's College Hospital

LMG seminar: THE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES IN THE NHS. 5.45 pm, Clarendon Wing, Lecture Theatre, Leeds General Infirmary, Leeds

Wednesday 23 November

SMG: NUCLEAR WAR. Early evening. Medical School, Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield

Thursday 24 November

LMG symposium: INFALLIBLE FALLACIES: THE POWER OF THE FORENSIC SCIENTIST. 5.45 pm, The London Hospital

AMG: THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE NURSE. 7.30 pm, Foresterhill College of Nursing, Aberdeen

DMG: HEALTH EDUCATION – POOR RELATION? 5.30 pm, Lecture Theatre 1, Ninewells Hospital, Dundee

Monday 28 November

MMG: GENETIC COUNSELLING: A CASE PRESENTATION. 5.30 pm, Lecture Theatre 3, Medical School, Oxford Road, Manchester

Tuesday 29 November

LMG symposium: ADVANCES IN GENETIC ENGINEERING. 5.45 pm, The Middlesex Hospital

Thursday 1 December

LMG symposium: UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION. 5.45 pm, Royal Free Hospital

Monday 5 December

NMG: BACK TO BEDLAM? CHANGES IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE. 7 pm. Venue to be announced.

Tuesday 6 December

LMG symposium: THE NURSE PRACTITIONER: FILLING A GAP IN CARE. 5.45 pm, St Bartholomew's Hospital

Thursday 8 December

LMG symposium: CHILDREN IN CARE: ARE SOCIAL WORKERS ABUSING THEIR AUTHORITY? 6 pm, St George's Hospital

Tuesday 13 December

LMG seminar: HANDICAPPED BABIES, WHO DECIDES? 5.45 pm, Clinical Sciences Building, St James's University Hospital, Leeds

Further information on lectures and symposia

Further details and complete lecture lists are available from the secretaries of the Medical Groups listed on the following page. Please send a stamped, addressed A4 envelope.

Medical groups

ABERDEEN MEDICAL GROUP

Mrs Elaine Foreman, Clinical Research Centre, Cornhill Road, Aberdeen AB9 22H

Dr Charles Crichton, c/o The Aberdeen Medical Group, Medical Buildings, Foresterhill, Aberdeen AB9 2ZO

BIRMINGHAM MEDICAL GROUP

Dr Anthony Parsons, Department of Obstetrics, Birmingham Maternity Hospital, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15

BRISTOL MEDICAL GROUP

Fiona Fawthrop, 52A Pembroke Road, Clifton, Bristol

Steven Webber, 21 Hampton Park, Cotham, Bristol

CAMBRIDGE MEDICAL GROUP

Mr Patrick Doyle, Department of Urology, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Hill's Road, Cambridge

CARDIFF MEDICAL GROUP

Patrick Coyle, 20 Long Oaks Court, Sketty, Swansea SA2 0QH

DUNDEE MEDICAL GROUP

Dr David B Walsh, Consultant in Biochemical Medicine, Ninewells Hospital, Dundee

EDINBURGH MEDICAL GROUP

Philip Cochia, Department of Chest Diseases, Northern General Hospital, Ferry Road, Edinburgh EH5 2DQ

GLASGOW MEDICAL GROUP

Mr Sam Galbraith, Institute of Neurological Sciences, Southern General Hospital, Glasgow

LEEDS MEDICAL GROUP

Stephen Singleton, Department of Medicine, Leeds General Infirmary, Leeds

Robert Wright, Charge Nurse, Accident and Emergency Unit, Leeds General Infirmary, Leeds

LEICESTER MEDICAL GROUP

Dr Liam Donaldson, Department of Community Health, Clinical Sciences Building, Leicester Royal Infirmary, PO Box 65, Leicester LE2 7LX

LIVERPOOL MEDICAL GROUP

Roger Cudmore, Alder Hey, Children's Hospital, Eaton Road, Liverpool

LONDON MEDICAL GROUP

Director of Studies, Edward Shoter, Room 68, Tavistock House North, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9LG

MANCHESTER MEDICAL GROUP

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NEWCASTLE MEDICAL GROUP

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OXFORD MEDICAL FORUM

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SHEFFIELD MEDICAL GROUP

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SOUTHAMPTON MEDICAL GROUP

Dr Barbara Leppard, Department of Dermatology, Graham Road, Royal South Hants Hospital, Southampton SO9 4PE

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Should more people die at home?

Ann Bowling

The right to lesbian parenthood

Gillian Hanscombe

Abortion and euthanasia of Down's syndrome children – the parents' views

Billie Shepperdson

Competent but irrational refusal of ECT – must it be accepted?

Richard Sherlock, Harry Lesser and P J Taylor

Plus: The right to be allowed to die • Can claims for 'wrongful life' be justified? • The religious foundations of health care: a conceptual approach • Contemporary aspects of medical ethics in France • Book reviews • News and notes • Correspondence • Lectures and symposia • Medical groups