

Editorial

The articles on the first issue of 2011 deal with current issues at the intersection of law, health care and bioethics. Readers will find a wide assortment of scholarly and opinion articles on topics ranging from human dignity, to alternative therapies, to the legal protection of health care consumers in Europe, the treatment of mental illness and the refusal of medical treatment on religious grounds, among others.

A relevant question for bioethics is that of human dignity and how it should be understood. Audrey R. Chapman researches this concept and presents the basis for a definition which can be applied to policy making on health care-related issues. The article by Roberto Andorno on the other hand discusses the impact of concepts such as 'human nature' and 'human dignity' for human biotechnological developments.

Several authors deal with patients' right to information and what this means in different settings. Alberto Campos & Fernando Cano Valle discuss alternative therapies and the lack of regulation which can lead to vulnerable patients making risky decisions based on their particular perception of 'alternative' medicine.

Mateusz Radomyski looks at the relationship between medical oaths and the concept of patients' autonomy with regard to refusal of medical treatment on the basis of religious beliefs. He uses the example of Jehovah's Witnesses to propose 'rational non-interventional paternalism' as the solution to the problem of treatment refusal on religious grounds.

On the issue of market practices, Andrea Faeh presents us with a systematic analysis of the legal effects of Directive 2001/83/EC relating to the rules on pharmaceutical product information and the consumer's right to information. At a time where packaging and marketing are a large part of all industries, the differing standards among European countries, sometimes do not allow for consumers to fully understand the product they are consuming without specialised help. The correct implementation of Directive 2001/83/EC could help ameliorate this problem, she argues.

Further, Katrina Perehudhoff and Sophie Bloemen examine the effects of anti-competitiveness strategies on access to and quality of health care in Europe. They stress the need for governments to ensure full access to medicines and to meet the changing public health needs in face of changing demographics and rising pharmaceutical expenses.

Several specific comparisons of regulation across countries are addressed as well. Valerie K. Blake analyses the current situation of reproductive tissue transplant as a means for the treatment of infertility, and the differences found in its regulation between the United States and the United Kingdom. Focusing on Europe R.E.

Hellemondts, A.C. Hendriks & M.H. Breuning assess whether the Dutch Act on Population Screening could serve as an example for other European countries for the regulation of direct-to-consumer genetic tests via internet.

Another relevant topic in the discussion of bioethics is that of mental health. This issue is taken up by John Petrila & Corine de Ruiter who discuss the treatment of mental illnesses and particularly the discrepancy between the emergence of recovery as the goal of treatment on the one hand and the growing use of preventive detention on the other hand.

Timothy Caulfield, Nola M. Ries and Graham Barr, comment on Research Ethics Board (REB) variability. They argue that variations in REB review create unnecessary delays and may compromise the comparability of results across sites when different REBs require modifications to a protocol, and stress the need for harmonisation and centralisation of review as well as measures for recruitment and further training for REB members in order to enhance ethics review and reducing variability in time taken to review protocols.

Keith Syrett analyses the new directives for prioritisation of health care services in the U.K. and how rationing may affect patients as well as health care providers. He argues that the changes in National Health Services in the country have allowed for more transparency, and the large role that English courts have played in this development.

Finally, in the discussion section Margaret Otlowski and Raphael Cohen-Almagor present their views on the legal implications of physician-assisted suicide and Konstantinos Margaritis, discusses the influence of the Christian-Orthodox church on euthanasia policies in Greece, adding a practical example to the debate.

Amsterdam Law Forum aims to present different legal perspectives on challenging societal topics. Since access to high-quality health care and the ethical development of new treatments and technologies are of interest to everyone, we hope that the excellent contributions in this number add to the current debates, but also help all readers understand the issues in a better manner.

In *Health Care, Bioethics and the Law*, we offer some broad examples of how the law interacts with the medical community. We hope to fuel the ongoing changing perspectives through this very diverse range of articles. All reactions are welcome in this platform for debate.

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