



to understand factors of population health that are not in the realm of clinical experience.

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The Human Genome Project and the Future of Health Care

Edited by Thomas H. Murray, Mark A. Rothstein and Robert F. Murray, Jr. *Medical Ethics Series*. Edited by David H. Smith and Robert M. Veatch. 248 pp. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 1996. US\$29.95. ISBN 0-253-33213-3

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Highly competent treatment of diverse issues
Weaknesses: Insufficient scientific content and, for Canadian readers, its US focus
Audience: Those who deal with bioethics, public policy, health care provision and genetic counselling

The warning that new ethical dilemmas will soon be upon us is nowhere more common than when invoked in relation to the Human Genome Project (HGP) and the medical technologies it has spawned. To the great credit of this book's contributors, much of that topic is avoided. In its place one finds thoughtful accounts of whether and to what extent the HGP will alter health care practices. Although the contributors (physicians, lawyers, philosophers and psychologists) often engage in speculation, the book is

largely devoted to a practical discussion of the HGP and its implications for medical practice and social policy.

At the heart of these papers is the issue of information — *genetic* information — and the proper uses to which it may be put. All genetic information is not created equal. Given the complex and variable ways in which genetic mutations are expressed phenotypically and the fact that effective therapy does not exist for many such diseases (e.g., Huntington chorea), concern is expressed about what patients, physicians and counsellors ought to do when faced with genetic information of unknown predictive importance. In these sections of the book the common claim that newly available information can potentially lead to new ethical problems is arguably most apparent. One reads how genetic information about a patient may implicate the patient's family members and thus alter the nature of the physician-patient relationship in previously unheard of ways.

The book's ultimate message is that the HGP gives us a new impetus to confront many ethical issues. Genetic information becomes yet another variable in the complex calculus of, for example, scarce organ allocation or employment discrimination. This results not from the genetic information *per se*, but from society's general mistreatment of the disabled. In focusing on genetics as it relates to existing medical, ethical and social problems, the authors provide us with critical tools to effectively deploy when considering the HGP, as well as more general problems confronting us in the medical context.

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Books and other media received

Livres et autres documents reçus

Books for patients

Comme une larme dans l'encrier : Récits d'une psychiatrie sensible. Paul Sidoun. 94 pp. Les éditions internationales Alain Stanké, Montréal (Qué.). 1997. \$14.95. ISBN 2-7604-0569-9

Where Did Mary Go: A Loving Husband's Struggle with Alzheimer's. Frank A. Wall. *Golden Age Series*. 148 pp. Illust. Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY. 1996. US\$19.95. ISBN 1-57392-070-3

Health care

The Online Guide to Healthcare Management and Medicine. Douglas Goldstein and Joyce Flory. 283 pp. Irwin Professional Publishing, Burr Ridge, Ill; McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., Whitby, Ont. 1997. \$36.95. ISBN 0-7863-0885-0

History

100 Years of Doctoring. William Tatlow. 100 pp. Illust. W.F. Tatlow, Box 655, Hudson, QC J0P 1H0. 1997. \$12.

Miscellaneous

Contraceptive Research and Development: Looking to the Future. Edited by Polly F. Harrison and Allan Rosenfield. 519 pp. National Academy Press, Washington. 1996. US\$49.95. ISBN 0-309-05442-7

Fever: Basic Mechanisms and Management. 2nd ed. Edited by Philip A. Mackowiak. 506 pp. Illust. Lippincott-Raven, Philadelphia. 1997. US\$97.50. ISBN 0-397-51715-7