HEALTH CARE ETHICS

Critical Issues for the 21st Century

FOURTH EDITION

Edited by

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Writing is always a collaboration. While writers have unique ways of seeing the world, they are influenced by their experiences, research, and education. Therefore, I dedicate this edition of Health Care Ethics: Critical Issues for the 21st Century to all those who contributed to chapters in this work and those who supported me through its creation. First, there is my immediate family, Grant, Kate, Emery Aidan, and Morrigan Leigh, who listened and encouraged. There are also colleagues, relatives, and friends who provided feedback and a lift of spirit when I needed it. Finally, there is my publisher, Michael Brown; my coeditor, Beth Furlong; and my Jones & Bartlett Learning editor, Danielle Bessette. They each added much to the quality and integrity of this work.

–Eileen E. Morrison

Mentors facilitate one’s journey. My gratitude goes to Dr. Amy Haddad and colleagues at Creighton University’s Center for Health Policy and Ethics. I value the ever-present support of my husband, Robert Ramaley. Furthering the ethics education of others with this book is possible because of the collegiality and support of my coeditor, Dr. Eileen Morrison. It has been a professional pleasure to work with her.

–Beth Furlong
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Dr. Morrison has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in ethics and provided workshops to professionals, including those in medicine, nursing, clinical laboratory services, health information, and dentistry. She has also authored articles and chapters on ethics for a variety of publications. In addition, she is the author of *Ethics in Health Administration: A Practical Approach for Decision Makers* (3rd ed.), published by Jones & Bartlett Learning, and a children’s book called *The Adventures of Emery the Candy Man*.

**Beth Furlong** is an associate professor emerita and adjunct faculty in the Center for Health Policy and Ethics at Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska, USA. Her academic background includes a diploma, BSN, and MS in nursing, an MA and PhD in political science, and a JD. Dr. Furlong has taught graduate ethics courses and provided continuing education unit (CEU) workshops for nurses on ethics issues. Her publications are in the areas of health policy, vulnerable populations, and ethics.
The history of health care is filled with change. For example, providers and systems have embraced changes that lead to cures for disease, new ways to care for patients, regulation, and funding. However, during the creation of this fourth edition of *Health Care Ethics: Critical Issues for the 21st Century*, the healthcare system has been in change overload. It must address changes from technology, the emphasis on patient-centered care, and fiscal challenges. It is also trying to address the truly unknown. For example, legislators continue to consider the appeal of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, while others are debating its repair. Since healthcare funding, programs, and regulations are linked to this legislation, the healthcare system will continue to engage in multilayers of contingency planning for survival and service.

Readers will also notice changes in this edition as its authors consider the implications of change with respect to their content areas. However, the fourth edition still reflects the organizational model that was used in previous editions. Therefore, the Greek temple image remains its organizational framework as a model for addressing ethics issues in health care (see Figure FM.1).

Like all buildings, this temple needs a firm foundation and ethics theory and principles serve this purpose. It also makes sense if one is going to be able to analyze the ethical
implications of an issue. An appropriate analogy would be that a surgeon cannot be successful unless he or she understands human anatomy. Likewise, a student who wishes to analyze the ethics of a particular issue in healthcare must have knowledge of theories and principles of ethics. Dr. Summers provides a strong foundation for applying ethics in the chapters “Theory of Healthcare Ethics” and “Principles of Healthcare Ethics” of this edition.

The three main pillars of the temple model illustrate sections to organize the ethics issues faced in healthcare situations. Note that the center pillar represents individuals who are called patients in the healthcare system. This is because the healthcare system would not function unless there are patients who need care. The remaining two pillars represent issues relevant to healthcare organizations and society and reflect challenges to the future of healthcare organizations and their ability to care for patients.

Given the current environment in the healthcare system, the potential for chapters and their content was extensive. The challenge for the writers was to select example of topics that represent ethics challenges for the future and avoid a non-readable tome. While it was not possible to address each potential issue, topics were updated and expanded within a 16-chapter format. For example, under the “Critical Issues for Individuals” section, attention was given to the most vulnerable patients. Therefore, there are chapters related to the moral status of embryos and infants and reproductive technology. To address patients at the other end of the life continuum, major revisions were made to the discussion of aging patients and the ethics of their care. The other pillars of healthcare organizations and society also include major revisions of existing chapters. New chapters that reflect current ethics issues in today’s environment have also been added. For example, there are chapters on the ethics of health information management and the ethics of epidemics.

Health care is truly in the epoch of change, but ethics will always matter. Even experts in ethics and health care cannot predict the future of health care with absolute certainty. However, this does not mean that ethics should not be part of making decisions amid a challenging environment. In fact, the ethics of what we do maybe even more important because health care is always held to a higher standard, even when it must meet unknown challenges.

However, Morrison and Furlong are optimistic that students will continue to ask themselves, “Is this the best ethical decision to make?” and “How do I know that this it is the best?” as they progress through their careers. Patients, healthcare organizations, and the community rely on their answers so that health care can be patient-centered, cost-effective, and fiscally responsible. What a challenging combination to face in the epoch of change!