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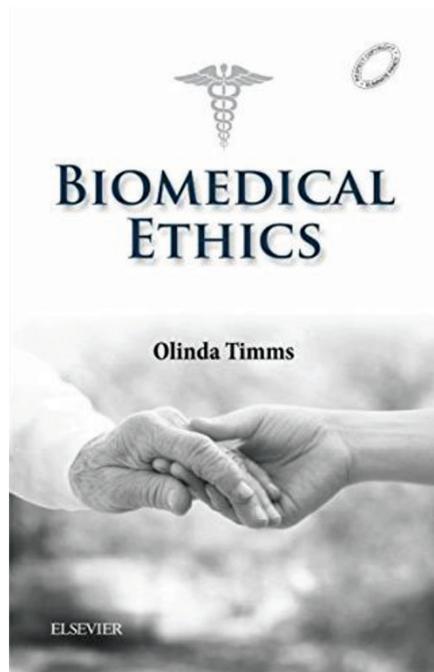
Medical Ethics Made Easy: A Book Review

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Biomedical Ethics by Olinda Timms. India: Elsevier; 2016.

ABSTRACT

The title Biomedical Ethics is very apt for this book, which is a surprisingly, a treat to read. It is short and yet traverses the entire gamut of issues in the subject. The writing is lucid and crisp. The chapters are just the right length. The information is presented in a readable style with case reports and in an attractive format. The necessary documents like the codes of medical ethics are conveniently relegated to the appendices and there is a good referencing system for researchers. Overall it is a definitive tome on Biomedical Ethics, which should adorn the desk of every humane doctor!

Keywords: *Medical ethics, Abortion, Euthanasia, Stem cell research, Cloning, Ethical publication*

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Introduction

These days of specialisation and super-specialisation where one tends to know more and more of less and less, it is good to be reminded of what William Harvey Cushing said nearly a century ago: “A physician is obligated to consider more than a diseased organ, more even than the whole man – he must view the man in his world.” This is a quote from this well written book.

Here at last is a definitive textbook on medical ethics, with a perspective of India and the developing world in general. The author Dr. Olinda Timms, an anesthetist who is passionate about medical ethics, has done her research exhaustively. She presents her facts comprehensively but yet manages it keep the book concise, within 400 pages!

Description of the Book

The book spans and scans the entire scope of Biomedical ethics at a glance as it were. Every section is described briefly and all the relevant viewpoints, arguments for and against are clearly enunciated. The historical precedents and documents such as codes and acts are described briefly and are made available in the appendices.

Each chapter begins with a teaser of a case study, leading to a discussion of the topic, leading to a discussion of the topic. It ends with a glance back at the case study in light of this knowledge. The author gives a wide coverage to all aspects of the topics and leaves questions haunting our mind.

Contents Discussed

She has traversed the entire minefield as it were of Medical ethics! Principles of medical ethics, issues with regard to the beginning and end of human life, public health ethics, ethics of emerging medical technologies such as cloning, stem cell research and assisted

reproduction are all given a good treatment in this book.

The issue of abortion, freedom of choice for the mother and the rights of the unborn fetus are well described. Dr. Timms defines all terms and places all the facts from every side of the issue in their entirety at the discretion of the reader. It is a delight to read and understand the multiple viewpoints and stands. She goes into the positions taken by faith groups such as the Jews, the Muslims and the Christians. The relevant views of ancient Indian medical giants such as Sushruta and Charaka are also described briefly. This gives a good perspective for the reader to choose from.

The other prickly topic of euthanasia also is dealt with very adroitly by Dr. Timms. She defines and classifies the term and gives the historical perspective. Then she goes on to present the perspectives of different faiths. The distinction between active and passive euthanasia is clearly done and the positions of some of the governments are given.

Innovations

The inclusion of real life stories which present dilemmas in this issue like that of the Nurse Aruna Shanbaug of Mumbai, gives the book a contemporary feel and it enhances its readability.

Emerging medical technologies such as stem cell research and cloning as well as genetic engineering and eugenics are all briefly expounded by the author in order to enunciate ethical principles. As some of these are still controversial, the author takes pains to explain out contrasting viewpoints. This enables the readers to see the entire gamut of opinions and decide for himself or herself the stand they need to take.

It is interesting to find tucked away into the book sections on ethical therapeutics or rational use of drugs as well as ethical publication. It gives us a sense of completion for ethical physicians who read the book.

Conclusion

The author gives an overall picture of the entire topic, in each chapter, from varied viewpoints. She took time to raise ethical dilemmas, which we will face as physicians in such situations.

This is a book, which should be prescribed for each medical graduate to be read in his or her internship. It should also be made essential reading for all medical and allied sciences post graduate students.

The extensive referencing by the author will help researchers to go for advanced study in their fields of interest. It is very thoughtful of the author to be thorough in this aspect as befits a standard textbook.

On the whole this is a well-researched, scholarly concise and comprehensive text on medical ethics. It is thought provoking and a must-read for every humane doctor, especially in the developing world.

