



Doing Right: A Practical Guide to Ethics for Physicians and Medical Trainees

Philip C. Hébert. 220 pp. Oxford University Press, Oxford, England; Oxford University Press Canada, Don Mills, Ont. 1996. \$19.95. ISBN 0-19-541104-8

Overall rating:	Very good
Strengths:	Liberal use of illustrative cases, appealing format and appropriate vocabulary for medical trainees and physicians
Weaknesses:	Gives the impression that ethical decisions are more certain than they often are and does not emphasize reasoning skills as much as it should
Audience:	Medical students, residents and practising physicians

Philip Hébert promises “a practical guide to ethics for medical trainees and physicians” and succeeds in fulfilling his promise. Teaching in a medical school requires sensitivity to the goals of the students. They are not in school to become philosophers but ethically sound physicians. Teaching of ethics must be relevant to clinical practice, as this book is.

The great strength of this book is its accessibility. Because of their academic backgrounds as well as the demands of medical school, medical students find abstract philosophical readings difficult and often simply do not read them. The format of Hébert’s book, its vocabulary and its very liberal use and discussion of common cases ensure that students will read it, understand it and become interested in it.

Although the author does not cover all issues in bioethics, he deals with enough issues that the principles used could clearly be applied to the examination of other problems. I particularly liked the chapters on justice

in medical care and on end-of-life issues. I found the discussion comprehensive and balanced. For those who believe that a “principle” approach is not the best way to approach medical ethics, however, this book may not be for them.

There are 2 weaknesses of the book, both of which the author acknowledges. Hébert’s discussion of the cases, although useful, may give the reader the impression that his conclusion is the right one. Although I agree with him most of the time, there are instances in which I do not. This is, of course, typical of ethical discussions. Indeed, he says in the introduction, “Nor should my opinions be taken as the right answer. In the ethical problems of real life — as in medicine generally — decisions are fraught with uncertainty, and even the seemingly best choice may have reasonable alternatives. I encourage you to develop your own opinions on the cases.” As well, the short, snappy discussions of the issues, although appealing and easy to read, may not encourage the contemplation and reasoning skills so necessary to good ethical decision-making. Again, however, Hébert suggests that *Doing Right* should be used in conjunction with other readings to avoid this pitfall.

If this book is used with Hébert’s suggestion in mind, it is a very useful addition to any undergraduate or postgraduate curriculum in biomedical ethics. Good ethical decision-making, like good decision-making of any sort in medicine, results from theoretical knowledge applied to relevant examples, good reasoning skills and a great deal of reflection.

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The Physicians’ Legal Manual

Edited by Sandra B. Kidd. 573 pp. Emond Montgomery Publications, Toronto. 1996. Distributed by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$57.95 (\$49.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-920722-79-2

Overall rating:	Good
Strengths:	Practical advice on legal matters for Canadian physicians; simple language, easy-to-access information and up-to-date references
Weaknesses:	Some points need further explanation
Audience:	All Canadian physicians

This manual is much needed. It strips away the mystery of the laws, statutes, regulations, bylaws and common law rules that govern the practice of physicians. It lists the specific actions the law demands of physicians and explains the expected actions and reactions of the other parties.

The book deals both with federal and provincial laws, some aspects of the public hospital statutes, the regulations affecting medical institutions and some bylaws that affect medical practice in academic, hospital, private and public milieu. The provincial laws are addressed individually in separate chapters. This allows busy physicians easy access to information for their province. Throughout, the authors remove the “legalese” and replace it with simple language that physicians can interpret quickly.

Each chapter is divided into subsections such as definition, legal liability, clinical practice guidelines and recommended actions. Further divisions and headings include the activities expected of various providers, such as physicians, surgeons, psychiatrists, nurses and hospitals. For situations in which decision-making may be legally damaging for the physician,



the book advises the use of legal consultation. Thus, armed with the background knowledge the book provides, the physician can quickly understand what he or she needs and can explain this to a lawyer.

The book serves as a good reference, since it also answers questions affecting daily practice, when physicians cannot consult a lawyer immediately. It addresses such questions as, How and when can one legally fire one's secretary? Can a physician inform the spouse of a patient who is infected with HIV? What is the hospital administrator's duty to the physician in questions concerning hospital privileges? Who bears the liability for errors in hospital practice? When does one call the coroner?

The manual gives a list of up-to-date references at the end of each chapter and also lists supporting documents and reference material available from professional associations such as the CMA and the Canadian Medical Protective Association.

Although some of the points in the manual require further explanation, this guide is indispensable to practising physicians in Canada.

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The Canadian Family Guide to Stroke: Prevention, Treatment and Recovery

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. 302 pp. Illust. Random House of Canada Ltd., Toronto. 1996. \$22. ISBN 0-394-22480-9. Also available through the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada.

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Illustrations, case examples and simple terms
Weaknesses: Photos of patients in real sit-

uations would have strengthened the book
Audience: Patients who have had a stroke and their families

The editors should be congratulated on bringing out a concise but informative book on stroke. This is an important guide for all patients who have had a stroke and their families, since it touches on all aspects of stroke, including its complications.

The first chapter, on warning signs, gives a brief introduction to the central nervous system in a palatable way, without many technical terms. The terms used in discussing stroke are clearly explained, and brief illustrations are provided. Preventive aspects are also discussed very clearly, with practical suggestions.

In the next chapter, the risk factors are listed, with examples and suggestions for mitigating risk. This chapter would be very useful for patients who have experienced stroke for the first time. As well, the families of patients with stroke often wonder about the type and variety of investigations conducted in the hospital. In the third chapter, these are explained, with particular discussion of the invasive and noninvasive investigations. I liked the fact that the book mentioned the complications of these procedures, such as warning family members about what to expect when a patient undergoes a cerebral angiogram.

The next chapter deals with treatment, including the medical and surgical aspects as well as new therapies for stroke. The usual complications of stroke are listed, with some preventive suggestions.

The best part of the book is the chapter on rehabilitation. It touches on the role of individuals, including the family and the rehabilitation team. The rehabilitation goal is explained methodically, with illustrations and case examples. The discussion of coping with stroke after leaving the hospital in the sixth chap-

ter is excellent. The book gives examples of many special tools available for patients' daily use. This chapter also touches on the emotional aspects of stroke.

The eighth chapter deals mainly with lifestyle and stroke prevention. These topics are also emphasized in the appendix, which includes several tables such as a food guide. At the end are the addresses of various support groups, which add to the usefulness of this book.

This book is an excellent aid in coping with a disease that is often devastating to patients and traumatic for their families.

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Neuromuscular Transmission

Edited by Leo H.D.J. Booij. *Fundamentals of Anaesthesia and Acute Medicine series*. Series editors Ronald M. Jones, Alan R. Aitkenhead and Pierre Foëx. 196 pp. Illust. BMJ Publishing Group, London. 1996. Distributed in Canada by the Canadian Medical Association, Ottawa. \$80.95 (\$67.95 CMA members). ISBN 0-7279-0929-0

Overall rating: Excellent
Strengths: Readable, concise, provides an excellent review of neuromuscular physiology and up-to-date references
Weaknesses: Not encyclopedic, especially in coverage of clinical use of neuromuscular blocking agents
Audience: Anesthetists, residents, intensive care physicians and pharmacologists

This book, the first in the series *Fundamentals of Anaesthesia and Acute Medicine*, boasts an impressive