



factors from the perspective of the patient and family. The flow charts are not designed to be read as text; they are too repetitious. However, with their indexes they are ideal for reference.

While primarily designed for emergency departments, this volume could be used in walk-in clinics or urgent-care centres to help determine which individuals would be better served in another type of facility. It would also be useful as a teaching tool for house staff taking calls in the family medicine setting.

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The Ethics of Human Gene Therapy

LeRoy Walters and Julie Gage Palmer. 209 pp. Illust. Oxford University Press, Oxford, England; Oxford University Press Canada, Don Mills, Ont. 1997. \$42.95. ISBN 0-19-505955-7

- Overall rating:** Excellent
- Strengths:** Easily understood, concise description of science, techniques and possible uses of gene therapy; listing of ethical issues from a clinical ethics perspective
- Weaknesses:** Little analysis of the collective effects of the use of gene therapy on shaping social attitudes and practices; incomplete discussion of social and ethical issues
- Audience:** Health professionals, research ethics committee members, general public

The authors' purpose was to describe the science of gene therapy and to examine the major ethical questions. Toward the end of the volume, they state that their mission has been accomplished if they have stimulated the reader "to think about these possibilities in a calm and rational way and to reach their own judg-

ment." Most of the 153 pages of text and the 43 pages of appendices focus on describing and illustrating the current and potential uses of gene therapy. There are useful summaries of guidelines and opinion surveys.

The authors, a philosopher and an attorney, introduce genes and heredity in the first chapter. The next three chapters discuss somatic and germ-line therapy, and enhancement genetic engineering, and a fifth chapter considers public policy. Each chapter begins with a clear, well-illustrated discussion of historical developments and builds to the current developments.

Technical advantages are clearly described, without ethical assessment. For instance, the advantages of germ-line over somatic therapy are described as more effective when the disease 1) affects many different organs and disparate cell types (e.g., cystic fibrosis); or 2) is expressed in nonremovable and nondividing cells (e.g., Lesch-Nyhan syndrome). Of course, germ-line therapy is also effective beyond the individual, with the therapeutic effect passed on to subsequent children and a possible reduction of certain inherited diseases in the human gene pool. Technical discussions are followed by an evaluation of ethical arguments. Generally speaking, the authors take a permissive stance with respect to somatic and germ-line therapy and toward enhancement genetic engineering.

Their ethical discussions are probably the weakest point in the volume. The technical discussions receive about twice as much discussion as the ethical, and the approach is implicitly utilitarian. The authors admit that their analysis is shaped by their assumptions about health (species-typical function or improved function) and human nature (dissatisfaction with the human condition). Their fascination with the details of the technologies seems to connote a

bold embrace of genetic technologies without evaluation of alternatives. It is curious that the authors of such a historically and technologically grounded account seem to lack the humility and sense of fallibility that lead other authors to more cautious conclusions. For instance, they conclude: "genetic enhancements are an important part of the overall task of attempting to provide a better life and a better world to our descendants."

Overall, the volume is well written and readable for anyone who has taken a college or high school biology course. It will certainly stimulate reflection by interested physicians, members of research ethics committees, or members of the general public. Ethical reflection would benefit from supplemental reading through the perspective of feminist writers and persons with disabilities.

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Slow Dance: A Story of Stroke, Love and Disability

Bonnie Sherr Klein. 365 pp. Alfred A. Knopf Canada, Toronto. 1997. \$29.95. ISBN 0-394-28161-6

- Overall rating:** Good
- Strengths:** Important insights into the challenges of stroke survivors
- Weaknesses:** Fewer "characters" analysed in greater detail might have had more impact
- Audience:** Health care professionals, stroke patients and their families

This book is a narrative account by its author, an award-winning documentary NFB filmmaker, of survival and partial recovery from a brainstem hemorrhage. It can be