

From the Editors

In addition to referring to the *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics*, the letters “CQ” have another meaning. Since 1912, “CQ” has been recognized as the international radio signal for alerting attention. This journal’s goal has always been to alert you to the most important issues in bioethics, and none is more vital to the future of our field than how we define our professional community.

Take a moment to construct a mental list of those you would include in your bioethics community. Who might they be? Your colleagues at work? Fellow attendees at professional conferences? Authors in the journals you read? All the bioethicists in your own country? Bioethicists in Asia? Latin America? Eastern Europe? Unless we begin to answer yes to all of the above, bioethics is in danger of becoming irrelevant.

How well bioethics rises to the challenge that the issues we face are global ones, requiring a global community to address them, will determine the richness of our thinking as well as the significance of our wider influence. Limiting ourselves to a single cultural perspective leaves us vulnerable not only to complacency but—what is worse—to collective delusions.

Our annual “International Voices” Special Sections are a call for a transnational bioethics—*not* in the sense of homogenization, but rather a realization that intellectual integrity requires that we open ourselves to other cul-

tures and appeals. By increasing our awareness of how bioethics’ thorniest issues are being debated and analyzed around the world, we increase our chances of uncovering the hidden limitations or glitches in our own ethical thinking. The point is not to converge our approaches but to sharpen our perspectives.

Among the questions discussed in this collection of “International Voices 2004” are: How can we best meet the challenges of healthcare systems facing growing shortages? Who should have access to fertility treatments? How should medical research be defined? What course of action might increase the number of available organs and be ethically acceptable? How can we ensure access to affordable medicines? What level of treatment should be afforded research subjects?

Well-informed bioethicists will expand their focus of attention to include how the most important issues of our time are developing and being debated internationally. In seeing how others do things differently, we move beyond our too-often predictable range of responses and have better information on hand to assess our own actions. If anything should be sacred to bioethicists, it should be not the comfort offered by familiar methodologies but the vigorous testing of hypotheses against a background of other approaches. We can—and must—learn from each other.



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