

## Monograph 1

### **Introduction to Medical Ethics and Professionalism**

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I have put together six monographs that will outline, with references, some basic tenets and issues covered by medical ethics. These monographs are suggestive and not exhaustive. Each of the issues raised by the monographs will be expanded with more detail through at least three more resources available to you in your four years of education and training in the medical school. There will be formal ethics sessions in the first two years incorporated in each of the four blocks of the first two-year curriculum. These sessions will be facilitated by faculty with special training and experience in bioethics. The third and fourth years of training is clinically oriented. So also will be your continued ethics training. You will participate in formal and informal ethics rounds in your clerkships. You will be working alongside experienced clinicians who face ethical dilemmas on a daily basis. You will also have a capstone paper in the fourth year in which you will write a paper on an issue or theme within ethics and professionalism that has come out of your increasing experience as a practitioner.

Our library also has a great resource. Ethics and Professionalism has its own site in the on-line library site. Just log on to the Skelton Libraries Site. Then click on the area named "Databases & Resources". Then click on "Resources by Subject". Then go to "Ethics and Professionalism". There you will find the following:

*Encyclopedia of Global Bioethics*. This is an expansive encyclopedia with full-length entries on hundreds of topics. Each entry has a complete bibliography. It is entirely on-line and available whenever you need it. It is a fantastic resource.

*Hastings Center Guidelines for Discussions on Life-Sustaining Treatment.* This is an invaluable resource put together by a leading ethics resource center and publisher of the *Hastings Center Report* a quarterly publication also available in the library.

*Practical Ethics for Students, Interns, and Residents: A Short Reference Manual 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.* While this short reference manual is available on this site, it is also available for downloading on a smart phone through Amazon and its free Kindle app. I urge you to consider downloading this (\$9.99) because you will find it convenient and useful. It is also available in a paperback version four by six inches and just 90 pages. It is designed to carry in your white coat pocket. Either version is useful but it is also available on our library site.

Your ethics faculty will also be posting other items that will be useful for you as references. I encourage you to consult with the resources there and check in to see what new items have been posted.

Finally, medical ethics is subversive. I have just written what many of us only think. Medical ethics is subversive. What I mean by that is that so much of medical training is the necessary learning about organ systems. Learning about organ systems gone wrong. Learning how to pass tests. Step 1. Step 2. Step 3 and all those quizzes in between. Medical ethics calls us back to the Hippocratic virtue of tending to those who cannot tend to themselves. It is about the patient. It is about the patient who has a story. It is about a patient who has secrets some of which may be revealed to you in a sacred time and a sacred space. Organs belong to people, some of whom are loved, some of whom are alone all of whom feel pain and know of, even if only vaguely, their own death. You all are called to learn about lab results and how organs work and what nostrums to prescribe but all of the knowledge is a trust you have been given by the patient. I end with the thoughts of a patient in a poem by Randall Jarrell.

## The X-Ray Waiting Room

I am dressed in my big shoes and wrinkled socks  
And one of the light blue, much-laundered smocks  
The men and women of this country wear.  
All of us miss our own underwear  
And the old days. These new, plain, mean  
Days of pain and care, this routine  
Misery has made us into cases, the one case  
The one doctor cures forever...the face  
The patients have in common hopes without hope  
For something outside the machine—its wife,  
Its husband—to burst in and hand it life;  
But when the door opens it's another smock.  
It looks at us, we look at it. Our little flock  
Of blue-smocked sufferers, in naked equality,  
Longs for each nurse and doctor who goes by  
Well and dressed, to make friends with, single out the I  
That used to be, but we are indistinguishable.  
It is better to lie upon a table,  
A dye in my spine. The roentgenologist  
Introduces me to a kind man, a specialist  
In spines like mine: the lights go out, he rotates me.  
My myelogram is negative. This elates me,  
And I take off my smock in joy, put on  
My own pajamas, my own dressing gown,  
And ride back to my own room, 601.

