

Editorial

Curtis W. Hart

Published online: 27 August 2013
© Springer Science+Business Media New York 2013

This issue of the *Journal* marks the conclusion of the third year of my stewardship as the Editor in Chief. As is yearly my practice, I wish to extend thanks to all those—authors, reviewers, the support staff at Springer, and most particularly members of our Editorial Board who have contributed to our growing success. Our Board provides not only reviews for submitted articles but also worthwhile and needed counsel to me when facing problematic choices about whether to review or publish certain manuscripts.

In the coming year, an important decision has been made by our publisher that the *Journal* will increase its number of online and print issues from four to six per year. This is the first increase in its type since the *Journal* began publishing in 1961. We need to make this move given the overflow of articles currently online and because of the number of submissions that have increased in the last few years. Second, our growing international cohort of both authors and readers demands this increase.

This issue of the *Journal* has a specific focus in the cluster of its first five articles that have to do with medical education. Four of these selections have medical students as authors, and one is written by a group of medical educators. They are all unique in character save for their efforts at focusing upon the place of ethics, values, and spiritual concerns in medical education and practice. Readers are encouraged to engage them as a whole in order to explore their explicit and implicit meanings. Every reader will, of course, derive their own interpretation of these as individual efforts and as a whole. Upon embarking on this reading and editing experience, I noted two prominent factors. The first is my seeing that the sort of reflection on spirituality and health to which the *Journal* is dedicated is demonstrated here in different and telling ways. The second is that in the case of the students, I could see the crucial roles of mentorship and collegiality played in the creative process of research and writing. This second point is a reminder to all who teach and guide of the value of their roles. We dare not forget what we do and why we do it.

The articles, as noted, cover a broad territory of exploration. Kelly Wolenberg presents the results of her study done in conjunction with colleagues at the Program in Medicine and

C. W. Hart (✉)
New York, NY, USA
e-mail: cuh9001@med.cornell.edu

Religion at the University of Chicago on the topic of “Religion and United States Physicians’ Opinion and Self-predicted Practices Concerning Artificial Nutrition and Hydration.” This is an ongoing issue in the training of physicians and in their subsequent practices. It is a question in bioethics that requires being looked at and explored in every generation. Kelly undertook this study during the year between the conclusion of her undergraduate studies at the University of Chicago where she pursued a double major of Biology and Religious Studies and her entry into the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. Her experience of working in a hospice program and the inspiration of her mentor, Farr Curlin, M.D., were both influential in helping her complete this project. This essay will, moreover, help shape her own identity as a physician obligated to cope with end of life and other issues that entail the use or removal of artificial nutrition and hydration.

Mimi McEvoy and her colleagues on the faculty of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine contribute an essay and qualitative study of students’ understanding of religious and spiritual issues as the students completed their final year of medical school. This conversation follows the encouragement of both the Carnegie Report (2010) and Institute of Medicine (2004) for a deeper exploration of the content and purpose of medical education. There were expected and unexpected benefits for both faculty members and students taking part in the course.

Christopher Terndrup writes of “A Student’s Perspective on Medical Ethics Education” at the conclusion of his time as a student at Tulane University Medical School. He focuses on the meaning and value of medical ethics education such as the one he received even as he surveys the quite limited field of existing studies related to the place of ethics in medical education. Christopher has since become a Resident in the Internal Medicine and its Urban Health Track at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and its hospitals. He already sees in his very short time as a resident how his grounding in ethics provides a necessary framework for looking at issues of informed consent in relation to both patients and their families. Christopher has also been selected to serve on the hospital’s Ethics Committee as a representative from its residency program.

Hannah Huang takes us in a different direction with a philosophical investigation entitled “Gene Patients: A Broken Incentives System.” Here, she writes about the Myriad case that recently was heard before the United States Supreme Court in 2013. The essay explores the contours of the contentious debate about patents for genes particularly as this relates to the patent of the BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene held by Myriad Genetics, Inc. The study brings to light the confluence of concerns from ethics, research, individual and property rights, and pursuit of the common good for the contemporary world and the future as well. Hannah is a student in the Weill Cornell/Sloan-Kettering Tri-Institutional MD-PhD Program that will prepare her for a multifaceted career involving her in both medical practice and research.

Finally, Amy R. Kelley is a second author on a piece entitled “Abuse in Childhood and Religious/Spiritual Status in Adulthood among Internal Medicine Outpatients.” She assisted in the writing of this article as a student at Wright State University Boonshoft School Medicine in Dayton, Ohio while working with her first author and mentor, Randy Sansone, M.D. Amy also assisted as second author with Dr. Sansone on another article published in the *Journal of Religion and Health* entitled “The Relationship between Forgiveness and Borderline Personality Symptomatology.” She continues her professional training as a resident in psychiatry at the North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System, New York.

Taken singly or together, these essays have much to teach us even as they reassure us about the future course of the medical profession in American society.