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Cancer Treatment and Research

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Printed on acid-free paper.

For Meghan, Christian, Audrey, and especially Grace.

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Preface

This book addresses a variety of ethical issues that arise in the care of oncology patients. Many volumes have been written on medical ethics in the past 30 years. However, few have focused on ethical issues specific to the care of cancer patients. This book brings together such a focused examination.

The contributors are experienced clinicians, ethicists, medical humanists, and medical educators. The issues raised have direct relevance to the care of oncology patients in treatment as well as research settings.

The chapters address issues that are central to contemporary medical practice and medical ethics inquiry. Any practicing clinician will be well aware of the problems of communication and how uncertainty, cross-cultural issues, and religious influences can impact patient care. The limits of care and the role of advance directives and palliative care are common issues that must be addressed in treating patients at the end of life. For oncologists and oncology patients, participation in clinical trials may be a thorny topic, especially when phase I clinical trials are being considered. The impact of managed care and reimbursement issues cannot be avoided in the contemporary patient care and similarly cannot be neglected when considering the ethical ramifications raised. No discussion of ethics in oncology can be complete without attention to the specific challenges raised by the pediatric patient with cancer. All of these topics are explored by the contributors to this book.

This volume will have direct importance for practicing physicians, nurses, and other care-givers who take care of cancer patients. In addition, medical students, medical educators, and ethicists should find this book of interest as well.

A book such as this is the result of the efforts of many people. I am appreciative of the hard work of all of the contributors. I would like to thank Steven Rosen, M.D., the series editor of *Cancer Treatment and Research*, for his insights in realizing the importance of a volume on medical ethics in the series. Melissa Ramondetta and her staff at Kluwer have been helpful and patient over the previous months. Sandra Kuipers has helped in numerous ways. Special thanks are owed to Alex Langerman for his invaluable assistance in the final manuscript preparation of this book. Of course, I would never have been able to complete a project such as this without the patience and support of my family. Thank you all.